

MIRACLES

THE CREDIBILITY OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT ACCOUNTS



CRAIG S. KEENER

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VOLUME 1

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BakerAcademic
a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Published by Baker Academic
a division of Baker Publishing Group
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.bakeracademic.com

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Keener, Craig S., 1960–
Miracles : the credibility of the New Testament accounts / Craig S. Keener.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
ISBN 978-0-8010-3952-2 (cloth)
1. Miracles. 2. Spiritual healing—Christianity. 3. Bible. N.T. Gospels—Evidences, authority, etc.
4. Bible. N.T. Acts—Evidences, authority, etc. I. Title.
BS2548.K44 2011
226.7'06—dc23

2011020926

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Lovingly dedicated to my brother Chris and his family:
Minglan, Jamie, and Kayla

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Acknowledgments

My academic specialization involves the NT and its ancient setting, but this book required some expertise in additional areas. (In particular, I could have offered more critical evaluations of the diversely shaped cure reports had I possessed medical training.) I have done my best with these other areas, but I needed others' help. I am grateful to friends and colleagues who provided feedback on various parts of this manuscript, including my brother, Dr. Christopher Keener, for comments based on his training as a physicist; and my wife, Dr. Médine Moussounga Keener, a historian by training and my interpreter for a number of the interviews in Central Africa, not only for interviews in French but also for those in Kitsangi and Munukutuba.

I am grateful to medical doctors and specialists who went out of their busy ways to provide advice on cases, including those not cited because I chose to omit accounts based on their feedback. Among them are Tahira G. Adelekan; Manita Fadele; David Zaritzky; and especially Nicole Matthews, who did considerable research and often helped me to distinguish which healing accounts were less apt to have analogies in normal recoveries. In the process, I discovered that I had already omitted some genuinely significant stories, and she helped keep me from playing down some others. I am also grateful to my student Donald Moore, a clinical director of voice and swallowing disorders, for reviewing and evaluating a number of accounts in this book. These friends were busy and none had time to review all the cases, but I am grateful for their help. I remain responsible for the mistakes in content that remain and for any views expressed in the book. I am grateful to my institution at the time, Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University, for granting me a reduced load in view of my several writing projects.

I must particularly thank Jeron Frame at Palmer Seminary's library, who graciously, regularly, and without complaint ordered for me a vast number of inter-library loan sources, both academic and popular, on miracles, spirit possession, religion and health, and philosophy of science. She did so even though I did not initially explain the strange character of my project that required at least a basic acquaintance with such a range of sources, some of which are not always the special forte of seminary libraries. Other libraries and research centers, especially the

following, provided important help: in Baguio, Philippines, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (in addition to the regular library facilities, I am particularly grateful to D. Rosanny Engcoy for helping me find valuable sources at the Asia Pacific Research Center); in Springfield, Missouri, the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (especially Joseph Marics); online access to the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center (with the help of Darrin Rodgers); and in St. Paul, Minnesota, Luther Seminary Library and the ELCA Region 3 Archives (Bruce Eldevik and others). I am also grateful to institutions that allowed me to lecture on this subject and provided stimulating interaction, including, in the United States, Wheaton College, Eastern University, Asbury Theological Seminary, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and, in Australia, United Theological College (a campus of Charles Sturt University), Wesley Institute, and Crossway College. Databases of abstracts, in this case, especially *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, also expanded my access to materials considerably.

I am grateful to my translators during my Latin American interviews, David Gomero Borges and Brian Stewart. I also am grateful to the many persons who directed me to other sources of information, especially to those who provided my earliest leads, including Candy Gunther Brown of Indiana University, who regularly and generously answered my queries and supplied sources, despite our different disciplinary approaches; John Pilch (Johns Hopkins University); Hendrik van der Breggen (Providence College); Paul Eddy (Bethel University); Christopher Hall (Palmer); Robert Larmer (University of New Brunswick); Paul Lewis (Asia Pacific Theological Seminary); Michael Licona (Southern Evangelical Seminary); Tim McGrew (Western Michigan University); J. P. Moreland (Talbot School of Theology); Warren Newberry, Byron Klaus, and the now late Gary McGee (Assemblies of God Theological Seminary); John Piippo (Palmer); Marie Brown; Eileen Cecilia; Mike Finley; and John Lathrop. These sources do not all share the same approach with one another or with me, and none of them should be held responsible for the views expressed here, but I must acknowledge my great appreciation for their assistance. I am grateful to the many persons who sacrificed their time to grant me interviews or send me correspondence. I name them at those appropriate places, although they sometimes supplied additional leads as well.

Many other individuals would have supplied helpful information, had I known to contact them; but it is safe to assume that there will be other authors and other books that will treat this issue more fully. For example, from an objective, scientific standpoint, Candy Gunther Brown's forthcoming contributions will undoubtedly continue to fill a large need.

Finally, I am grateful to Baker Academic for publishing this work, originally contracted with Hendrickson. Baker acquired a number of titles from Hendrickson during the editing phase of this work, yet enthusiastically adopted the project as its own; they have been overwhelmingly gracious and skillful. I am grateful to Tim Muether for the author index and to my editors at various stages, including Brian Bolger, Shirley Decker-Lucke, Allan Emery, and especially Tim West.

Abbreviations

Ancient Sources

Note: Most disputed works are listed under their putative or traditional authors.

General

ca.	circa
frg.	fragment
HB	Hebrew Bible
LXX	Septuagint
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament/Hebrew Bible
pref.	preface
Q	Quelle (hypothetical source behind much of Matthew and Luke)

Papyri and Inscriptions

CIJ	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum</i> , ed. Frey
Epidauros inscr.	Epidauros inscriptions
I. Eph.	<i>Inscripfen von Ephesos</i>
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
PDM	<i>Papyri Demoticae Magicae</i>
PDM Sup.	<i>Papyri Demoticae Magicae Supplement</i>
PGM	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i>
P. Grenf.	Greek Papyri, ed. B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt
P. Oxy.	<i>Papyrus Oxyrhynchus</i>
P. Par.	<i>Les Papyrus grecs du Musée du Louvre</i> , ed. W. Brunet de Presle and E. Egger
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
SIG	<i>Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum</i> . 3rd ed. Edited by W. Dittenberger. 4 vols. Leipzig, 1915–24

Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Gen	Genesis	Josh	Joshua	2 Kgs	2 Kings
Exod	Exodus	Judg	Judges	2 Chr	2 Chronicles
Lev	Leviticus	1 Sam	1 Samuel	Neh	Nehemiah
Num	Numbers	2 Sam	2 Samuel	Job	Job
Deut	Deuteronomy	1 Kgs	1 Kings	Ps(s)	Psalms(s)

Prov	Proverbs	Ezek	Ezekiel	Mic	Micah
Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Dan	Daniel	Mal	Malachi
Isa	Isaiah	Jon	Jonah		

New Testament

Matt	Matthew	Gal	Galatians	Phlm	Philemon
Mark	Mark	Eph	Ephesians	Heb	Hebrews
Luke	Luke	Phil	Philippians	Jas	James
John	John	Col	Colossians	1 Pet	1 Peter
Acts	Acts	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet	2 Peter
Rom	Romans	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians	1 John	1 John
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	1 Tim	1 Timothy	Jude	Jude
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	2 Tim	2 Timothy	Rev	Revelation

Old Testament Apocrypha

Bar	Baruch	4 Macc	4 Maccabees	Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
Jdt	Judith	Sir	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)		
2 Macc	2 Maccabees	Tob	Tobit		

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

<i>Apoc. Ab.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i>	<i>Liv. Pr.</i>	<i>Lives of the Prophets</i>
<i>Apoc. Adam</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Adam</i>	<i>Pr. Jos.</i>	<i>Prayer of Joseph</i>
<i>Apoc. Mos.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Moses</i>	<i>Pss. Sol.</i>	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
<i>Apoc. Sedr.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Sedrach</i>	<i>Ps.-Phoc.</i>	<i>Pseudo-Phocylides</i>
<i>Apoc. Zeph.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Zephaniah</i>	<i>Sib. Or.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
<i>Ascen. Isa.</i>	<i>Ascension of Isaiah</i>	<i>Sim.</i>	<i>Similitudes (of 1 Enoch)</i>
<i>2 Bar.</i>	<i>2 Baruch</i>	<i>T. Ab.</i>	<i>Testament of Abraham</i>
<i>3 Bar.</i>	<i>3 Baruch</i>	<i>T. Adam</i>	<i>Testament of Adam</i>
<i>4 Bar.</i>	<i>4 Baruch</i>	<i>T. Jac.</i>	<i>Testament of Jacob</i>
<i>1 En.</i>	<i>1 Enoch</i>	<i>T. Job</i>	<i>Testament of Job</i>
<i>2 En.</i>	<i>2 Enoch</i>	<i>T. Sol.</i>	<i>Testament of Solomon</i>
<i>3 En.</i>	<i>3 Enoch</i>	<i>Tr. Shem</i>	<i>Treatise of Shem</i>
<i>Ezek. Trag.</i>	<i>Ezekiel the Tragedian Exagoge</i>		
<i>4 Ezra</i>	<i>4 Ezra</i>		

Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

<i>Gr. Apoc. Ezra</i>	<i>Greek Apocalypse of Ezra</i>	<i>T. Dan</i>	<i>Testament of Dan</i>
<i>Hist. Rech.</i>	<i>History of the Rechabites</i>	<i>T. Iss.</i>	<i>Testament of Issachar</i>
<i>Jan. Jam.</i>	<i>Jannes and Jambres</i>	<i>T. Jos.</i>	<i>Testament of Joseph</i>
<i>Jos. Asen.</i>	<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>	<i>T. Jud.</i>	<i>Testament of Judah</i>
<i>Jub.</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>	<i>T. Levi</i>	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
<i>L.A.B.</i>	<i>Pseudo-Philo's Biblical Antiquities</i>	<i>T. Naph.</i>	<i>Testament of Naphtali</i>
<i>L.A.E.</i>	<i>Life of Adam and Eve</i>	<i>T. Reu.</i>	<i>Testament of Reuben</i>
<i>Let. Aris.</i>	<i>Letter of Pseudo-Aristeas</i>	<i>T. Sim.</i>	<i>Testament of Simeon</i>
<i>Odes Sol.</i>	<i>Odes of Solomon</i>		

Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Texts

CD	<i>Damascus Document</i>	1QS	<i>Manual of Discipline/Community Rule</i>
1Qap Gen ^{ar}	<i>Genesis Apocryphon</i>		
1QM	<i>Qumran War Scroll</i>	4Q	<i>Manuscripts from Qumran Cave Four</i>
1QpHab	<i>Qumran Peshier Commentary on Habakkuk</i>	11QTemple	<i>Qumran Temple Scroll</i>

Targumic Texts

<i>Tg. Jon.</i>	<i>Targum Jonathan</i>	<i>Tg. Ps.-Jon.</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>
<i>Tg. Onq.</i>	<i>Targum Onqelos</i>		

Mishnah, Talmud, and Related Literature

<i>b.</i>	Babylonian Talmud	<i>Maksh.</i>	<i>Makshirin</i>
<i>bar.</i>	baraita (i.e., a citation of earlier tradition)	<i>Meg.</i>	<i>Megillah</i>
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah	<i>Meil.</i>	<i>Meila</i>
<i>p.</i>	Palestinian (Jerusalem, Yerushalmi) Talmud	<i>Men.</i>	<i>Menahoth</i>
<i>tos.</i>	Tosefta	<i>Mid.</i>	<i>Middot</i>
		<i>Mik.</i>	<i>Mikvaot</i>
<i>Ab.</i>	<i>Aboth</i>	<i>M.K.</i>	<i>Moed Katan</i>
<i>A.Z.</i>	<i>Abodah Zarah</i>	<i>M.S.</i>	<i>Maaser Sheni</i>
<i>B.B.</i>	<i>Baba Bathra</i>	<i>Naz.</i>	<i>Nazir</i>
<i>Bek.</i>	<i>Bekoroth</i>	<i>Ned.</i>	<i>Nedarim</i>
<i>Ber.</i>	<i>Berakoth</i>	<i>Neg.</i>	<i>Negaim</i>
<i>Bez.</i>	<i>Bezah</i>	<i>Nid.</i>	<i>Niddah</i>
<i>Bik.</i>	<i>Bikkurim</i>	<i>Ohol.</i>	<i>Oholoth</i>
<i>B.K.</i>	<i>Baba Kamma</i>	<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orlah</i>
<i>B.M.</i>	<i>Baba Mezia</i>	<i>Pes.</i>	<i>Pesahim</i>
<i>Eduy.</i>	<i>Eduyoth</i>	<i>R.H.</i>	<i>Rosh Hoshana</i>
<i>Erub.</i>	<i>Erubin</i>	<i>Sanh.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
<i>Git.</i>	<i>Gittin</i>	<i>Shab.</i>	<i>Shabbat</i>
<i>Hag.</i>	<i>Hagigah</i>	<i>Sheb.</i>	<i>Shebuot</i>
<i>Hal.</i>	<i>Hallah</i>	<i>Shebiith</i>	<i>Shebiith</i>
<i>Hor.</i>	<i>Horayoth</i>	<i>Sheq.</i>	<i>Sheqalim</i>
<i>Hul.</i>	<i>Hullin</i>	<i>Sot.</i>	<i>Sota</i>
<i>Kel.</i>	<i>Kelim</i>	<i>Suk.</i>	<i>Sukkot</i>
<i>Ker.</i>	<i>Keritot</i>	<i>Taan.</i>	<i>Taanit</i>
<i>Ket.</i>	<i>Ketuboth</i>	<i>Tam.</i>	<i>Tamid</i>
<i>Kid.</i>	<i>Kiddushin</i>	<i>Tem.</i>	<i>Temurah</i>
<i>Kip.</i>	<i>Kippurim</i>	<i>Ter.</i>	<i>Terumoth</i>
<i>Maas.</i>	<i>Maaserot</i>	<i>Toh.</i>	<i>Toharot</i>
<i>Mak.</i>	<i>Makkot</i>	<i>Yad.</i>	<i>Yadaim</i>
		<i>Yeb.</i>	<i>Yebamot</i>
		<i>Zeb.</i>	<i>Zebahim</i>

Other Rabbinic Works

<i>Ab. R. Nat.</i>	<i>Abot de Rabbi Nathan</i>	<i>Midr. Ps</i>	Midrash on Psalms (<i>Midrash Tehillim</i>)
<i>A.M.</i>	<i>Sipra Aharé Mot</i>	<i>Num. Rab.</i>	<i>Numbers Rabbah</i>
<i>Besh.</i>	<i>Mekilta Beshallah</i>	<i>Pesiq. Rab.</i>	<i>Pesiqta Rabbati</i>
<i>Deut. Rab.</i>	<i>Deuteronomy Rabbah</i>	<i>Pesiq. Rab Kah.</i>	<i>Pesiqta de Rab Kahana</i>
<i>EccI. Rab.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes (Koheleth) Rabbah</i>	<i>Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup.</i>	<i>Pesiqta de Rab Kahana Supplement</i>
<i>Exod. Rab.</i>	<i>Exodus Rabbah</i>	<i>Qed.</i>	<i>Sipra Qedoshim</i>
<i>Gen. Rab.</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	<i>Shir.</i>	<i>Mekilta Shirata</i>
<i>Lam. Rab.</i>	<i>Lamentations Rabbah</i>	<i>Sipre Deut.</i>	<i>Sipre Deuteronomy</i>
<i>Lev. Rab.</i>	<i>Leviticus Rabbah</i>	<i>Song Rab.</i>	<i>Song Rabbah</i>
<i>Mek.</i>	<i>Mekilta</i>		

Patristic Sources

Ambrose		Apostolic Fathers	
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistles</i>	<i>1 Clem.</i>	<i>1 Clement</i>

<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>
<i>Herm.</i>	<i>Shepherd of Hermas</i>
<i>Vis.</i>	<i>Vision (of Hermas)</i>

Athanasius

<i>Inc.</i>	<i>De incarnatione</i>
<i>Vit. Ant.</i>	<i>Life of St. Anthony</i>

Augustine

<i>City of God</i>	<i>De civitate Dei</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessions</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistles</i>
<i>Retract.</i>	<i>Retractions</i>
<i>Util. cred.</i>	<i>On the Advantage of Believing</i>

Chrysostom, John

<i>Hom. Acts</i>	<i>Homilies on Acts</i>
<i>Hom. Cor.</i>	<i>Homilies on 1–2 Corinthians</i>
<i>Jul.</i>	<i>In sanctum Julianum martyrem</i>

Clement of Alexandria

<i>Quis div.</i>	<i>Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?</i>
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Cyprian

<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistles</i>
<i>Laps.</i>	<i>On the Lapsed</i>

Eusebius

<i>Praep. ev.</i>	<i>Praeparatio evangelica</i>
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Ignatius

<i>Eph.</i>	<i>To the Ephesians</i>
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Irenaeus

<i>Haer.</i>	<i>Against Heresies</i>
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Jerome

<i>Vit. Hil.</i>	<i>Vita S. Hilarionis eremitae</i>
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Justin

<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology (1, 2)</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>

Lactantius

<i>Epit.</i>	<i>Epitome of the Divine Institutes</i>
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>Divine Institutes</i>

Origen

<i>Cels.</i>	<i>Against Celsus</i>
<i>Hom. Jos.</i>	<i>Homilies on Joseph</i>

Tertullian

<i>An.</i>	<i>On the Soul</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i>
<i>Cor.</i>	<i>De corona militis</i>
<i>Idol.</i>	<i>De idolatria</i>
<i>Praescr.</i>	<i>De praescriptione haereticorum</i>
<i>Scap.</i>	<i>Ad Scapulam</i>
<i>Spect.</i>	<i>De spectaculis</i>
<i>Test.</i>	<i>The Soul's Testimony</i>
<i>Ux.</i>	<i>Ad uxorem</i>

Theodoret of Cyr

<i>Comm. 1 Cor.</i>	<i>Commentary on 1 Corinthians</i>
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New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

<i>Acts Andrew</i>	<i>Acts of Andrew</i>	<i>Acts Thom.</i>	<i>Acts of Thomas</i>
<i>Acts John</i>	<i>Acts of John</i>	<i>Apost. Const.</i>	<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>
<i>Acts Paul</i>	<i>Acts of Paul</i>	<i>Gos. Nic.</i>	<i>Gospel of Nicodemus</i>
<i>Acts Pet.</i>	<i>Acts of Peter</i>		

Other Greek and Latin Works

Note: Texts that are an author's only known or surviving work are cited in this book by the author's name. Texts whose authorship is unknown are alphabetized by title in the list below, except when their traditional association with a particular corpus invites pseudepigraphic or some other works to be listed under a given author.

Achilles Tatius

<i>Achilles Tatius</i>	<i>Clitophon and Leucippe</i>
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Aelius Aristides

<i>Def. Or.</i>	<i>Defense of Oratory</i>
<i>Or.</i>	<i>Oration to Rome</i>

Aeschines

<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timarchus</i>
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Aeschylus

<i>Ag.</i>	<i>Agamemnon</i>
<i>Cho.</i>	<i>Choephoroi (Libation-Bearers)</i>

Sept. *Septem contra Thebas* (Seven
against Thebes)

Alciphron

Farm. *Farmers*

Aphthonius

Progymn. *Progymnasmata*

Apollodorus

Bib. *Library*

Epit. *Epitome*

Apollonius Rhodius

Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica*

Appian

Bell. civ. *Civil War*

Hist. rom. *Roman History*

Apuleius

De deo Socr. *De deo Socratis*

Metam. *Metamorphoses*

Aristophanes

Ach. *Acharnians*

Plut. *Rich Man/Plutus*

Aristotle

De an. *De anima* (Soul)

Div. somn. *De divination per somnum*
(Prophesying by Dreams)

Heavens *On the Heavens*

Pol. *Politics*

Rhet. *Rhetoric*

Arius Didymus

Arius Didymus *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*

Arrian

Alex. *Anabasis of Alexander*

Artemidorus

Onir. *Onirocritica*

Athenaeus

Deipn. *Deipnosophists*

Athenagoras

Plea *A Plea for the Christians*

Aulus Gellius

Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights*

Bede

Comm. Acts

H.E.G.A. *Commentary on Acts*
Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis
Anglorum

Caesar

Bell. civ. *Civil War*

Callimachus

Callimachus *Hymns*

Callistratus

Descr. *Descriptions*

Chariton

Chaer. *Chaereas and Callirhoe*

Cicero

Att. *Letters to Atticus*

Div. *De Divinatione*

Fin. *De finibus*

Inv. *De inventione rhetorica*

Leg. *De legibus*

Nat. d. *De Natura Deorum*

Off. *De officiis*

Pis. *In Pisonem*

Rep. *De republica*

Tusc. *Tusculan Disputations*

Verr. *In Verrem*

Cornutus

Nat. d. *Summary of Greek Theology*

Digest

Dig. *Digest*

Dio Cassius

Dio Cassius *Roman History*

Dio Chrysostom

Or. *Orations*

Diodorus Siculus

Diodorus Siculus *Library of History*

Diogenes

Ep. *Epistle* (in *The Cynic Epistles*,
ed. A. Malherbe)

Diogenes Laertius

Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*

Dion. Hal.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus	Hesiod	
<i>Ant. rom.</i>	<i>Roman Antiquities</i>	<i>Astron.</i>	<i>Astronomy</i>
<i>Comp.</i>	<i>Literary Composition/De compositione verborum</i>	<i>Op.</i>	<i>Works and Days</i>
<i>Epid.</i>	<i>Epideictic</i>	<i>Theog.</i>	<i>Theogony</i>
Epictetus		Homer	
<i>Diatr.</i>	<i>Discourses</i>	<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>
Eunapius		<i>Od.</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
<i>Lives</i>	<i>Lives of the Philosophers</i>	Homeric Hymn	
Euripides		<i>Hom. Hymn</i>	<i>Homeric Hymn</i>
<i>Alc.</i>	<i>Alcestis</i>	Hypostasis of the Archons	
<i>Andr.</i>	<i>Andromache</i>	<i>Hyp. Arch.</i>	<i>Hypostasis of the Archons</i>
<i>Bacch.</i>	<i>Bacchanals</i>	Iamblichus	
<i>El.</i>	<i>Electra</i>	<i>Myst.</i>	<i>Mysteries</i>
<i>Hec.</i>	<i>Hecuba</i>	<i>V.P.</i>	<i>Life of Pythagoras, or, Pythagorean Life</i>
<i>Herc. fur.</i>	<i>Madness of Heracles</i>	Isaeus	
<i>Hipp.</i>	<i>Hippolytus</i>	<i>Astyph.</i>	<i>Astyphilus</i>
<i>Orest.</i>	<i>Orestes</i>	<i>Menec.</i>	<i>Meneclcs</i>
Fragments of Greek Historians		Isocrates	
<i>FrGrH</i>	<i>Fragments of Greek Historians</i>	<i>Paneg.</i>	<i>Panegyricus (Or. 4)</i>
Fronto		Josephus	
<i>Ad M. Caes.</i>	<i>Ad Marcus Caesarem</i>	<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>
<i>De Fer. Als.</i>	<i>De Feriis Alsensibus</i>	<i>Ag. Ap.</i>	<i>Against Apion</i>
<i>Eloq.</i>	<i>Eloquence</i>	<i>Life</i>	<i>Life</i>
Gaius		<i>War</i>	<i>The Jewish War</i>
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>Institutes</i>	Justinian	
Gregory of Tours		<i>Inst.</i>	<i>Institutes</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>History</i>	Juvenal	
Heliodorus		<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satires</i>
<i>Aeth.</i>	<i>Aethiopica</i>	Libanius	
Heraclitus		<i>Narration</i>	<i>Sample Narrations</i>
<i>Hom. Prob.</i>	<i>Homeric Problems</i>	<i>Speech in Character</i>	<i>Sample Speeches in Character</i>
Hermogenes		Livy	
<i>Inv.</i>	<i>On Invention</i>	<i>Livy</i>	<i>Ab Urbe Condita</i>
<i>Issues</i>	<i>On Issues</i>	Longinus	
<i>Progymn.</i>	<i>Progymnasmata</i>	<i>Subl.</i>	<i>On the Sublime</i>
Herodian		Longus	
<i>Herodian</i>	<i>History</i>	<i>Longus</i>	<i>Daphnis and Chloe</i>
Herodotus		Lucan	
<i>Herodotus</i>	<i>Histories</i>	<i>Bell. civ.</i>	<i>Civil War</i>

Lucian

<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander the False Prophet</i>
<i>Charid.</i>	<i>Charidemus</i>
<i>Critic</i>	<i>The Mistaken Critic</i>
<i>Dance</i>	<i>The Dance</i>
<i>Dem.</i>	<i>Demonax</i>
<i>Dial. D.</i>	<i>Dialogues of the Dead</i>
<i>Dial. G.</i>	<i>Dialogues of the Gods</i>
<i>Hermot.</i>	<i>Hermotimus, or Sects</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>How to Write History</i>
<i>Icar.</i>	<i>Icaromenippus, or Sky-Man</i>
<i>Indictment</i>	<i>Double Indictment/Bis accusatus</i>
<i>Lover of Lies</i>	<i>The Lover of Lies/Doubter/Philopseudes</i>
<i>Lucius</i>	<i>Lucius or the Ass</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Menippus, or Descent into Hades</i>
<i>Peregr.</i>	<i>Peregrinus</i>
<i>Posts</i>	<i>Salaried Posts in Great Houses</i>
<i>Ship</i>	<i>The Ship, or The Wishes/Navigium</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timon</i>
<i>True Story</i>	<i>A True Story</i>
<i>Z. Rants</i>	<i>Zeus Rants</i>

Lucretius

<i>Nat.</i>	<i>De Rerum Natura</i>
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Macrobius

<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Saturnalia</i>
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Marcus Aurelius

Marcus Aurelius	<i>Meditations</i>
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Martial

<i>Epig.</i>	<i>Epigrams</i>
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Maximus of Tyre

Maximus of Tyre	<i>Orations</i>
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Menander Rhetor

Menander Rhetor	<i>Epideictic Speeches</i>
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Minucius Felix

<i>Oct.</i>	<i>Octavius</i>
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Orphic Hymns

<i>Orph. H.</i>	<i>Orphic Hymns</i>
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Ovid

<i>Am.</i>	<i>Amores</i>
<i>Fast.</i>	<i>Fasti</i>
<i>Metam.</i>	<i>Metamorphoses</i>
<i>Tristia</i>	<i>Tristia</i>

Parthenius

<i>L.R.</i>	<i>Love Romance</i>
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Pausanias

Pausanias	<i>Description of Greece</i>
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Persius

<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satires</i>
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Petronius

<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satyricon</i>
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Philo

<i>Ab.</i>	<i>On Abraham</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>On the Confusion of Languages</i>
<i>Creation</i>	<i>On the Creation of the World</i>
<i>Giants</i>	<i>On the Giants</i>
<i>Migr.</i>	<i>The Migration of Abraham</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	<i>Life of Moses (1–2)</i>
<i>Names</i>	<i>On the Change of Names</i>
<i>Spec. Laws</i>	<i>Special Laws (1–4)</i>

Philostratus

<i>Ep. Apoll.</i>	<i>Epistles of Apollonius</i>
<i>Hrk.</i>	<i>Heroikos</i>
<i>Vit. Apoll.</i>	<i>Life of Apollonius</i>
<i>Vit. soph.</i>	<i>Lives of the Sophists</i>

Pindar

<i>Isthm.</i>	<i>Isthmian Odes</i>
<i>Pyth.</i>	<i>Pythian Odes</i>

Plato

<i>Epin.</i>	<i>Epinomis</i>
<i>Phaedr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>Symp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>

Pliny the Elder

<i>Nat.</i>	<i>Natural History</i>
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Pliny the Younger

<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistles</i>
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Plutarch

<i>Alc.</i>	<i>Alcibiades</i>
<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander</i>
<i>Bride</i>	<i>Advice to Bride and Groom</i>
<i>Br. Wom.</i>	<i>Bravery of Women</i>
<i>Cam.</i>	<i>Camillus</i>
<i>Cic.</i>	<i>Cicero</i>
<i>Cor.</i>	<i>M. Coriolanus</i>
<i>Dem.</i>	<i>Demosthenes</i>
<i>Dial. L.</i>	<i>Dialogue on Love</i>
<i>Face M.</i>	<i>Face on the Moon</i>

<i>Isis</i>	<i>Isis and Osiris</i>
<i>Luc.</i>	<i>Lucullus</i>
<i>Lys.</i>	<i>Lysander</i>
<i>M. Cato</i>	<i>Marcus Cato</i>
<i>Mor.</i>	<i>Moralia</i>
<i>Obsol.</i>	<i>Obsolescence of Oracles</i>
<i>Or. Delphi</i>	<i>Oracles at Delphi no longer given in verse (De Pyth. Orac.)</i>
<i>Pel.</i>	<i>Pelopidas</i>
<i>Pleas. L.</i>	<i>Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible</i>
<i>R.Q.</i>	<i>Roman Questions</i>
<i>Sign Soc.</i>	<i>Sign of Socrates</i>
<i>Sulla</i>	<i>Sulla</i>
<i>Them.</i>	<i>Themistocles</i>
<i>T.-T.</i>	<i>Table-Talk</i>
<i>Uned. R.</i>	<i>Uneducated Ruler</i>

Polybius

<i>Polybius</i>	<i>History of the Roman Republic</i>
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Porphry

<i>Marc.</i>	<i>To Marcella</i>
<i>Vit. Pyth.</i>	<i>Life of Pythagoras</i>

Ps.-Callisthenes

<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander Romance</i>
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Pseudo-Clementine

<i>Ps.-Clem. Rec.</i>	<i>Recognitions</i>
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Quadratus

<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i>
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Quintilian

<i>Decl.</i>	<i>Lesser Declamations</i>
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>Institutes of Oratory</i>

Rhetorica ad Alexandrum

<i>Rhet. Alex.</i>	<i>Rhetorica ad Alexandrum</i>
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Sallust

<i>Bell. cat.</i>	<i>War with Catiline</i>
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Seneca the Elder

<i>Controv.</i>	<i>Controversiae</i>
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Seneca the Younger

<i>Ben.</i>	<i>On Benefactions</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogues</i>
<i>Ep. Lucil.</i>	<i>Epistles to Lucilius</i>
<i>Nat.</i>	<i>Natural Questions</i>

Sextus Empiricus

<i>Math.</i>	<i>Against the Professors (Adv. Math.)</i>
<i>Pyr.</i>	<i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i>

Silius Italicus

<i>Silius Italicus</i>	<i>Punica</i>
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Socrates

<i>Socrates Ep.</i>	<i>Epistles (in Cynic Epistles)</i>
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Sophocles

<i>Antig.</i>	<i>Antigone</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Philoctetes</i>

Soranus

<i>Gynec.</i>	<i>Gynecology</i>
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Sozomen

<i>H.E.</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
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Statius

<i>Silv.</i>	<i>Silvae</i>
<i>Theb.</i>	<i>Thebaid</i>

Stobaeus

<i>Ecl.</i>	<i>Eclogae</i>
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Strabo

<i>Strabo</i>	<i>Geography</i>
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Suetonius

<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Augustus</i>
<i>Claud.</i>	<i>Claudius</i>
<i>Jul.</i>	<i>Julius</i>
<i>Otho</i>	<i>Otho</i>
<i>Vesp.</i>	<i>Vespasian</i>

Tacitus

<i>Ann.</i>	<i>Annals</i>
<i>Germ.</i>	<i>Germania</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>History</i>

Theon

<i>Progyrn.</i>	<i>Progyrnasmata</i>
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Theophilus

<i>Autol.</i>	<i>Ad Autolycom</i>
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Thucydides

<i>Thucydides</i>	<i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i>
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Valerius Flaccus

Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica*

Valerius Maximus

Valerius Maximus *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*

Varro

Lat. Lang. *On the Latin Language*

Virgil

Aen. *Aeneid*
Ecl. *Eclogues*

Life of Aesop

Vit. Aes. *Life of Aesop*

Vitruvius

Arch. *Architecture*

Xenophon

Anab. *Anabasis*
Cyr. *Cyropedia*
Eq. mag. *De equitum magistro (Cavalry Commander)*
Hell. *Hellenica*
Mem. *Memorabilia*

Xenophon of Ephesus

Eph. *Ephesiaka*

Other Ancient and Medieval Works

AQHT	Aqhat Epic	M. Takla Haym.	<i>The Miracles of Takla</i>
<i>Incant. Texts</i>	Aramaic incantation texts		<i>Hâymânôt in the Version of</i>
KRT	Keret Epic		<i>Dabra Libânôs</i>
<i>L. Takla Haym.</i>	<i>The Life of Takla Hâymânôt in the Version of Dabra Libânôs</i>		

Modern Sources

AARAS	American Academy of Religion Academy Series
AARTRSS	American Academy of Religion Teaching Religious Studies Series
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
AcOphSc	<i>Acta Ophthalmologica Scandinavica</i>
AcT	<i>Acta Theologica</i>
Africa	<i>Africa</i>
<i>African Affairs</i>	<i>African Affairs</i>
AfSR	<i>African Studies Review</i>
AfThJ	<i>Africa Theological Journal</i>
AfSt	<i>African Studies</i>
AGHer	<i>Assemblies of God Heritage</i>
AgMHealth	<i>Aging and Mental Health</i>
AIDSPCS	<i>AIDS Patient Care and Studies</i>
AILEHS	The Archbishop Iakovos Library of Ecclesiastical and Historical Sources
AJDAA	<i>American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse</i>
AJPS	<i>Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies</i>
AJPSS	<i>Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies Series</i>
AJET	<i>Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology</i>
AJT	<i>Asia Journal of Theology</i>
Aleph	<i>Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism</i>
Alfinge	<i>Alfinge</i>
AmbPed	<i>Ambulatory Pediatrics</i>
AmAnth	<i>American Anthropologist</i>
AmBenRev	<i>American Benedictine Review</i>
AmEthn	<i>American Ethnologist</i>
AmFamPhys	<i>American Family Physician</i>
AmHeartJ	<i>American Heart Journal</i>
AmJClinHyp	<i>American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis</i>
AmJEpid	<i>American Journal of Epidemiology</i>
AmJGerPsy	<i>American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry</i>
AmJHBeh	<i>American Journal of Health Behavior</i>
AmJHPallCare	<i>American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Care</i>
AmJHyp	<i>American Journal of Hypertension</i>
AmJKDis	<i>American Journal of Kidney Diseases</i>

<i>AmJPsc</i>	<i>American Journal of Psychiatry</i>
<i>AmJPsyctT</i>	<i>American Journal of Psychotherapy</i>
<i>AmJTh</i>	<i>American Journal of Theology</i>
<i>AmPhilQ</i>	<i>American Philosophical Quarterly</i>
<i>AmPhilQMS</i>	<i>American Philosophical Quarterly Monograph Series</i>
<i>AmPsc</i>	<i>American Psychologist</i>
<i>AmSocMissMonS</i>	<i>American Society of Missiology Monograph Series</i>
<i>AmSocMissS</i>	<i>American Society of Missiology Series</i>
<i>Analysis</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
<i>ANCTRTBS</i>	<i>Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies</i>
<i>ANES</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. J. B. Pritchard, 1955 ed.
<i>AnIntCare</i>	<i>Anaesthesia and Intensive Care</i>
<i>AnnBehMed</i>	<i>Annals of Behavioral Medicine</i>
<i>AnnEpid</i>	<i>Annals of Epidemiology</i>
<i>AnnIntMed</i>	<i>Annals of Internal Medicine</i>
<i>ANQ</i>	<i>Andover Newton Quarterly</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i>
<i>ANTC</i>	<i>Abingdon New Testament Commentaries</i>
<i>AnthChr</i>	<i>Anthropology of Christianity</i>
<i>AnthConsc</i>	<i>Anthropology of Consciousness</i>
<i>AnthHum</i>	<i>Anthropology and Humanism</i>
<i>Anthropos</i>	<i>Anthropos</i>
<i>AnthrQ</i>	<i>Anthropological Quarterly</i>
<i>Anton</i>	<i>Antonianum</i>
<i>AnxSC</i>	<i>Anxiety, Stress and Coping</i>
<i>ANZJPsc</i>	<i>Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry</i>
<i>APRC</i>	<i>Asia Pacific Research Center</i>
<i>ARAnth</i>	<i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i>
<i>Archaeology</i>	<i>Archaeology</i>
<i>ArchIntMed</i>	<i>Archives of Internal Medicine</i>
<i>ArchOd</i>	<i>Archaeology Odyssey</i>
<i>ArchRep</i>	<i>Archaeological Reports</i>
<i>ARG</i>	<i>Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte</i>
<i>ArIrMed</i>	<i>Archives of Iranian Medicine</i>
<i>AsEthn</i>	<i>Asian Ethnology</i>
<i>Asian Affairs</i>	<i>Asian Affairs</i>
<i>Asian Report</i>	<i>Asian Report</i>
<i>AsFolkSt</i>	<i>Asian Folklore Studies</i>
<i>AsTJ</i>	<i>Asbury Theological Journal</i>
<i>AT</i>	<i>Annales theologici</i>
<i>AThR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
<i>ATSSWCRMIS</i>	<i>Asbury Theological Seminary Series in World Christian Revitalization Movements in Intercultural Studies</i>
<i>ATSSWCRMPCS</i>	<i>Asbury Theological Seminary Series in World Christian Revitalization Movements in Pentecostal/Charismatic Studies</i>
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAGB</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé</i>
<i>BangTF</i>	<i>Bangalore Theological Forum</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>BehResTher</i>	<i>Behaviour Research and Therapy</i>
<i>BehSN</i>	<i>Behavior Science Notes</i>
<i>BeO</i>	<i>Bibbia e Oriente</i>
<i>BES</i>	<i>Biblical Encounters Series</i>
<i>BETL</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium</i>

<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibOr</i>	<i>Biblia et Orientalia</i>
<i>BibSham</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Shamanistica</i>
<i>BibT</i>	<i>The Bible Today</i>
<i>BibTh</i>	<i>Biblical Theology</i>
<i>BibW</i>	<i>The Biblical World (Journal)</i>
<i>Bijdr</i>	<i>Bijdragen</i>
<i>BIS</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation Series</i>
<i>BJPhilSc</i>	<i>British Journal for the Philosophy of Science</i>
<i>BJPsy</i>	<i>British Journal of Psychology</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library</i>
<i>BJS</i>	<i>Brown Judaic Studies</i>
<i>BK</i>	<i>Bibel und Kirche</i>
<i>BL</i>	<i>Bibel und Liturgie</i>
<i>BMedJ</i>	<i>British Medical Journal</i>
<i>BMik</i>	<i>Beth Mikra</i>
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BollS</i>	<i>Bollingen Series</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BrCanRes</i>	<i>Breast Cancer Research</i>
<i>Breast Journal</i>	<i>Breast Journal</i>
<i>BRev</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BSClinPsyc</i>	<i>British School of Clinical Psychology</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BTCB</i>	<i>Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible</i>
<i>BTr</i>	<i>Bible Translator</i>
<i>BullHistMed</i>	<i>Bulletin of the History of Medicine</i>
<i>ByF</i>	<i>Biblia y Fe</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>BZNW</i>	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>CaÉ</i>	<i>Cahiers Évangile</i>
<i>CanJPhil</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of Philosophy</i>
<i>CanJPsy</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of Psychiatry</i>
<i>CanNur</i>	<i>Cancer Nursing</i>
<i>CBC</i>	<i>Cambridge Bible Commentary</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CBQMS</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series</i>
<i>CBull</i>	<i>Classical Bulletin</i>
<i>C&C</i>	<i>Cross and Crown</i>
<i>CCRMS</i>	<i>Cross-Cultural Research and Methodology Series</i>
<i>CCTh</i>	<i>Cross Cultural Theologies</i>
<i>CCWJCW</i>	<i>Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200</i>
<i>CDSR</i>	<i>Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews</i>
<i>CEC</i>	<i>The Context of Early Christianity</i>
<i>CGB</i>	<i>Church Growth Bulletin</i>
<i>CGI</i>	<i>China Gleanings (earlier issues simply Gleanings)</i>
<i>CGR</i>	<i>Conrad Grebel Review</i>
<i>Charisma</i>	<i>Charisma</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
<i>ChapT</i>	<i>Chaplaincy Today</i>
<i>ChGEv</i>	<i>Church of God Evangel</i>
<i>ChH</i>	<i>Christian History (continued as Christian History and Biography)</i>
<i>ChicSt</i>	<i>Chicago Studies</i>
<i>ChPsycHumDev</i>	<i>Child Psychiatry and Human Development</i>
<i>ChrCent</i>	<i>Christian Century</i>

<i>Churchman</i>	<i>Churchman</i>
<i>Circ</i>	<i>Circulation</i>
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
<i>CJP</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of Philosophy</i>
<i>CJT</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of Theology</i>
<i>ClinGer</i>	<i>Clinical Gerontologist</i>
<i>ClinPsyRev</i>	<i>Clinical Psychology Review</i>
<i>CMAJ</i>	<i>Canadian Medical Association Journal</i>
<i>CMPsy</i>	<i>Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry</i>
<i>CNS</i>	<i>Cristianesimo nella Storia</i>
<i>Coll</i>	<i>Collationes</i>
<i>CollAntr</i>	<i>Collegium Antropologicum</i>
<i>ColT</i>	<i>Collectanea theologica</i>
<i>ComMedRes</i>	<i>Complementary Medical Research</i>
<i>ComThClPrac</i>	<i>Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice</i>
<i>Conf</i>	<i>Confidence</i>
<i>CounsSp</i>	<i>Counseling and Spirituality</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CrCareCl</i>	<i>Critical Care Clinics</i>
<i>CritInq</i>	<i>Critical Inquiry</i>
<i>CrQ</i>	<i>Crozer Quarterly</i>
<i>CSHSMC</i>	<i>Comparative Studies of Health Systems and Medical Care</i>
<i>CSIR</i>	<i>Cambridge Studies in Ideology and Religion</i>
<i>CSPhilRel</i>	<i>Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion</i>
<i>CSR</i>	<i>Christian Scholar's Review</i>
<i>CT</i>	<i>Christianity Today</i>
<i>CulRel</i>	<i>Culture and Religion</i>
<i>CurAnth</i>	<i>Current Anthropology</i>
<i>CurTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
<i>CV</i>	<i>Communio Viatorum</i>
<i>DACB</i>	<i>Dictionary of African Christian Biography</i> (New Haven, Conn.: Overseas Ministries Study Center; a continuing online project)
<i>Daphnis</i>	<i>Daphnis</i>
<i>DBM</i>	<i>Deltion Biblikon Meleton</i>
<i>DeathS</i>	<i>Death Studies</i>
<i>DécHell</i>	<i>Décrets hellénistiques</i>
<i>DepAnx</i>	<i>Depression and Anxiety</i>
<i>DiabC</i>	<i>Diabetes Care</i>
<i>Dial</i>	<i>Dialogue</i>
<i>Diál</i>	<i>Diálogos</i>
<i>DialAll</i>	<i>Dialogue and Alliance</i>
<i>Divinitas</i>	<i>Divinitas</i>
<i>DNTB</i>	<i>Dictionary of New Testament Background</i> . Edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000.
<i>DoonTJ</i>	<i>Doon Theological Journal</i>
<i>DPL</i>	<i>Dictionary of Paul and His Letters</i> . Edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993.
<i>DRev</i>	<i>The Downside Review</i>
<i>DSD</i>	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
<i>DunRev</i>	<i>Dunwoodie Review</i>
<i>EAFSt</i>	<i>Eastern African Studies</i>
<i>ÉgT</i>	<i>Église et Théologie</i>
<i>EmmJ</i>	<i>Emmaus Journal</i>
<i>Enc</i>	<i>Encounter</i>
<i>Enr</i>	<i>Enrichment</i>
<i>ÉPROER</i>	<i>Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain</i>

<i>EpwRev</i>	<i>Epworth Review</i>
<i>Eranos</i>	<i>Eranos</i>
<i>EstBib</i>	<i>Estudios Bíblicos</i>
<i>ÉtBib</i>	<i>Études Bibliques</i>
<i>EthDis</i>	<i>Ethnicity and Disease</i>
<i>EthHealth</i>	<i>Ethnicity and Health</i>
<i>Ethnology</i>	<i>Ethnology</i>
<i>Ethos</i>	<i>Ethos</i>
<i>EurJAg</i>	<i>European Journal of Ageing</i>
<i>EurJCC</i>	<i>European Journal of Cancer Care</i>
<i>EurZTh</i>	<i>Europäische Zeitschrift für Theologie</i>
<i>Evangel</i>	<i>Evangel</i>
<i>EvMissSS</i>	<i>Evangelical Missiological Society Series</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExAud</i>	<i>Ex auditu</i>
<i>Exchange</i>	<i>Exchange</i>
<i>Exp</i>	<i>The Expositor</i>
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>FamComHealth</i>	<i>Family and Community Health</i>
<i>FamMed</i>	<i>Family Medicine</i>
<i>FidHist</i>	<i>Fides et Historia</i>
<i>FoiVie</i>	<i>Foi et Vie</i>
<i>Forum</i>	<i>Forum</i>
<i>FourR</i>	<i>The Fourth R</i>
<i>FPhil</i>	<i>Faith and Philosophy</i>
<i>FSCS</i>	<i>Faith and Scholarship Colloquies Series</i>
<i>GeistLeb</i>	<i>Geist und Leben</i>
<i>Gerontologist</i>	<i>The Gerontologist</i>
<i>GNC</i>	<i>Good News Commentary</i>
<i>GosPersp</i>	<i>Gospel Perspectives</i> . Edited by R. T. France and David Wenham. 6 vols. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980–86.
<i>GOTR</i>	<i>Greek Orthodox Theological Review</i>
<i>Grail</i>	<i>Grail</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>Greg</i>	<i>Gregorianum</i>
<i>GrJ</i>	<i>Grace Journal</i>
<i>GTT</i>	<i>Gereformeerd theologisch tijdschrift</i>
<i>GynOnc</i>	<i>Gynecologic Oncology</i>
<i>HamIsl</i>	<i>Hamdard Islamicus</i>
<i>HastCRep</i>	<i>Hastings Center Report</i>
<i>HCPsy</i>	<i>Hospital and Community Psychiatry</i>
<i>HealthEdBeh</i>	<i>Health Education and Behavior</i>
<i>HealthPsy</i>	<i>Health Psychology</i>
<i>HealthSR</i>	<i>Health Services Research</i>
<i>Helios</i>	<i>Helios</i>
<i>Hen</i>	<i>Henoch</i>
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
<i>HeyM</i>	<i>Heythrop Monographs</i>
<i>HistPhilQ</i>	<i>History of Philosophy Quarterly</i>
<i>HistTh</i>	<i>History and Theory</i>
<i>HJAsSt</i>	<i>Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies</i>
<i>HMFT</i>	<i>Health/Medicine and the Faith Traditions</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i>
<i>HS</i>	<i>Hebrew Studies</i>
<i>HSW</i>	<i>Health and Social Work</i>
<i>HTIOPS</i>	<i>Hispanic Theological Initiative Occasional Paper Series</i>

HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	<i>Harvard Theological Studies</i>
HTS/TS	<i>HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
HumOrg	<i>Human Organization</i>
HumSt	<i>Hume Studies</i>
HvTS	<i>Hervormde Teologiese Studies</i>
Hypertension	<i>Hypertension</i>
IBMR	<i>International Bulletin of Missionary Research</i>
ICC	<i>International Critical Commentaries</i>
ICMR	<i>Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations</i>
IDS	<i>In die Skriflig</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IgViv	<i>Iglesia Viva</i>
IJAC	<i>International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling</i>
IJAHD	<i>International Journal of Aging in Human Development</i>
IJAHS	<i>International Journal of African Historical Studies</i>
IJGerPsc	<i>International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry</i>
IJGynC	<i>International Journal of Gynecological Cancer</i>
IJNeurSc	<i>International Journal of Neuroscience</i>
IJPhilRel	<i>International Journal for Philosophy of Religion</i>
IJSocPsc	<i>International Journal of Social Psychiatry</i>
IJT	<i>Indian Journal of Theology</i>
IntArHistI	<i>International Archives of the History of Ideas</i>
Interp	<i>Interpretation</i>
IntJAd	<i>International Journal of the Addictions</i>
IntJAgHDev	<i>International Journal of Aging and Human Development</i>
IntJEpid	<i>International Journal of Epidemiology</i>
IntJGerPsc	<i>International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry</i>
IntJPsyMed	<i>International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine</i>
IntJPsRel	<i>International Journal for the Psychology of Religion</i>
IntRevMiss	<i>International Review of Mission</i>
ITQ	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
JAACAP	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JABFM	<i>Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine</i>
JAbSocPsy	<i>Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology</i>
JAdDev	<i>Journal of Adult Development</i>
JAdHealth	<i>Journal of Adolescent Health</i>
JAfDis	<i>Journal of Affective Disorders</i>
JAgHealth	<i>Journal of Aging and Health</i>
JAlComMed	<i>Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine</i>
JAM	<i>Journal of Asian Mission</i>
JAMA	<i>Journal of the American Medical Association</i>
JAmGerAss	<i>Journal of the American Geriatrics Association</i>
JAmGerSoc	<i>Journal of the American Geriatric Society</i>
JANER	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i>
JANESCU	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
JAnthRes	<i>Journal of Anthropological Research</i>
JAppGer	<i>Journal of Applied Gerontology</i>
JASA	<i>Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation</i>
JATS	<i>Journal of the Adventist Theological Society</i>
JBehMed	<i>Journal of Behavioral Medicine</i>
JBiolRegHomA	<i>Journal of Biological Regulators and Homeostatic Agents</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBSS	<i>Journal of Biosocial Science</i>
JCCAP	<i>Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology</i>

JChrDis	<i>Journal of Chronic Diseases</i>
JCJQS	<i>Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Safety</i>
JClinEpid	<i>Journal of Clinical Epidemiology</i>
JClinOn	<i>Journal of Clinical Oncology</i>
JClinPsy	<i>Journal of Clinical Psychiatry</i>
JClPsychol	<i>Journal of Clinical Psychology</i>
JCommRel	<i>Journal of Communication and Religion</i>
JConClPsy	<i>Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology</i>
JContRel	<i>Journal of Contemporary Religion</i>
JCounsCLPs	<i>Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology</i>
J ECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JerPersp	<i>Jerusalem Perspective</i>
JEthS	<i>Journal of Ethiopian Studies</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JEurSt	<i>Journal of European Studies</i>
JewishHist	<i>Jewish History</i>
JFamPr	<i>Journal of Family Practice</i>
JFamPsych	<i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>
JFolkI	<i>Journal of the Folklore Institute</i>
JFSR	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
JGBSMS	<i>Journals of Gerontology Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences</i>
JGenIntMed	<i>Journal of General Internal Medicine</i>
JGenPsy	<i>Journal of General Psychology</i>
JGer	<i>Journal of Gerontology</i>
JGPSSS	<i>Journal of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences</i>
JGRCJ	<i>Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism</i>
JHistSex	<i>Journal of the History of Sexuality</i>
JHPsych	<i>Journal of Health Psychology</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JHSocBeh	<i>Journal of Health and Social Behavior</i>
Jian Dao	<i>Jian Dao</i>
JITC	<i>Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JMedPhil	<i>Journal of Medicine and Philosophy</i>
JMenSc	<i>Journal of Mental Science</i>
JNatCInst	<i>Journal of the National Cancer Institute</i>
JNeurSc	<i>Journal of the Neurological Sciences</i>
JNMedAss	<i>Journal of the National Medical Association</i>
JNMDis	<i>Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease</i>
JObGynNNurs	<i>Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing</i>
JOpPsyc	<i>Journal of Operational Psychiatry</i>
JPallMed	<i>Journal of Palliative Medicine</i>
JPastCare	<i>Journal of Pastoral Care</i>
JPers	<i>Journal of Personality</i>
JPerSocPsy	<i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>
JPFC	<i>The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions.</i> Edited by S. Safrai and M. Stern with D. Flusser and W. C. van Unnik. 2 vols. Section 1 of <i>Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum</i> . Vol. 1: Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp., B.V., 1974; Vol. 2: Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.
JPHWMSM	<i>J. Philip Hogan World Missions Series Monograph</i>
JPsychHist	<i>Journal of Psychohistory</i>
JPsyChr	<i>Journal of Psychology and Christianity</i>
JPsyRes	<i>Journal of Psychosomatic Research</i>
JPsyTh	<i>Journal of Psychology and Theology</i>
JPT	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i>

JPTSup	Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JRelAf	<i>Journal of Religion in Africa</i>
JRelGer	<i>Journal of Religious Gerontology</i>
JRelHealth	<i>Journal of Religion and Health</i>
JRepMed	<i>The Journal of Reproductive Medicine</i>
JResPer	<i>Journal of Research in Personality</i>
JRH	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
JRitSt	<i>Journal of Ritual Studies</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JRSHealth	<i>Journal of the Royal Society of Health</i>
JSHJ	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSocI	<i>Journal of Social Issues</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSQ	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
JSRNC	<i>Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JSSR	<i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i>
JStatPLInf	<i>Journal of Statistical Planning and Inference</i>
JStIJ	<i>Jewish Studies: An Internet Journal</i>
JStRel	<i>Journal for the Study of Religion</i>
JTIICC	<i>Journal of Trauma-Injury Infection and Critical Care</i>
Judaism	<i>Judaism</i>
Justice Quarterly	<i>Justice Quarterly</i>
JValInq	<i>Journal of Value Inquiry</i>
JWCDN	<i>Journal of the World Christian Doctors Network</i>
Kairos	<i>Kairos</i>
KD	<i>Kerygma und Dogma</i>
KEKNT	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, begründet von H. A. W. Meyer
Lancet	<i>Lancet</i>
Laós	<i>Laós</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LD	Lectio Divina
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
Lig	<i>Liguorian</i>
Lit	<i>Liturgy</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
Logia	<i>Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology</i>
Logos	<i>Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture</i>
LouwS	<i>Louvain Studies</i>
LQ	<i>Lutheran Quarterly</i>
LRB	Library of Religious Biography
LRE	<i>The Latter Rain Evangel</i>
LumVie	<i>Lumière et Vie</i>
Man	<i>Man</i>
Maria	<i>Maria: A Journal of Marian Studies</i>
MBPS	Mellen Biblical Press Series
MedAnthQ	<i>Medical Anthropology Quarterly</i>
Medical Care	<i>Medical Care</i>
MedJAus	<i>The Medical Journal of Australia</i>
MedT	<i>Medical Times</i>
MHRC	<i>Mental Health, Religion and Culture</i>

<i>MissFoc</i>	<i>Mission Focus</i>
<i>Missiology</i>	<i>Missiology: An International Review</i> (continuing <i>Practical Anthropology</i>)
<i>Missionalia</i>	<i>Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Missiology</i>
<i>MissSt</i>	<i>Mission Studies</i>
<i>MJT</i>	<i>Melanesian Journal of Theology</i>
<i>ModAnth</i>	<i>Module in Anthropology</i>
<i>ModCh</i>	<i>Modern Churchman</i>
<i>Month</i>	<i>The Month</i>
<i>MOrthS</i>	<i>Modern Orthodox Saints</i>
<i>MounM</i>	<i>Mountain Movers</i>
<i>MS</i>	<i>Mediaeval Studies</i>
<i>MScRel</i>	<i>Mélanges de Science Religieuse</i>
<i>MSJMed</i>	<i>Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine</i>
<i>MSMS</i>	<i>Modern Spiritual Masters Series</i>
<i>Muséon</i>	<i>Muséon</i>
<i>MusW</i>	<i>Muslim World</i>
<i>NatInt</i>	<i>The National Interest</i>
<i>Nature</i>	<i>Nature</i>
<i>NBf</i>	<i>New Blackfriars</i>
<i>NCamBC</i>	<i>New Cambridge Bible Commentary</i>
<i>NCBC</i>	<i>New Century Bible Commentary</i>
<i>NCCS</i>	<i>New Covenant Commentary Series</i>
<i>NCS</i>	<i>Noyes Classical Studies</i>
<i>NDST</i>	<i>Notre Dame Studies in Theology</i>
<i>NedTT</i>	<i>Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift</i>
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
<i>Neurology</i>	<i>Neurology</i>
<i>NewEngJMed</i>	<i>New England Journal of Medicine</i>
<i>NFTL</i>	<i>New Foundations Theological Library</i>
<i>NICNT</i>	<i>New International Commentary on the New Testament</i>
<i>NicTobRes</i>	<i>Nicotine and Tobacco Research</i>
<i>NIVAC</i>	<i>NIV Application Commentary</i>
<i>NKZ</i>	<i>Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift</i>
<i>Nous</i>	<i>Nous</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NovTSup</i>	<i>Supplements to Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NRColPap</i>	<i>Nicholas Rescher Collected Papers</i>
<i>NRTh</i>	<i>Nouvelle Revue Théologique</i>
<i>NSPR</i>	<i>New Studies in the Philosophy of Religion</i>
<i>NTG</i>	<i>New Testament Guides</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NTTS</i>	<i>New Testament Tools and Studies</i>
<i>Numen</i>	<i>Numen: International Review for the History of Religions</i>
<i>NYRB</i>	<i>New York Review of Books</i>
<i> OCD</i>	<i>The Oxford Classical Dictionary: The Ultimate Reference Work on the Classical World</i> . 3rd rev. ed. Edited by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
<i> OCPHS</i>	<i>Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies</i>
<i>OEANE</i>	<i>The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East</i> . Edited by E. M. Meyers. New York, 1997.
<i>OHCC</i>	<i>Oxford History of the Christian Church</i>
<i>OIRSSA</i>	<i>Oxford in India Readings in Sociology and Social Anthropology</i>
<i>OrOnc</i>	<i>Oral Oncology</i>
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
<i>OTP</i>	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983–85.
<i>OxBS</i>	<i>Oxford Bible Series</i>

<i>Pain</i>	<i>Pain</i>
<i>PallMed</i>	<i>Palliative Medicine</i>
<i>PallSCare</i>	<i>Palliative and Supportive Care</i>
<i>Parab</i>	<i>Parabola</i>
<i>Parac</i>	<i>Paraclete</i>
<i>PastPsy</i>	<i>Pastoral Psychology</i>
<i>PAST</i>	<i>Pauline Studies (Brill)</i>
<i>PatBibMon</i>	<i>Paternoster Biblical Monographs</i>
<i>PCPhil</i>	<i>Problems in Contemporary Philosophy</i>
<i>PedNurs</i>	<i>Pediatric Nursing</i>
<i>PentEv</i>	<i>Pentecostal Evangel</i>
<i>PentV</i>	<i>The Pentecostal Voice (Manila)</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>PerIndDif</i>	<i>Personality and Individual Differences</i>
<i>PerMotSk</i>	<i>Perceptual and Motor Skills</i>
<i>Persp</i>	<i>Perspective</i>
<i>PHC</i>	<i>Penguin History of the Church</i>
<i>PhilChr</i>	<i>Philosophia Christi</i>
<i>PhilEW</i>	<i>Philosophy East and West</i>
<i>PhilFor</i>	<i>Philosophical Forum</i>
<i>Philo</i>	<i>Philo</i>
<i>Philosophy</i>	<i>Philosophy: The Journal of the British Institute of Philosophical Studies</i>
<i>PhilPhenRes</i>	<i>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</i>
<i>PhilQ</i>	<i>Philosophical Quarterly</i>
<i>PhilRhet</i>	<i>Philosophy and Rhetoric</i>
<i>PhilSS</i>	<i>Philosophical Studies Series</i>
<i>PhilSt</i>	<i>Philosophical Studies</i>
<i>PhilTheol</i>	<i>Philosophy and Theology</i>
<i>PHNurs</i>	<i>Public Health Nursing</i>
<i>Phoenix</i>	<i>Phoenix</i>
<i>Phronesis</i>	<i>Phronesis</i>
<i>PhysOcTherGer</i>	<i>Physical and Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics</i>
<i>PIBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association</i>
<i>PNAS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i>
<i>Pneuma</i>	<i>Pneuma: Journal for the Society of Pentecostal Studies</i>
<i>Pom</i>	<i>Pomegranate</i>
<i>PPAS</i>	<i>Publications of the Philadelphia Anthropological Society</i>
<i>PracAnth</i>	<i>Practical Anthropology</i>
<i>PrevMed</i>	<i>Preventive Medicine</i>
<i>PrMPhil</i>	<i>Princeton Monographs in Philosophy</i>
<i>PrPam</i>	<i>Princeton Pamphlets</i>
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>PrTMS</i>	<i>Princeton Theological Monograph Series</i>
<i>PScChrF</i>	<i>Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith</i>
<i>PSocPsyBull</i>	<i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i>
<i>PsyAdBeh</i>	<i>Psychology of Addictive Behaviors</i>
<i>PsyAg</i>	<i>Psychology and Aging</i>
<i>PsychBull</i>	<i>Psychological Bulletin</i>
<i>PsychMed</i>	<i>Psychosomatic Medicine</i>
<i>Psycho-Oncology</i>	<i>Psycho-Oncology</i>
<i>Psychophysiology</i>	<i>Psychophysiology</i>
<i>Psychosomatics</i>	<i>Psychosomatics</i>
<i>PsychServ</i>	<i>Psychiatric Services</i>
<i>PsychRep</i>	<i>Psychological Reports</i>
<i>PsychRes</i>	<i>Psychiatry Research</i>
<i>PsycTRPT</i>	<i>Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training</i>
<i>PTMS</i>	<i>Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series</i>

PTR	<i>Princeton Theological Review</i>
PWS	Pietist and Wesleyan Studies
Qad	<i>Qadmoniot</i>
QR	<i>Quarterly Review</i>
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RBL	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
RCB	<i>Revista de Cultura Biblica</i>
RefRenRev	<i>Reformation and Renaissance Review</i>
REJ	<i>Revue des Études Juives</i>
RelHHeal	<i>Religion, Health, and Healing</i>
Religion	<i>Religion</i>
RelL	<i>Religion and Life</i>
RelS	<i>Religious Studies</i>
RelT	<i>Religious Traditions</i>
RenJ	<i>Renewal Journal</i>
ResAg	<i>Research on Aging</i>
RevExp	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
RevMet	<i>Review of Metaphysics</i>
Re-Vision	<i>Re-Vision</i>
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RGRW	<i>Religions in the Graeco-Roman World</i>
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire des Religions</i>
RHPR	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
RivSAnt	<i>Rivista storica dell'Antichità</i>
RocT	<i>Roczniki Teologiczne</i>
RRelRes	<i>Review of Religious Research</i>
RSPT	<i>Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques</i>
RSR	<i>Recherches de Science Religieuse</i>
RSSSR	<i>Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion</i>
RStMiss	<i>Regnum Studies in Mission</i>
R&T	<i>Religion and Theology</i>
RThom	<i>Revue Thomiste</i>
RTL	<i>Revue Théologique de Louvain</i>
RTPC	<i>Revue de théologie et de philosophie chrétienne</i>
SAJPsc	<i>South African Journal of Psychology</i>
SAOC	<i>Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization</i>
SBEC	<i>Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity</i>
SBET	<i>Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology</i>
SBFLA	<i>Studii Bibliici Franciscani Liber Annuus</i>
SBLDS	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</i>
SBLMS	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series</i>
SBL SBL	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature</i>
SBLSemS	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies</i>
SBLSP	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBLSymS	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series</i>
SBLWGRW	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-Roman World</i>
SBT	<i>Studies in Biblical Theology</i>
ScAm	<i>Scientific American</i>
ScChrB	<i>Science and Christian Belief</i>
ScDig	<i>Science Digest</i>
ScEs	<i>Science et Esprit</i>
SCEthn	<i>Series in Contemporary Ethnography</i>
SCHNT	<i>Studia ad Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti</i>
SCR	<i>Studies in Comparative Religion</i>
Scriptura	<i>Scriptura</i>
SEÅ	<i>Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok</i>

SEAJT	<i>South East Asia Journal of Theology</i>
SecCent	<i>Second Century</i>
SEHT	<i>Studies in Evangelical History and Thought</i>
Semeia	<i>Semeia</i>
XVII ^e siècle	<i>XVII^e siècle</i>
Shamanism	<i>Shamanism</i>
SHCM	<i>Studies in the History of Christian Mission</i>
SHR	<i>Studies in the History of Religions</i>
SIFC	<i>Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica</i>
SICHC	<i>Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity</i>
SixtCenJ	<i>Sixteenth Century Journal</i>
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SJPhil	<i>Southern Journal of Philosophy</i>
SJRS	<i>Scottish Journal of Religious Studies</i>
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SMedJ	<i>Southern Medical Journal</i>
SNTSMS	<i>Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series</i>
SocAn	<i>Sociological Analysis</i>
SocCom	<i>Social Compass</i>
SocG	<i>Sociologische Gids</i>
SocQ	<i>Sociological Quarterly</i>
SocRel	<i>Sociology of Religion</i>
Soph	<i>Sophia</i>
SOTBT	<i>Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology</i>
SP	<i>Sacra Pagina</i>
SpCh	<i>The Spirit and Church</i>
SPhila	<i>Studia Philonica Annual (Studia Philonica)</i>
SPhilMon	<i>Studia Philonica Monographs</i>
SR/SR	<i>Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses</i>
StChHist	<i>Studies in Church History</i>
StEv	<i>Studies in Evangelicalism</i>
StPB	<i>Studia Post-Biblica</i>
StrOnk	<i>Strahlentherapie und Onkologie</i>
SSAMD	<i>Sage Series on African Modernization and Development</i>
SSMed	<i>Social Science and Medicine</i>
ST	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
StChrMiss	<i>Studies in Christian Mission</i>
StHistEc	<i>Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae</i>
StPatr	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
Stroke	<i>Stroke</i>
StThIn	<i>Studies in Theological Interpretation</i>
StWChr	<i>Studies in World Christianity</i>
SUNT	<i>Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments</i>
SvMT	<i>Svensk Missionstidskrift</i>
SwJT	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
TANZ	<i>Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76.
TEFSG	<i>Theological Education Fund Study Guide</i>
TexJC	<i>Texas Journal of Corrections</i>
TheoEd	<i>Theological Education</i>
Theology	<i>Theology</i>
ThLife	<i>Theology and Life</i>
Thrakika	<i>Thrakika</i>
ThTo	<i>Theology Today</i>
Time	<i>Time</i>
TJ	<i>Trinity Journal</i>

TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TorStTh	Toronto Studies in Theology
TranscPsysc	Transcultural Psychiatry
TranscPsyscR	Transcultural Psychiatric Research
TranscPsyscRR	Transcultural Psychiatric Research Review
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TwinResHumGen	Twin Research and Human Genetics
TynBul	Tyndale Bulletin
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UF	Ugarit Forschungen
UJT	Understanding Jesus Today
UNDCSJCA	University of Notre Dame Center for the Study of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity
UrbMiss	Urban Mission
VA Practitioner	VA Practitioner
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VEE	<i>Verbum et Ecclesia</i>
Vid	<i>Vidyajyoti</i>
VidJTR	<i>Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection</i>
ViolWom	Violence Against Women
VitIndRel	Vitality of Indigenous Religions
VOH	<i>Voice of Healing</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WCDN	World Christian Doctors Network
WJBLSt	<i>Western Journal of Black Studies</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WMQ	<i>William and Mary Quarterly</i>
WPC	Westminster Pelican Commentaries
WPJ	<i>World Policy Journal</i>
WSCM	World Studies of Churches in Mission (World Council of Churches)
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WW	<i>Word and World</i>
WWit	<i>Word and Witness</i>
YSMT	York Studies in Medieval Theology
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
Zion	Zion
ZMR	<i>Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft</i>
ZNT	<i>Zeitschrift für Neues Testament</i>
ZNThG	<i>Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZR	<i>Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft</i>
ZRGG	<i>Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte</i>
ZSNT	Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament
ZST	<i>Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie</i>
Zygon	<i>Zygon</i>

Introduction

Despite abundant popular interest in the subject of contemporary miracle claims, I am writing this book to fill a lacuna on an academic level especially for biblical studies. Many academic works have focused on important philosophic, exegetical, and recently historical issues, but at least in my discipline only a few have begun to take into account the relevance of the massive number of miracle claims proliferating around the world. The situation today is far different from when eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume claimed that miracles were contrary to human experience or even when modern reports resembling most miracle stories in the Gospels were unknown to most mid-twentieth-century Gospels scholars.

The book's primary thesis is simply that eyewitnesses do offer miracle claims, a thesis simple enough but one sometimes neglected when some scholars approach accounts in the Gospels. The secondary thesis is that supernatural explanations, while not suitable in every case, should be welcome on the scholarly table along with other explanations often discussed. While addressing some historical and philosophic issues first (chs. 1–6), the heart of the book consists of stories from various parts of the world (chs. 7–12). With a research grant and a year or two to travel, I could have easily collected hundreds of further stories (perhaps to some busy readers' dismay). Some circles whose reports I was exploring invited me to witness their experiences firsthand; while this deeper investigation would have been ideal, my academic schedule and other factors have so far precluded my plan to do so. Though lacking these advantages, I trust that I have nevertheless included enough accounts to expound the book's primary point.

Statistics (cited alongside other evidence in ch. 7) reveal the pervasiveness of miracle claims, but with slightly more concrete accounts I seek to illustrate them to a lavish extent so that readers will have samples of many of the kinds of claims the wider statistics involve. I have included most of the accounts in chapters 7–11 without asking questions of causation, since all of them illustrate the primary point that eyewitnesses can claim miracles. I do so even though I find some of

the accounts more plausible and evidentially compelling for our secondary point than others, and by the end of writing the book I was more convinced of some explanations than when I began it. I thus take the accounts mostly at face value while recounting them, as is common in anthropological and other approaches, and turn to questions of possible interpretations especially in chapters 13–15.

The texture of the healing accounts is therefore at a more popular level than in the chapters involving interpretation, but this pattern fits discussions of popular religion, for which the primary sources are necessarily popular ones. Less academic readers will undoubtedly find the healing accounts later in the book more readable than the earlier chapters addressing comparative and philosophic issues, but given the book's academic purpose, I needed to address those introductory issues first. Others have addressed the philosophic questions far more thoroughly and competently than I have, but I must treat them at least briefly in this book to challenge the modern Western prejudices that many of us bring to non-Western or nonmodern accounts.

I acknowledge up front that my personal interest in writing this book includes challenging the prejudice of Western antisupernaturalist readings of the Gospels and Acts. I believe that antisupernaturalism has reigned as an inflexible Western academic premise long enough and that significant evidence now exists to challenge it. When many Western intellectuals still claim that miracles or any events most readily explained by supernatural causation cannot happen, simply as an unexamined premise, whereas hundreds of millions of people around the world claim to have witnessed just such events, some in indisputably dramatic ways, I believe that genuinely open-minded academicians should reexamine our presuppositions with an open mind. Although claims do not by themselves constitute proof, the world is different from when the views informing our presuppositions against all miracle claims formed. While eyewitness claims do not constitute indisputable proof, they do constitute evidence that may be considered rather than *a priori* dismissed.¹ I am much more convinced of this perspective now than when I began this book.

Despite conceding the above personal interest, my academic approach in this book is more nuanced, because the question on the academic level is more complex than I have just represented it. I am thus addressing the question of the plausibility of ancient miracle accounts on two levels. As noted above, my primary argument, based on substantial evidence, is that historians should not dismiss the possibility of eyewitness information in the miracle accounts in the Gospels or Acts, since large numbers of eyewitnesses can and do offer miracle claims, many of them quite comparable in character to the early Christian accounts. By the end of the book, I do not expect that any readers will dissent from my argument that vast numbers of eyewitnesses offer significant “paranormal” healing claims. Many scholars writing about early Christian miracles already accept this approach, but I hope that

1. For personal experience as a form of evidence in sociology, see Wuthnow, “Teaching,” 187; legal evidence and historiography also rely heavily on testimony. We address these questions more fully in chs. 5–7 and especially 14–15.

by bringing to the fore a greater abundance of evidence I will help to solidify this consensus more generally among NT scholars.

Before turning to my secondary argument, I should digress momentarily to note that when I use the term “paranormal,” I do not imply any connections with specifically psychic experiences, ghost apparitions, or the like, as many writers popularly do.² Instead I employ the term purely in its etymological sense as what differs from the norm of human experience, hence, not “ordinary.”³ I employ the term at points to avoid prejudicing the question as to whether supernatural or superhuman explanations are in order. I do not employ the term pervasively because for many people it has taken on the narrower connotations rather than the neutral usage I seek to imply. “Extraordinary” would be suitable except we are accustomed to employing that designation in a sometimes ordinary way. A more suitable replacement, which I have sometimes employed, might be “extranormal”: while a neologism is often unhelpful, it at least allows us to shape its usage.

My secondary and more controversial argument, engaging more debated philosophical approaches, is that we should not rule out the possibility of supernatural causation for some of these healing claims. Experts in some disciplines prescind from discussing these issues, which is their right, but this does not prevent other disciplines or scholars from exploring them. Supernatural causation is not the only possible explanation behind all the accounts, and it is a more compelling hypothesis in some cases than in others. Natural and supernatural factors (to use today’s common language) can coexist, but the greater the extent to which a questioner of supernatural causation leaves the burden of proof on the supernatural claim, the smaller the pool of data that remains to support supernatural causation. I nevertheless believe that many readers will be surprised at the nature of some of the more dramatic accounts today. Indeed, despite my original attempts to be “neutral” (and the possibility of remaining so had I restricted the book to merely including claims rather than seeking to explain a few of them), I eventually began arguing a thesis (namely this second one). As the depth of my conviction about genuinely supernatural events grew cumulatively in view of some of the evidence I was finding, the burden of proof shifted so far in my mind that it became disingenuous for me to try to appear to maintain personal neutrality on these points. It will not take a redaction critic to recognize that some parts of the book (e.g., much of ch. 12) reflect a more optimistic approach than others.

Some readers who agree with my first point about eyewitness miracle claims, with which I think disagreement will be difficult, may well demur from the second point that some of these claims are best explained by supernatural causation. I recognize at the outset that some traditional scholars (and perhaps some reviewers) will dismiss the latter claim even without reading or considering the evidence I offer.

2. Greeley, *Sociology*, 8, refers to “psychic, mystic, and contact with the dead experiences,” explicitly excluding connection with supernatural or miracle claims. A glossary links use of the term with terms like “telepathic” or “psychic.” These terms designate particular kinds of paranormal claims, not all kinds.

3. I.e., a dictionary defines it as inexplicable from the perspective of (current) scientific knowledge.

I believe that such a dismissal might actually illustrate the point that an inherited approach, originally appealing to the alleged lack of evidence that could support a contrary approach, is often used to dismiss uncritically and without examination any evidence subsequently offered. Nevertheless, I hope that today's climate is open enough for many scholars to approach the question with a more open mind. I am genuinely interested in both the primary and secondary points, but particular parts of the book will argue one point or the other. To avoid being too repetitious I will not always reiterate which argument I am addressing. Nevertheless, I will note it fairly often (e.g., reminding the reader at various points that I am not yet addressing the question of supernatural causation) to avoid confusing the questions and for the sake of those readers whose interest is drawn to particular parts of the book. Many examples simply illustrate the diversity of global healing claims; those most relevant to my secondary argument appear in chapters 12, 14, and particularly 15.

The Origin of This Book

Whether or not a reader concludes that the current form of this book is intelligently designed, from my historical standpoint it evolved accidentally, starting eight or ten years ago as a footnote in my commentary on Acts. Because some scholars have treated miracle claims in the Gospels and Acts as purely legendary on the premise that such events do not happen, I intended to challenge their instinctive dismissal of the possibility of such claims by referring to a few works that catalogued modern eyewitness claims of miracles. One may agree or disagree with the supernatural element in such claims, but it is extraordinarily naive to pretend that eyewitnesses, including sincere eyewitnesses, do not offer such claims. I intended to cite two or three major collections of such information, which I assumed would be readily accessible and easily located, since I was aware of hundreds of eyewitness miracle claims and cognizant of circles that could supply thousands more.

To my surprise, however, I failed to find many works academically cataloging such claims, and even fewer that offered medical documentation along with the many testimonies.⁴ Because I lack medical training, I defer the latter interest to those more qualified to provide it. Those who reject all modern evidence apart from such documentation will need to look mostly to other works produced by those more qualified to offer and evaluate it, and that is an important area where further discussion must turn.⁵ Despite the limited sources I found initially, however, I did decide to track down some more eyewitness healing claims that had

4. To my surprise, anthropologists had documented claims of paranormal cures and spirit possession in settings of traditional religion far more fully than theologians or missiologists had explored such claims among Christians. Nevertheless, the rapidly expanding academic focus on Pentecostalism and indigenous non-Western forms of Christianity seems to be effecting a shift, and some anthropologists now include Christian practice (e.g., Turner, *Healers*, 69–74, 105–7, 123, 128).

5. Catholic miracle dossiers have already demanded medical documentation in increasingly rigorous ways in recent centuries (see, e.g., Duffin, *Miracles*), but for reasons addressed later in the book, the usual

been published. Despite my initial embarrassment that many of those claims I first found appeared in popular sources, I eventually recognized that such sources are most comparable to what my historical quest involved: the Gospels and Acts offer popular claims, not medical documentation. Indeed, in the modern sense, medical documentation was impossible; even shrines of Asclepius did not provide the sorts of verification preferred today. Most important, popular sources are the sorts of primary sources that historiography works with when studying popular religion, including studies of people's beliefs about experiences they have construed as supernatural. While I could not reach most of these popular authors to check their own sources, in time far more information than I had initially anticipated came my way. Eventually I uncovered a wealth of eyewitness material and even some sources that offered some medical documentation.

My quest proved so interesting that it grew into one of the longest chapters in my commentary, with sufficient material for a book. (It was not by any means the focus of my commentary, representing perhaps only 3 percent of the manuscript, or 19 percent of the introduction, despite the significant proportion of Acts reporting miracles.) Recognizing that a much wider audience would be interested in this topic than would buy the entire commentary for the sake of that chapter, I began organizing and developing this material into a separate book, improving it and augmenting it with considerable additional material, while deleting a large proportion of the original chapter in the commentary and hundreds of sources from its original bibliography.

The present book would have been useful as part of my recent *Historical Jesus of the Gospels*. But because the present material also proved too large for that book and ranged methodologically significantly beyond it, I have instead designed it as something of a companion sequel to that book.⁶ Although miracle stories compose nearly one-third of Mark's Gospel, I could not lay the foundations to address them in *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* without distracting attention from the less disputed questions that book addressed. Nevertheless, the issues are related. One of the foundational historic reasons for skepticism about the Gospels' basic content was the radical Enlightenment's rejection of miracle claims, which seemed thoroughly embedded in the Gospel narratives.⁷ This book, then, addresses a fundamental historical issue relevant for understanding the Gospels and Acts.

In contrast to my book about the historical Jesus, however, the question of miracles invites further exploration than the questions addressed by traditional historical-critical criteria may provide. By the standard historical criteria used for

means of medical inquiry prove difficult in addressing the current explosion of healing reports in the Majority World.

6. Keener, *Historical Jesus*. My "sequel" is with a different publisher because so much of this book relates to material in the commentary on Acts then being published by Hendrickson. Baker Academic subsequently acquired a number of titles from Hendrickson, including this book and the Acts commentary.

7. See Kelly, "Miracle," 46; for early examples, note the approaches of Karl Friedrich Bahrdr (summarized in Schweitzer, *Quest*, 39–44; Brown, *Miracles*, 112–13), Karl Heinrich Venturini (summarized in Schweitzer, *Quest*, 44–45), and others in the "rational" phase (in Schweitzer, *Quest*, 27–67).

evaluating Jesus's sayings, we can affirm multiply attested miracles and (more easily) categories of miracles in Jesus's ministry. Most historical Jesus scholars thus concur that people approached Jesus as a healer. Scholars in many other disciplines, however, may ask questions of causation, whereas the culturally shaped parameters of much conventional historical Jesus scholarship bracket from consideration some potential answers (indeed, especially those answers offered by the early Christian writers themselves). Even many historical Jesus scholars who allow that people approached Jesus as a healer doubt many of the particular stories as outside the realm of what happens. Scholars often raise the question of historical analogy: Are the content of the miracle reports, in contrast to merely radical sayings or actions, the kinds of events known to occur?⁸ Aside from any theological question of whether Jesus and his first followers may have differed from others, the answer to this analogy question, surprisingly to many of us, is yes. That is, the kinds of miracle claims most frequently attested in the Gospels and Acts are also attested by many eyewitnesses today. Whether any miracle claim represents genuine divine or supernatural activity is a separate question that must be addressed separately, but events such as the immediate recovery of many people after a significant spiritual experience are too well attested to question.

At the same time, this book presupposes the more historiographic treatment of the narrative materials in the Gospels and Acts covered in my book about the historical Jesus. I thus take for granted here the value of these narratives for significant historical reconstruction and do not argue that point, because I have argued it elsewhere. Here I focus more broadly on questions regarding the philosophy of history and social analogies to the sorts of phenomena depicted in the Gospels and Acts. Some scholars who felt comfortable with my *Historical Jesus of the Gospels*, which largely works within already-accepted academic paradigms, will find this work more challenging. I am nevertheless hopeful that this work can provoke open dialogue on some issues that mainstream biblical scholarship has often avoided.

The Subjects of This Book

As noted above, I address two distinct issues in this book, though I treat only the first of these at significant length. I believe that this book will establish the first issue, a historical one, to most readers' satisfaction, regardless of their philosophic

8. For example, in my paper for the Historical Jesus session at SBL on Nov. 21, 2010 ("Comparative Studies"), I argued (in keeping with my *Historical Jesus* and "Otho") that in light of the character of ancient biographies of recent characters and the nature of disciples preserving tradition, we should expect substantial historical information to be preserved in them. One respondent to my paper gave the expected objection: the Gospels abound in supernatural claims. Once we distinguished reports from interpretation, however, both of us concurred that Jesus was known as a healer, that unusual events occur, and that Majority World reports today should be taken into account. I believe that such an agreement can undercut the objection to eyewitness material in the Gospels, without resolving questions of causation (on which we likely would have disagreed).

assumptions. This first argument is that the miracle reports in the Gospels and Acts are generally plausible historically and need not be incompatible with eyewitness tradition. Similar claims, often from convinced eyewitnesses, circulate widely today, and there are no *a priori* reasons to doubt that ancient eyewitnesses made analogous claims.

I do not expect this first argument to be particularly controversial, in view of the overwhelming evidence supporting it. Indeed, probably the majority of NT scholars today who focus on the issue of miracle claims do allow that eyewitnesses can attribute dramatic recoveries to supernatural causes. Nevertheless, many other scholars appear to remain unfamiliar with this subject, some still perpetuating the skepticism of an earlier generation on this point. Likewise, few have explored the question in detail, just as I had not, before attempting my “footnote”; I believe that this book will provide more copious documentation for this thesis than Western scholars have usually had conveniently available. Those who demur from my conclusions on my second point should at least find the book useful for its first point, although in the past some scholars have cultivated the habit of ignoring the scholarship of scholars who arrived at conclusions different from their own on any significant point.

The second issue challenges a commonly held worldview, so some of my academic readers may demur here, though I hope they will respect the legitimacy of my argument.⁹ This second point is that we are not obligated to begin with the *a priori* assumption that none of these events could involve intelligent, suprahuman causation. I must digress to point out that I often use the term “supernatural” because that is the modern question usually at issue, but for ancient audiences the question was more typically whether the cause was suprahuman. For Israelites, for example, only God was supranatural; hence, for them the primary issue was divine causation.¹⁰ Yet most ancient audiences, including Jews, Christians, and, later, Muslims, recognized other suprahuman beings in addition to God. Likewise, many cultures today do not accept the Western dichotomy between natural and supernatural.¹¹ In employing the designation “supernatural,” then, I am deferring to this extent to the terms of the modern debate.

9. I hope that those who are not persuaded will at least appreciate the valiant and academically legitimate nature of my attempt. Worldviews do not crumble easily, although I am convinced that thoroughgoing antisupernaturalism fails to explain the totality of our evidence. I myself value retaining abundant room for methodological naturalism in the appropriate spheres and cases. Happily, the current intellectual climate is in many disciplines much less committed to antisupernaturalism than it was a half-century ago.

10. Some other modern writers employ “supernatural” with the sense “superhuman” (e.g., Fitzgerald, “Miracles,” 49). Some cultures (e.g., in Tibet) lack specific vocabulary for “supernatural” because they treat experiences Westerners would treat as anomalous as simply part of the continuum of nature (McClenon, *Events*, 1).

11. The dichotomy between “natural” and “supernatural” is a modern Western one, imposed on most cultures only externally (see, e.g., Greenfield, *Spirits*, 156; more extensively, Saler, “Supernatural” [esp. 31–32], though he ultimately concludes that the category is a helpful one if employed heuristically [50–51]). Thus, for example, the Mande see spirits as “part of the natural environment, like a waterfall,

Some earlier modern theologians, including Rudolf Bultmann, insisted that “mature” modern people do not believe in miracles and that “no one can or does seriously maintain” such early Christian perspectives.¹² Bultmann, however, unwittingly excluded from the modern world the majority of the world’s population, as I shall illustrate, in a manner that current sensitivities would regard as inexcusably ethnocentric (although there is no reason to believe that he, unlike a scholar I will address later, did this deliberately). Bultmann’s assumptions about miracles have come under increasing criticism from other angles, and I intend to contribute to that criticism. Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) was right to point out, in 1988, that Bultmann’s perspective was not a result of biblical scholarship per se but of a particular philosophic epistemology.¹³

My more important concern in this book is to persuade readers of my first, less controversial point, because this book is meant to be read with my work on historical tradition in the Gospels. The second point, however, a philosophic issue, will be important for readers also concerned with the meaning of what is reported in the Gospels and Acts, since the writers attribute these miracles to divine causation. Cases are argued with varying degrees of certainty, and I concede that my case for the second point cannot be persuasive with the same degree of academic assurance as would be possible if instead those arguing it were medical researchers equipped with extensive medical documentation. As I have emphasized, I am not qualified to contribute expertise in that area. I nevertheless think that, given the general canons of reliability for testimonial evidence, we have a greater degree of assurance regarding many extranormal healing claims than we have for many claims that we widely accept. Although I can understand some demurring on the matter of supernatural causation, as I once did, I am fully convinced that it remains the best explanation in a number of the reports that I will cite. While the evidence for some cases that I have collected is stronger than that for other cases (sometimes due to my own research limitations), I hope that scholars in my discipline will accept supernatural theism (a historic Jewish, Christian, and Islamic approach) as at least one academically acceptable explanatory option rather than presupposing its exclusion.

a person, or a tree” (McNaughton, *Blacksmiths*, 11). In the view of thinkers like Heim, *Transformation*, 173–99, even miracles are “natural” rather than supernatural, reflecting God’s activity through the natural order but in a special revelatory way. My usage thus defers to common rather than technical usage at this point.

12. “Mythology,” 4; see further *ibid.*, 5–9; cf. Max Weber’s designation of modernity as “disenchanted” (in Remus, *Healer*, 106). Bultmann allows that God acts existentially in ways communicated by mythical language (“Mythology,” 32; “Demythologizing,” 110), but uses the presence of miracles as a criterion of inauthenticity in Jewish texts (Bultmann, *Tradition*, 58). He denies that the historical continuum may be “interrupted” by supernatural interventions (e.g., “Exegesis,” 147; cf. “Demythologizing,” 122; Perrin, *Bultmann*, 86; Thiselton, *Horizons*, 292) and affirms as “myth” whatever involves supernatural forces (Bultmann, “Demythologizing,” 95; cf. “Mythology,” 9; observations on Bultmann’s approach in Perrin, *Bultmann*, 77; Poland, *Criticism*, 11; Richardson, *Age of Science*, 109). For one survey and critique of Bultmann’s approach to miracles, see Hay, “View.”

13. So Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 13.

The reader who keeps in mind these two objectives of the book should be able to discern when I am arguing more for one thesis or the other. For purposes of simplicity, it may be noted that I argue especially for the major thesis when recounting or covering miracle claims, especially in chapters 8–12, although I eventually focus on some accounts of more dramatic experiences (especially in chs. 12, 15) for the sake of their value to the second thesis. I argue for the second thesis and against its exclusion from the conversation especially where I challenge philosophic objections to genuinely supernatural causation (e.g., chs. 5–6 and 13–15); the cases I apply most explicitly to the secondary thesis appear in chapter 15. The chapters recounting miracle claims will naturally be easier to read; the philosophic and scientific material is important, however, for considering the secondary question in a Western academic context.

Limitations

Some points in this section reiterate information offered above, but they bear repetition here because it is important to note the book's limitations explicitly. This book is a prolegomenon to a study of one aspect of miracles in the Gospels and Acts, and not a study of those miracles themselves. Other scholars have analyzed the miracle stories one by one or by category (see, e.g., Leopold Sabourin, John Meier, Gerd Theissen, Paul Achtemeier, or Wendy Cotter, though not sharing with one another identical objectives, approaches, or conclusions).¹⁴ Detailed commentaries on the Gospels and Acts normally treat the individual miracle stories in detail, and I refer the interested reader to such studies. Because I have also treated many of the early Christian miracle stories in my commentaries on Matthew, John, and Acts,¹⁵ I will not distract readers from the central theses of this book by repeating those treatments here. Other writers, many of them cited in my notes, also have approached some of the historical context issues that I treat briefly in my opening chapters.

My concern is to focus instead on the more introductory question of the plausibility of eyewitness miracle reports, not to treat particular examples or even categories in the Gospels and Acts. That is, I am clearing some ground so scholars can address such subjects without many of them feeling compelled to start with the assumption that such reports must be historically inauthentic. The bulk of the book will therefore address the philosophy and history of the question, modern analogies, and so forth rather than NT texts themselves, just as books on NT background, for example, often focus more attention on information other than what is found in

14. Sabourin, *Miracles*; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 2; Theissen, *Miracle Stories*; Achtemeier, *Miracle Tradition*; Cotter, *Portrait*; see also Kee, *Miracle* and other works. Also, for various literary approaches, see, e.g., Wire, "Story"; idem, "Structure"; Funk, "Form"; theologically, Polhill, "Perspectives." For an extensive annotated bibliography (albeit from 1977), see Sabourin, *Miracles*, 237–71.

15. Keener, *Matthew*; idem, *John*; idem, *Acts*.

the NT itself. Some readers may feel that any book useful for NT scholarship must focus on NT passages even if it repeats the same ground that others (or the same author) have covered elsewhere. If so, we will have to live with our disagreement. I am seeking to expose most of my readers to more matters that may be new to them, and regard the potential applications to the question of NT reports here as fairly basic and self-evident (though I shall mention them periodically).

While I raise the question of supernatural causation, I am not assuming that is the best explanation for all miracle claims, and even less often the only plausible explanation for them. Some dramatic claims, however, for example, the instantaneous reversal of documented, long-term, organic blindness, do seem to me to welcome such discussion. Scholars writing within particular religious traditions will grant some activities to be extrahuman without necessarily viewing them positive; while I am not opposed in principle to exploring such distinctions, they are not the points at issue here (those points being the plausibility of eyewitness miracle claims and the limits of the inflexibly antisupernaturalist paradigm). Biblical theology is far less interested in the category of “supernatural” than in specifically divine causation, including through natural phenomena, even for some of what it calls signs;¹⁶ the supernatural question addressed in this book is thus one framed in this particular sense more by modern philosophy than by Scripture itself.

That is, my interest in this book is historical and metahistorical and generally does not develop some more traditional theological questions except where they overlap with those disciplines. The question of whether a deity or deities exist and do miracles certainly overlaps deeply with theological interests, but I will not engage most of the more detailed questions. Where scholars offer varying theological opinions on an issue that must be raised but not necessarily resolved, I will sometimes note these opinions without taking a firm position on them myself. I am not minimizing the value of biblical and theological studies on the subject, and I have written with these interests elsewhere. Nevertheless, such studies would constitute a different book and, given my current writing commitments, likely a different author. One theological concern I do have is that no one reading this book thinks that I suppose that spiritual cures happen invariably—they do not, and most of those who supplied testimonies for this book recognize that they do not. Naturally we could fill books with stories where such cures did not happen. I could include there, for example, the eight miscarriages that my wife and I have suffered. But there seems little point in arguing a case that virtually no one

16. For the mid-twentieth-century emphasis on “biblical theology as recital” of divine acts, see, e.g., Wright, *God Who Acts* (e.g., 64), though specifically miraculous features were often construed as of peripheral relevance, in keeping with the academic setting of the interpreters (Wright, “Prologue,” 25). Others have critiqued this movement for sidestepping questions concerning special divine acts in history (distinct from a deity working through natural causes; see the complaint in Dille, “Act,” 67–73), contending that either modernists are right that God works only through natural processes or the biblical picture of miracles is also correct (ibid., 73–80; cf. Wink, *Transformation*, 31). Miracle stories support the theological claim that God acts only if God in fact acted in the reported miracles (O’Connell, “Miracles,” 55). In Scripture, divine revelation consisted of both word and deed (Mussner, *Miracles*, 5–6).

questions. My interest in miracles is not triumphalistic, as if to play down biblical themes of suffering or justice that some writers contrast with study of miracles. I have addressed these themes elsewhere;¹⁷ they are simply not my focus here. In the theology of the Gospels, signs are foretastes of the kingdom, not its fullness.

There are also theological issues inevitably raised in the book that readers will answer in various ways, for example, healing through apparitions of saints (though I include only a very small proportion of these accounts). My primary interest in such cases is eyewitness claims of extraordinary spiritual cures, more than whether these cases involve saints, angels, God, other spirits, highly unusual natural causes, or a combination of factors. I do not come from a tradition that has ready explanations for such cases, and even if I did, my research into reports does not confer automatic expertise in their theological interpretation. It would be unfair in a book of this academic nature, however, to exclude such claims (especially when medical documentation often does accompany such claims). The subject of spiritual cures is a broad one inviting further exploration than my narrower focus will permit here.

It should go without saying in an academic work that when I make common cause with some authors or fields of study for the purposes at hand, I am not expressing agreement with them on all other points. I do not concur with all the views or methods of all those whose accounts I include, but out of academic fairness wish to avoid excluding significant voices. My exegetical or theological views need not be read between the lines of this book; they appear instead in what I have written on those subjects. It should go equally without saying that when I criticize authors, like Bultmann and those who hold his reticence to affirm visibly supernatural claims, I am not thereby criticizing all their insights or publications. To take an extreme example, when I treat respectfully a shaman's indigenous explanation for an event, the reader should not infer that I would agree with all of the shaman's worldview. In challenging some traditional Western paradigms as inadequate, I am not personally embracing all possible alternative paradigms or dismissing everything that Western academicians, of whom I am one, have argued. On this issue I could make common cause with claimants from various religions and nonreligious perspectives, although I have restricted my examples primarily to the Christian ones I am best connected to locate and best equipped to explore.

Other scholars have approached many remarkable recoveries from a variety of valuable angles, such as the vital contributions of psychoimmunology; while I do not believe that such approaches cover every incident we narrate, I allow that they are instructive in many cases.¹⁸ Because my objectives in this work differ from

17. On suffering, e.g., Keener, *Spirit*, 69–71; idem, *Revelation*, passim; on justice, e.g., Usry and Keener, *Religion*, 83–139. Against some critics' assumptions, writers who address themes like healing or the Spirit need not neglect other ones (see, e.g., Mittelstadt, *Spirit*).

18. I do not personally regard such cases as incompatible with divine causation, though on a general level they would not need to offer evidence for this intelligent causation unless perhaps one argues from design, whether that of divine design more directly or through evolutionary teleology or both, depending

those of most of these scholars' publications, however, I have not chosen to focus as much on this approach, but my approach should not be construed as contradicting it. Each such approach has its legitimate role and its objective.

This book is inevitably only a sample of what could be written on its subject. Further research might offer more controlled studies (helpful especially for the more skeptical); more follow-up interviews with and consulting the medical records of persons claimed by various written sources to be healed; and so forth. Such valuable research requires different kinds of research resources and qualifications than those currently available to me. My discipline is historical study of early Christianity, but this book has required a multidisciplinary approach drawing on, among other disciplines, anthropology, modern church history, and, farthest from my primary competence, the philosophy of science; ideally, this subject could be better addressed with medical expertise, which I have already confessed is beyond my competence.

I also lack the recording equipment (with exceptions in one setting) to meet optimum archival standards for oral history interviews, though I know how to ask necessary questions and am confident that my notes meet the standards traditionally used by many journalists.¹⁹ Others can build on what current writers have done and can press beyond it, as later works should normally do, providing further research than I include here.²⁰ Ideally such works can provide distinctions along a continuum including verified (to a high degree of probability) to probable to possible to clearly false (deceptive or erroneous) claims.²¹ My limitations in these other areas offer another reason why other work on the subject must carry matters beyond where I have been able to carry them.

In addition to those limitations, I have no research team, no research assistants, and no research funds; nor have I had sabbaticals to pursue this research, though I am grateful to my institution for their gracious load reduction and to the library for enormous help, especially in securing my numerous interlibrary loan requests. I do urge others to develop this research further than I have been able to do, and I suspect that doctors working in Majority World hospitals might be most ideally

on one's interpretive grid. I have not followed the distinction between "healing" and "cure" found in some of these works, not because I find such distinctions illegitimate but because they are less germane to my focus.

19. At least, based on my experiences with interviews with cautious journalists; I am not considering here the less careful interviewers. One journalist whose work I cite several times in this book notes an occasion where, receiving an unexpected source of information, he "took notes on the back of my wedding invitation" (Wakefield, *Miracle*, 85); admittedly, I found myself in a few such situations. If one dismisses interviews on cure experiences as mere "hearsay," while affirming those of journalists and anthropologists on (usually) other topics, it seems not the genre of oral reports but the content of cures (that many construe supernaturally) to which one objects. That is, one is eliminating evidence for a position to which one objects.

20. Missiology dissertations and other works are better suited for such studies than the research of a NT scholar who in this book has often had to stretch beyond his primary areas of competence. We are not accustomed to interviewing live mortal witnesses. Anthropologists have developed religious healing research into a lively field, and research on global Christian healing is rapidly becoming a discipline well (see Brown, "Afterword," 372).

21. For the importance of degrees of probability in epistemology, see Polanyi, *Knowledge*, 31–32.

situated to develop aspects that I could not. I trust, however, that this work will provide one of the useful foundations for such subsequent research.

The abundance of testimonies demonstrates widespread belief that God does miracles today; many of these will be seen as of ambiguous value in an argument supporting a belief in supernatural causation, but some of them do, I believe, provide compelling support for that thesis, especially where multiple independent witnesses confirm extranormal experiences. Some readers may dismiss all testimony lacking medical documentation; although in some cases medical documentation is available, even medical documentation can be faked or its interpretation disputed, so ultimately any testimony can be discredited if one's skepticism about miracles is thoroughgoing. In some cases, further investigation may weaken the reliability of a few of my sources and my sources' sources; in a larger number of cases, the recoveries that some witnesses attribute to divine intervention also have natural parallels. If one does not, however, simply adopt the ill-formulated arguments of Hume and his successors, I believe that the weight of some of the accounts in this book should invite readers to seriously consider extranormal causation.

Some will dismiss as uncritical any narration of miracle accounts without individual disclaimers. Disclaimers are not needed for the book's primary purpose, however, and I cite only some of the accounts explicitly in support of the second. Moreover, one might ask why openness to the possibility that some events are miraculous is more uncritical than their *a priori* dismissal. This question seems particularly pertinent for scholars whose dismissal is dogmatic and lacks self-critical reflection about the historical origin and formation of their own beliefs.

A book reflects its own time; the shifting paradigms that make this book possible at this moment will probably eventually make it unnecessary, and other questions about claimed extrahuman activity, including distinguishing the nature of different claims, will become more crucial.²² When others build on works like this one in more sophisticated ways, the present book may seem basic. But if a book has a time, I believe that now is this book's time. It was initially ready for the original publisher in early 2009, but due to delays in the process (and ultimately its acquisition, along with many of that publisher's other works, by Baker Academic), I have had some additional time to work on it. While my journalistic side was initially not pleased with the various delays (I felt I had an urgent "scoop"), my academic side has concluded that the additional time has made this a stronger, more nuanced, and ultimately more enduring work.

22. That is, modernist rejection of miracle accounts could give way to postmodern equation of the value of all such accounts. On a theological level, such an equation can privilege relativist worldviews (say, polytheistic ones) over exclusivist ones (say, monotheistic ones) simply by presupposing relativism. (Hume, *History of Religion*, 48–51, viewed polytheism as far more tolerant than monotheism; cf. comments about Hume's approach in Smith, "Introduction," 15.) They may also privilege subjective interpretation of personal experience over objective scientific evaluation of the nature of a recovery, a privileging that if applied to medical science could hinder research. That such discussions are not the point of this book does not mean that they will not merit discussion.

Because it is important for the reader to know a writer's perspectives, I reiterate that my current personal conviction is that some of these events do involve suprahuman causation. That has not, however, always been my perspective, and I do not write this book from the assumption that all readers share my perspective. A writer's perspective cannot but influence how she approaches the philosophic question of suprahuman causation, though I think that a theistic bias is not more of a bias than an atheistic one, such as I once held. (Though a small minority of theists demur, the vast majority of theists do affirm at least the possibility of miracles; and being open to such a possibility is hardly more of a bias than being closed to it.) In any case, no one can deny that massive numbers of people today offer miracle claims, however scholars choose to interpret them.

The Problem

Richard Bauckham has recently offered a compelling argument for considerable eyewitness material in the Gospels.²³ Whether or not one agrees with all his conclusions (I myself am skeptical, for example, that the Gospels often designate the individual sources of their eyewitness tradition),²⁴ one question that his valuable argument raises is an academic tradition of skepticism toward miracles appearing in genuine eyewitness narrative. Some scholars have simply ruled out miracle reports a priori, an approach that affects one's reading of documents (particularly Mark) in which they dominate many narratives.

Some scholars who grant that the Gospels are biographies or that Acts is a historical monograph containing much accurate historical information nevertheless find the miracle reports in those same narratives problematic. This apparent inconsistency in approach stems not from a change in genre but from philosophic assumptions about what is possible for intelligent people in other cultures and eras to believe that they have seen.²⁵

The Gospels and Acts claim that eyewitnesses and participants saw what they and the writers believed were miracles. Some of these claims appear even in material where the narrator claims to be present (Acts 20:9–12; 28:8–9).²⁶ Scholars can

23. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*.

24. Cf. some observations in Tuckett, "Review"; Keener, "Review of Bauckham."

25. This is the sort of skepticism noted but not endorsed in Talbert, *Acts*, 248; Achtemeier, *Miracle Tradition*, 136–37; cf. Clark, "Miracles and Law," 23, noting some on a more popular level who simply dismiss the Gospels because of miracle accounts. Others, who grant the reports but question only the early Christian writers' interpretation, work from philosophic assumptions about what is possible that differ from those of early Christians; in practice, they tend to accept reports about healings and exorcisms that they can explain psychosomatically but are more skeptical of, say, the much fewer number of nature miracles and raisings in the Gospels.

26. Most scholars attribute Luke's "we" material to an eyewitness, many to Luke himself; see, e.g., Dupont, *Sources*, 164–65; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 103; Rackham, *Acts*, xv–xvii; Packer, *Acts*, 3; Neil, *Acts*, 22–23; Barclay, *Acts*, 6; Munck, *Acts*, xliii; Thornton, *Zeuge* (as cited in Campbell, *We Passages*, 8); Arrington, *Acts*, xxxii; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 66, 82; Fusco, "Sezioni-noi"; Hanson, *Acts*, 21–24; Spencer, *Philip*, 249;

explain most such incidents in either naturalistic or supernatural terms, depending on their assumptions, but reducing them to novelistic flourishes or legendary accretions²⁷ requires reading them in a manner different from the rest of these works' narratives.²⁸

Studying the historical question requires us to examine non-Christian miracle accounts from the Gospels' era. The ancient accounts provide a sort of literary context for how the first audiences of the Gospels and Acts heard such accounts, but on many particular points the analogies are limited, and broader analogies from human experience bring into question the need to postulate direct dependence. We also must take account of the historic context of ancient and modern philosophic skepticism toward miracles, because such contexts shape our cultural a priors toward the accounts, as well as help explain why we often lump all supernatural claims together, when they are often quite diverse. Afterward and at greater length we must confront the question of how modern Western readers can relate to such claims; I will suggest that many other cultures and some religious subcultures within our culture provide better paradigms for a sympathetic reading of the Gospels' claims than our dominant Western academic paradigms do.²⁹

Historians in antiquity often include miraculous elements in their works, as earlier in much of ancient Israel's historiography,³⁰ so acknowledging the presence of such claims does not shift the presumed genre of the Gospels and Acts away from ancient biography or historiography. Yet the Gospels and Acts report signs more often, given the amount of space available, than typical extant historians from their period. Still, they do so in a proportion comparable to certain sections of Israelite narratives, and perhaps with a lower concentration than parts of the Elijah-Elisha cycle.³¹

Hemer, *Acts in History*, 312–34; Martin, *Foundations*, 2:67–68; Hengel and Schwemer, *Between Damascus and Antioch*, 7; Barnett, *Birth*, 190–92; deSilva, *Introduction*, 299; González, *Acts*, 4; Pao, *Isaianic Exodus*, 22–23. Many scholars do demur, so I refer the reader to the much fuller discussion in Keener, *Acts*, at Acts 16:10.

27. As is usually the case for the nonhistorical, later apocryphal gospels and acts. On the novelistic character of these works, see, e.g., Aune, *Environment*, 151–52; Lalleman, "Apocryphal Acts," 67; Rebenich, "Historical Prose," 307–8; Bauckham, "Acts of Paul"; Keylock, "Distinctness," 210; Krasser, "Reading," 554; Hofmann, "Novels: Christian," 846–48; Perkins, "World."

28. I address the genre and character of these works more generally in my book on research about the historical Jesus and my commentary on Acts. I will not repeat those arguments here, since they are of comparable length to this book. See Keener, *Historical Jesus*, chs. 5–8; idem, *Acts*, introduction, chs. 2–8; "Assumptions"; "Biographies"; cf. also idem, *Matthew*, 8–14, 16–36; idem, *John*, 11–34, 57–65.

29. E.g., Roschke, "Healing," emphasizes that African culture has better foundations for understanding healings and exorcisms than Western culture does. Jenkins, "Reading," 72, notes that "African and Asian readers can identify strongly" with biblical perspectives on healing, apocalyptic, and spiritual realities, which feel more relevant in their contexts than to typical Westerners.

30. See, e.g., Krasser, "Reading," 554; Plümacher, *Geschichte*, 33–84.

31. Our sources do differ some among themselves; for example, Luke-Acts emphasizes signs in a manner more unambiguously positive than the way they appear in Mark or John and as more central than in Paul's letters. The difference in the latter case, however, may be one of genre (see 2 Cor 12:12); thus James clearly expects miracles (Jas 5:14–16), but one would not be aware of this expectation without a single paragraph

While many or most ancient historians mentioned extranormal phenomena, rarely did they dwell on them as the Gospels and Acts do. Yet this difference is likely especially because most other extant historians were writing about political or social events, not the early history of a miracle worker and a “charismatic” movement known in that period for its signs. And, as we will argue, there is little reason to doubt that the first Christians, like some revival movements since that time, believed that signs were occurring among them and that they could offer first-, second-, or thirdhand testimony to such events.

This book addresses especially the general possibility of events such as those narrated in the Gospels and Acts. That is, one may affirm that events like these can occur or even grant that they may sometimes occur supernaturally, but this does not mean that every purported case of an extranormal phenomenon in history happened, still less that it happened supernaturally. I am not trying to resolve every case of a miracle claim in the Gospels and Acts. In principle, oral sources could blur or exaggerate details over time, and even in directly eyewitness material authors presumably shaped the story to sharpen it for literary purposes, as historians normally did with their material. Those wishing to debate such issues must do so passage by passage or based on the general reliability of the tradition, and as already noted, I have engaged both the majority of those accounts and the issue of the tradition’s reliability elsewhere in *Historical Jesus* and more fully in my commentaries on Matthew, John, and Acts.³² Here, however, I am addressing the larger starting question: Do we need to treat the miracles differently than, that is, as less authentic than, the rest of the narratives in which they occur?

Closing Comments

As noted above, the main focus of the book is to persuade readers skeptical of NT miracle accounts that such accounts can stem from eyewitnesses and potentially report phenomena that happened. I believe that the evidence in this book, uneven as some of it is, is more than sufficient to sustain this claim. That some superhuman being, such as God, sometimes causes some such phenomena is a theological claim, and while I hope to challenge bias against this claim and demonstrate its plausibility, I assume that some of my readers ready to follow the first (historical) argument may demur at the second (theological) one. I nevertheless offer this argument, as well, in the expectation that a number of readers will find the evidence sufficient to agree and that many others will find it sufficient at least to allow for the possibility or to acknowledge that scholars can make a good case for it. The

in which he raises the issue. Paul raises the issue more often than James, though over a longer course of letters. Early Christian narratives, however, include more signs (esp. the Gospels; cf. even Rev 11:5–6).

32. Especially Keener, *Acts*, introduction, chs. 2–9; also idem, *Historical Jesus*, passim; idem, *Matthew*, 8–14, 16–36; idem, *John*, 11–34, 57–65.

material I use to illustrate both arguments can also help provide modern readers a more sympathetic way to hear these texts with the wonder with which most of the earliest auditors would have invested them.

Craig Keener
December 2009

The Ancient Evidence

There is a general consensus among scholars of early Christianity that Jesus was a miracle worker. Claims of miracles were common in antiquity, but these claims took different forms. Most people sought divine help at healing sanctuaries; public individual miracle workers were not nearly so common in this period, and those who did perform wonders rarely specialized in healings. Nevertheless, comparisons with the latter category help us understand better both how Jesus and his early followers could have been understood by their contemporaries and how they would have stood out in ways that appeared distinctive.

I will address these introductory questions only briefly, compared with the attention I will give to later questions in the book. That is because these subjects are familiar to both scholars and students of early Christianity and have been addressed at length elsewhere. This introductory discussion is important, however, because it helps set the groundwork for later questions in the book. Such questions will include: Granted that Jesus was viewed as a miracle worker, is it plausible in principle for specific claims about miracles to derive from eyewitnesses? In considering explanations for these miracles, what range of options should be open to consideration? Should supernatural as well as natural causes be entertained as possibilities?

Opening Questions about Early Christian Miracle Claims

Thus, from the standpoint of the gospels, the mighty deeds of Jesus, healings and exorcisms alike, were the product of the power which flowed through him as a holy man. His powers were charismatic, the result of his having become a channel for the power of the other realm, that which Jesus and his contemporaries also called Spirit. —Marcus Borg¹

I hold, in summary, that Jesus, as a magician and miracle worker, was a very problematic and controversial phenomenon not only for his enemies but even for his friends. —John Dominic Crossan²

A powerful healer of the physically and mentally sick, . . . he was . . . unconditionally given over to the rescue, not of communities, but of persons in need. —Geza Vermes³

[Jesus] probably saw his miracles as indications that the new age was at hand. *He shared the evangelists' view that he fulfilled the hopes of the prophets*—or at least that these hopes were about to be fulfilled. —E. P. Sanders (emphasis his)⁴

[Jesus's] healings and exorcisms were an intrinsic part of his proclamation of the kingdom (or rule) of God. The mighty deeds and the proclamation must go together; neither can be understood without the other. —Craig Evans⁵

Historians offer historical reconstructions on the basis of testimony, sometimes artifacts, and frequently additional critical evaluation based on context, intrinsic probability, and the weighing of evidence. Two issues thus confront

1. Borg, *Vision*, 67.

2. Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 311.

3. Vermes, *Religion*, 206.

4. Sanders, *Figure*, 168.

5. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus*, 141.

a historian's discussion of miracles in early Christianity. First, the nature of the evidence involves some testimony but no first-century artifacts. Second, the probability argument must engage the long-standing albeit declining Western philosophic assumption that miracles do not occur, or at least must be evaluated with a bar of skepticism so high that no individual miracle claim could ever be accepted as valid.

This second issue does not always translate into a denial that witnesses claimed to see phenomena that could be interpreted in such terms, but it has sometimes had this effect. I will return to this philosophic question in chapters 5–6, and the analogy argument based on it in chapters 7–12, but focus at present on the question regarding the nature of the evidence.

Evidence for Jesus's Miracles

Although limited in kind (i.e., no artifacts), the available evidence for Jesus as a miracle worker is substantial. Although the evidence is limited concerning most particular miracles, all of the many ancient sources that comment on the issue agree that Jesus and his early followers performed miracles: Q, Mark, special material in Matthew and Luke, John, Acts, the Epistles, Revelation, and non-Christian testimony from both Jewish and pagan sources.⁶ If anyone were to object that Q includes only one complete narrative about a miracle (Matt 8:5–13//Luke 7:1–10; not including miracle summaries, in Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22; Matt 12:28//Luke 11:19), it is noteworthy that this narrative comprises perhaps half or all the narrative usually assigned to Q.⁷ Jesus's summary of his miracle working in Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22 clearly indicates that he believed himself a miracle worker.⁸ Moreover, given the extreme unlikelihood of Jesus's later followers making up obscure sites of his ministry like Chorazin or using the early name Beth-

6. For Paul, see Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 12:8–10; 2 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:5; for Revelation, Rev 11:6 (cf. Rev 11:18; 19:10). Although skeptical observers may be most impressed by the non-Christian evidence, the Gospel traditions take us closer to the events than other extant sources do. I have elsewhere argued my case in greater detail for the enormous wealth of genuine information about Jesus available in these sources (see Keener, *Historical Jesus*). Noting the wide range of sources, many appeal to multiple attestation to support the picture of Jesus as miracle worker (e.g., Sabourin, *Miracles*, 69; Boobyer, "Miracles," 40–41; Rowland, *Origins*, 146–47; Sanday, "Miracles," 63–64).

7. See Robinson, "Challenge," 321. I personally allow several more possible narratives for Q (Matt 4:1–11//Luke 4:1–12; Matt 8:5–13//Luke 7:1–10). I believe that it probably also includes the narrative construction behind Mark 3:22–30, because the parallels in Matt 12:22–32, 43–45//Luke 11:14–26 include additional overlapping material [Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20] that Mark may have deleted; but these could stem from oral tradition other than Q). Yet all of these Q accounts include a supernatural element. Eve, *Healer*, 84–91, doubts the Q hypothesis and therefore leans primarily on Mark alone (thus focusing on Mark's theological application of miracle stories in 92–117); this approach has invited some criticism (e.g., Hagerland, "Review"), though a significant minority of strong scholars today share Eve's skepticism about Q (e.g., Goodacre and Perrin, *Questioning*).

8. Dunn, *Remembered*, 671, rightly notes that one need doubt this belief no more than Paul's belief that he was empowered with signs in Rom 15:19.

saida, the Q material in Matt 11:21//Luke 10:13 is widely regarded as bedrock tradition,⁹ yet it refers to these Galilean villages being judged for not responding radically to Jesus's extraordinary miracles among them.¹⁰ Moreover, Mark would hardly have invented the idea that Jesus could not heal where faith was lacking (Mark 6:5).¹¹

Most scholars today working on the subject thus accept the claim that Jesus was a healer and exorcist.¹² The evidence is stronger for this claim than for most other specific historical claims that we could make about Jesus or earliest Christianity. Scholars often note that miracles characterized Jesus's historical activity no less than his teaching and prophetic activities did.¹³ So central are miracle reports to the Gospels that one could remove them only if one regarded the Gospels as

9. See Mussner, *Miracles*, 19–22; Charlesworth, "Sketch," 97; Burkitt, *Sources*, 14; Theissen, *Gospels in Context*, 49–52; Witherington, *Christology*, 166; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 183; cf. Adinolfi, "Lago"; Arav and Rousseau, "Bethsaïde"; pace Bultmann, *Tradition*, 112.

10. See Mussner, *Miracles*, 19–20. Mussner (31–36) appeals to the criterion of dissimilarity to defend Jesus's healing of lepers, placing it in the conflict tradition; so also Jesus's healings on the Sabbath (38); but today Jesus's miracles are less controversial than the conflict tradition, which I address in *Historical Jesus*, ch. 16.

11. So also Funk et al., *Acts of Jesus*, 85; Montefiore, *Gospels*, 1:119. It may be that Jesus often required faith not because he depended on it but because he wanted at least some present who would understand the point of the signs (Robinson, "Challenge," 326). Even Matthew, who may emphasize other elements, does not downplay miracles (Heil, "Aspects," passim, e.g., 276); cf. discussions of miracles in Mark (e.g., Lamarche, "Miracles"), Matthew (elsewhere, e.g., Légasse, "Miracles"), Luke (e.g., George, "Miracle"), and John (e.g., Léon-Dufour, "Miracles"; Johns and Miller, "Signs"; Charlier, "Notion"); Mark's miracle stories are probably older tradition (Best, "Miracles," 540). Although now more than four decades old, see the list of sixty-two articles published before 1962 on Jesus's miracles in Metzger, *Index*, 18–21 (some important samples are Scherer, "Miracles de Jésus"; Chadwick, "Miracles"; Young, "Value"; Dellings, "Verständnis"; Foster, "Miracles"; Ropes, "Aspects").

12. For summaries of this consensus, see Blackburn, "Miracles," 362; Eve, *Miracles*, 16–17; Welch, "Miracles," 360; Green, "Healing," 758; Licona and Van der Watt, "Historians and Miracles," 2; Dunn, *Remembered*, 670; Hultgren, "Stories," 134–35; Davies, *Healer*, 44; Eddy and Beilby, "Introduction," 38; Twelftree, "Message," 2518–19; cf. Evans, "Prophet," 1228–29; also the statement of the same consensus just over a century ago, in Wilson, "Miracles," 13. Some scholars settle for "plausibility" (e.g., Remus, *Healer*, 113). Ehrman, *Prophet*, 197–200, notes that scholars can accept Jesus as an exorcist and healer without passing judgment on whether he acted supernaturally. Various scholars (e.g., Hunter, *Work*, 86; Blessing, "Healing," 186) point out that even Bultmann accepted Jesus as healer and exorcist (citing *Word*, 124, 172). Some have argued that even particular descriptions in the Gospels appear reliable (Mansour, Mehio-Sibai, Walsh et al., "Jesus and Eye," summarized in Kub, "Miracles," 1273–74; see also Wilkinson, *Healing*, e.g., 122, against Bultmann).

13. See, e.g., Twelftree, "Miracles"; idem, *Miracle Worker*; idem, "Message," 2520–24; Richardson, *Apologetics*, 170–71. Deists removing supernatural and other objectionable elements in the Gospels could delete "nearly half their text" (Woodward, *Miracles*, 18, on Jefferson, on whose approach see also Brown, *Thought*, 280). The "Third Quest" is more respectful toward the Gospels' miracle tradition than the so-called first and second quests were (Meier, "Third Quest"). Scholars who treat Jesus as prophet and miracle worker appear to remain in the mainstream (see, e.g., Meier, "Quest"; Tan, *Zion Traditions*, 237; Flusser, "Love," 154; Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 113, 281–315; Kee, "Quests"; Robinson, "Challenge," 321; Pikaza, "Jesús histórico"; Rusecki, "Kryteria"); this paradigm is not intrinsically opposed to Jesus as sage (Van Oyen, "Criteria"; see Evans, "Prophet"; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 2, 34), just as sages and mystics were not incompatible (Sterling, *Ancestral Philosophy*, 99–113). Burton Mack's skepticism (*Myth*, 76) may be exceptional.

preserving barely any genuine information about Jesus.¹⁴ Indeed, it is estimated that more than 31 percent of the verses in Mark's Gospel involve miracles in some way,¹⁵ or some 40 percent of his narrative!¹⁶ Very few critics would deny the presence of any miracles in the earliest material about Jesus.¹⁷

If followers would preserve Jesus's teachings, how much more might they, and especially those who experienced recoveries, spread reports about his extraordinary acts of power?¹⁸ Because miracle claims attach to a relatively small number of figures in antiquity (itinerant or not), there is little reason to suppose that Jesus would have developed a reputation as a wonder worker if he did not engage in such activities.¹⁹ Jesus's ministry to the afflicted also coheres with his care for the marginalized in contrast to his frequent conflicts with the elite.²⁰ As historical Jesus scholars Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz put it, "Just as the kingdom of God stands at the centre of Jesus's preaching, so healings and exorcisms form the centre of his activity."²¹

14. Pittenger, "Miracles 1," 106 (believing that the Gospels provide a valuable "if 'impressionistic' picture" of the Jesus known by the disciples); Robinson, "Challenge," 321–22; Betz, *Jesus*, 60; cf. also Eder, *Wundertäter* (as cited in Sabourin, *Miracles*, 245); Dod, "Healer," 169 (noting, e.g., the summary of Jesus's ministry in Luke 13:32); Brockingham, "Miracles," 495; Wright, "Miracles," 189; Kallas, *Significance*, 112–13; O'Connell, "Miracles," 59; Polkinghorne, *Reality*, 74. Pittenger does not insist that the miracles are genuinely supernatural by the standards of today's science ("Miracles 1," 107), and he rejects, for example, the accounts of the virgin birth, which he compares with a "fairy-tale" ("Miracles 2," 147–48). Even Schleiermacher, who approached the miracle accounts largely rationally, concludes from their role in the Gospels that they were significant in Jesus's ministry (Loos, *Miracles*, 17). For the centrality of exorcisms in the early sources, see, e.g., Mills, *Agents* (esp. summary on 136); for the centrality of healing for Jesus's mission in Luke-Acts, see Green, "Daughter of Abraham," 654.

15. Robinson, "Challenge," 321; for Mark's heavy emphasis on miracles, see, e.g., Van Wyk and Viljoen, "Benaderings"; for his heavy emphasis on exorcism, see Finger and Swartley, "Bondage," 19 (highlighting Mark 3:20–28; cf. Matt 12:28/Luke 11:20). Eve, *Healer*, 118–19, who depends primarily on Mark (92–117), offers arguments that Mark genuinely reflects historical tradition that Jesus was a miracle worker: one does not normally write even a novel about a historical character that diverges completely from the person's known portrait (118–19), and the sorts of events matter more than individual cases (119).

16. Wilkinson, *Health*, 19; idem, *Healing*, 65. Recounting miracles requires nearly half the verses in Mark's first ten chapters (Placher, *Mark*, 76).

17. On this consensus, see Boobyer, "Miracles," 40–41. Some accept most of the healing accounts (e.g., Heard, *Introduction*, 40).

18. Wright, "Seminar," 114 (suggesting that the reports would rapidly assume a standard form, as they were told and retold).

19. Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 113. Miracles are also not widely attached to messianic figures or to the majority of prophets. Using criteria of coherence and dissimilarity, Eve, *Miracles*, 386, argues for the authenticity of Jesus's distinctive ministry of healing and exorcism.

20. Liberation theologians have rightly emphasized Jesus's concern for the poor and marginalized; though emphasized by Luke (e.g., Green, "Good News," esp. 66–69, 71–72), it appears throughout Gospel tradition; for healing for the marginalized in Mark, see discussion in, e.g., Gaiser, "Touch." Perhaps of relevance to the topic of this book, some see a growing confluence between liberation theology and the interest of progressive sectors of global Pentecostalism in empowering the poor in this world (Cox, "Foreword," xix; cf. Brown, "Introduction," 12; Oblau, "Healing," 321, 324), though other sectors are sometimes myopic regarding structural issues (Brown, "Introduction," 10; cf. the mixed message of Word of Faith teaching in Sánchez Walsh, "Santidad," 151–54, 163–66).

21. Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 281 (see more fully 281–315).

Among non-Christian sources, the rabbis²² and Celsus are clear that Jesus performed miracles, although both sources are hostile to these miracles. (Many of these later non-Christian sources attribute the miraculous works to sorcery, which probably constitutes the earliest anti-Christian explanation for Christian miracles.²³) This unanimity is striking given the conversely unanimous silence in Christian, Jewish, and even Mandaean tradition concerning any miracles of respected prophetic figures like John the Baptist.²⁴ None of the ancient sources respond to claims of Jesus's miracles by trying to deny them.

More important, the first-century Jewish historian Josephus apparently claims that Jesus was a miracle worker.²⁵ Jewish historian Geza Vermes, a noted expert on Jesus's era, has argued that this miracle claim in Josephus is authentic, based on Josephus's style.²⁶ In this report Josephus calls Jesus a wise man who also "worked startling deeds,"²⁷ a designation that Josephus also applies to miracles associated with the prophet Elisha.²⁸

It is thus not surprising that most scholars publishing historical research about Jesus today grant that Jesus was a miracle worker, regardless of their varying philosophical assumptions about divine activity in miracle claims. For example, E. P. Sanders regards it as an "almost indisputable" historical fact that "Jesus was a Galilean who preached and healed."²⁹ Using traditional historical-critical tools,

22. Yamauchi, "Magic," 90–91, cites *b. Sanh.* 43a; *tos. Hul.* 2:22–23; cf. Loos, *Miracles*, 156–67; Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 79; Mussner, *Miracles*, 23; Rowland, *Origins*, 306; Hruby, "Perspectives Rabbiniques," 94.

23. Cf. *b. Sanh.* 107b; in paganism, Cook, *Interpretation*, 36–39, 138. Although rabbinic sources do not recite the charge before the late second century (Flusser, *Judaism*, 635), Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 166, rightly notes that the charge concerning Jesus must be early; "Why answer a charge that was not levelled?" (see Matt 12:24; cf. John 8:48; Mussner, *Miracles*, 23).

24. See Stauffer, *Jesus*, 10–11; the Mandaean and Islamic evidence he cites, however, is too late for actual relevance. For Jesus as a worker of miracles (attributed by his detractors to magic) in Islam, see, e.g., Qur'an 5.110; 61.6; from the ninth century (the earliest surviving texts), in Thomas, "Miracles," 221–22; later Islamic discussion, e.g., in Rahman, "Interpretation" (though Islam is careful to portray them as divine miracles and Jesus acting only as a prophet—Zebiri, "Understanding"). Christian influence may have contributed to the rise of miracles associated with Muhammad (Sahas, "Formation"). Still, even a few Muslim thinkers, though not ruling out miracles, had some ideas similar to those of Hume (see Tegharian, "Al-Ghazali"). The issue never arises clearly in Paul, except with respect to his own miracle working, though cf. Wenham, "Story," 307–8.

25. Josephus *Ant.* 18.63.

26. Vermes, "Notice"; idem, *Jesus the Jew*, 79; see also Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:621; Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 74 (arguing that Josephus seeks to report about Jesus with the same neutrality he used concerning John and James); Voorst, *Jesus*, 102; Montefiore, *Miracles*, 99.

27. Παράδοξα; cf. Luke 5:26. The Slavonic version develops this claim but is much more questionable (Gruson, "Joseph").

28. *Ant.* 9.182. Josephus often employs this term in more neutral ways (e.g., *Ant.* 2.91; 6.290; 8.130, 317; 12.87; 13.140; 15.261; 16.343; *War* 1.518; 4.238, 354; 6.102; *Ag. Ap.* 1.53; perhaps *Ant.* 14.455) but often refers to activity surprising because of divine or preternatural elements (*Ant.* 2.223, 267, 285, 295, 345; 3.1, 14, 30, 38; 5.28; 9.14, 58, 60, 182; 10.235; 15.379; cf. 2.347; 5.125; 6.171; 10.28; 13.282; perhaps 12.63; faked divine action in *Ag. Ap.* 2.114). Yet the present instance is most valuable, for the comparison with another prophet is most revealing (note also *Ant.* 9.58–60, also referring to Elisha).

29. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11. Certainly the Gospels portray Jesus's miracles as "an essential part of that ministry" (Filson, *History*, 105). Some point to Sanders disclaiming the reality of supernatural

John Meier finds many of Jesus's reported miracles authentic.³⁰ Raymond Brown notes that "scholars have come to realize that one cannot dismiss Jesus's miracles simply on modern rationalist grounds, for the oldest traditions show him as a healer."³¹ Otto Betz regards it as "certain" that Jesus was a healer, arguing "even from the Jewish polemic which called him a sorcerer."³² The miracles, he notes, are central to the Gospels, and without them, most of the other data in the Gospels are inexplicable.³³ Even Morton Smith, among the recent scholars most skeptical toward the Gospel tradition, argues that miracle working is the most authentic part of the Jesus tradition,³⁴ though he explains it along the magical lines urged by Jesus's early detractors.³⁵

These observations do not resolve the question of individual miracle stories in the Gospels,³⁶ but they do challenge one basic assumption that has often lodged the burden of proof against them: against some traditional assumptions, one cannot dismiss particular stories on the basis that Jesus did not perform miracles.³⁷ One need not, therefore, attribute stories about Jesus's miracles purely to legendary accretions.³⁸ Nor should one expect that the church's later Christology led them to

intervention for historiographic study (Martin, "Historians on Miracles," 414–15), but that caveat differs from the claim that Jesus was not a healer.

30. *Marginal Jew*, 2:678–772; for historical evidence supporting Jesus as a miracle worker, see *Marginal Jew*, 2:617–45; see also Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*; Blomberg, *Gospels*, 127–36. Eve, "Meier," however, is less positive toward the criterion of multiple attestation. Martin, "Historians on Miracles," 417, understands Meier as arguing that historians ought not to decide for or against the possibility of miracles, an approach that would inadvertently close off the possibility of accepting evidence for one.

31. Brown, *Death*, 143–44.

32. Betz, *Jesus*, 58.

33. *Ibid.*, 60.

34. Smith, *Magician*, 16. There are both Jewish and Greek parallels, but not regarding roughly contemporary teachers or philosophers; characters of the distant past, such as Enoch and Noah in *1 Enoch*, were special candidates for traditional embroidery. Even Bultmann, who emphasized later Hellenistic miracle additions to the tradition, recognizes that Palestinian Jewish Christians told stories of Jesus's marvels, but he heavily emphasized Hellenistic analogies (McGinley, *Form-Criticism*, 67).

35. Neusner, in "Foreword," xxvii, and *New Testament*, 5, 173, offers perhaps the harshest critique of Smith's magical thesis. Some recent scholars have accused Smith of forging an "ancient" gospel source ("Secret Mark"; see Jeffery, *Secret Gospel*; Carlson, *Hoax*; for varying views, see, e.g., Hedrick, "Stalemate"; Stroumsa, "Testimony"; Ehrman, "Response"), but his magician thesis has been judged wanting for reasons specific to that thesis.

36. See, e.g., the concerns expressed by Lincoln, *John*, 41–42 (who questions the historical authenticity of some miracles narrated in the Fourth Gospel but distinguishes these questions from belief in Jesus's resurrection or his ability to heal); Boobyer, "Miracles," 45–47; Hunter, *Work*, 86. Many scholars recognize that Jesus performed miracles yet profess agnosticism about the authenticity of most *specific* miracle accounts (R. H. Fuller and Alan Richardson, summarized in Maher, "Writings," 167). In the sixteenth century, John Locke acknowledged that the probability of particular miracle claims might be in question but argued that the cumulative weight of multiple testimony to miracles surrounding one person increased the overall probability exponentially (Burns, *Debate*, 68–69).

37. Against Bultmann and other predecessors, the majority of historical Jesus scholars today (e.g., Morna Hooker, E. P. Sanders, and most of the Third Quest) argue that whoever is making a case (whether for or against a tradition) bears the burden of proof (see esp. Winter, "Burden of Proof").

38. Dibelius, *Tradition*, 70–103, treats some of the miracle stories (the "tales") thus; so also Bultmann, *Tradition*, 227; cf. Bultmann's willingness to compare even "Fairy stories" and "folk-songs" (*ibid.*, 6; cf.,

invent many accounts of Jesus's miracles;³⁹ it may have influenced their interpretation and shaping of the accounts,⁴⁰ but there was little reason to invent miracles for christological reasons. We lack substantial contemporary evidence that Jewish people expected a miracle-working messiah, and nonmessianic figures like Paul were also believed to be miracle workers (2 Cor 12:12). Rather than Christology causing miracle claims to be invented, claims already circulating about Jesus's miracles, once combined with other claims about Jesus, undoubtedly contributed to apologetic for a higher Christology.⁴¹ Some of the offending "Christology," moreover, could apply to Jesus as a great eschatological prophet or ruler, roles not without analogies among contemporary figures.⁴²

The form of miracle stories typically proves less distinctive than their content.⁴³ Granted, comparison with other ancient accounts reveals a number of common motifs, sometimes suggesting that familiar forms of narration may have helped shape how stories were recounted.⁴⁴ At the same time, with regard to the basic

e.g., 229, 236). Below I address the form-critical and (in subsequent chapters) comparative questions they raise, but only quite briefly, because others have addressed them far more extensively (e.g., McGinley, *Form-Criticism*; Eve, *Miracles*). Cotter shows that the narrative function of miracle stories in the Gospels differ starkly from even the ancient narratives with which Dibelius and Bultmann compared them (*Portrait*, 3–4). As I shall note later in the book, even the miracle accounts in the Gospels that some scholars most readily classified as "tales" (esp. nature miracles) have some parallels in eyewitness narratives today.

39. Cf. Bultmann, *Tradition*, 219, 226. Rudolf Pesch treated christological interest in a Gospel account as a mark of inauthenticity, rather than allowing for later shaping of authentic tradition (see the summary in Maher, "Writings," 169–70).

40. For the Gospel writers shaping their materials in light of the literary context in which they embed them, see, e.g., Léon-Dufour, "Fonction," 329–31.

41. Maher, "Writings," 173. Bultmann, *Tradition*, 229, is able to marshal only the barest evidence for a miracle-working messianic expectation (some of it out of context).

42. See Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 238–67, 523–40. Even some sorts of higher "christological" elements may be earlier than exegetes have often supposed; see Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, passim; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 268–82, 540–49.

43. Cf., e.g., the conclusions of McGinley, *Form-Criticism*, 63–64, 153; formal observations in 76–95; criticism of Bultmann's anachronistic categories in Cotter, *Portrait*, 1–2. Some formal observations (e.g., in Funk, "Form," 90–94) seem less profound when we consider not just narrative structures more generally but also the elements expected in ancient healings and other pre-narrative characteristics (though Funk's careful analysis, distilled on 89, is noteworthy; see the helpful collection of motifs and observations about their basic organization in Léon-Dufour, "Fonction," 295–305). Robinson, "Challenge," 322, rightly concurs with Jeremias's critique of Dibelius's mostly arbitrary distinction between paradigms and novellen (as in Dibelius, *Tradition*, 70–103; some accounts appear more elaborate, but we know of no "class of 'storytellers'" alongside the eyewitnesses), for all Dibelius's insights in some of his other form-critical work. For further critique of Dibelius's subjective speculation here, see McGinley, *Form-Criticism*, 48–59 (esp. 56–59); on narrower grounds, Wikenhauser, *Introduction*, 264. George Ladd attributed to Henry Cadbury (with whom he studied) the observation that a genuine miracle story would necessarily have the same form as a fabricated one (D'Elia, *Place*, 26). Scholars classify Gospel miracle stories in various ways; for one fairly simple approach, see Léon-Dufour, "Fonction," 306–13; for an older article (in Metzger, *Index*, 20), see Jordan, "Classification."

44. For common motifs, see especially Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, passim. One distinctive feature of miracle stories about Jesus is the emphasis on his rejection (*ibid.*, 236–37). For subsequent forms, see, e.g., Stephens, *Healeth*, 69–70; in some Asian churches (but far more abstract and generalized than in the Gospels), cf. Oblau, "Healing," 322; for some transculturally frequent elements, see Duffin, *Miracles*, 168.

narration of information, there are only so many ways to recount a miracle: most fundamentally, one expects at the least a statement of the problem and its cure, and a storyteller wishing to emphasize the miracle worker would naturally recount, by knowledge or presumably legitimate inference, the audience's astonishment. Thus the most basic format of a miracle story is, as one would expect, a description of the circumstances of the healing, the healing itself, and its confirmation or effects on the audience.⁴⁵ A number of the modern miracle stories recounted later in the book take on particular forms because of space constraints and the first two necessary, basic elements; while I have structured those accounts, however, every one of them derives from "tradition" (my interviews with or reading of sources, a significant number of them eyewitnesses or the persons cured).⁴⁶ My point in offering this observation is that one cannot make ready inferences about the historical authenticity of accounts based solely on their form.

Addressing the historical claim (my primary purpose here) does not mean that other literary approaches to Jesus's miracles are unimportant. It may, however, point to an aspect of the Gospels' theology with which modern Western readers sometimes find themselves uncomfortable. Jesus presumably intended his miracles as prophetic symbolic actions, hence with some metaphoric significance from the start;⁴⁷ commentators are right to find even more figurative significance on the level of the narratives in which we have these accounts. In my commentaries, I often take note of this significance,⁴⁸ and one could easily devote an entire book to this discussion were that one's focus.

Yet for all their symbolic import, sometimes even as a sort of acted parables, they are introduced as straightforward narratives of events, differently from how

45. Aune, *Environment*, 50. For people marveling after miracles, see, e.g., Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* passim. In the opening story of Luke, for example, note fear (Luke 1:12, 64–65), astonishment (Luke 1:12, 29), praise (Luke 1:42), and joy (Luke 1:58). The audience response may characterize a conventional way to report the story but would not be surprising in most cultures (cf., e.g., Hickson, *Heal*, 120–21, 129).

46. Including converts unaware of earlier forms. In some cases the third element also appears, though often today in terms of the doctors' amazement (see esp. observations in Duffin, *Miracles*, 116–17, 142–43, 185). Onlookers' amazement in instant healings may be taken for granted, whereas modern hearers are more interested in medical observations (because these are what establish a miracle for many modern critics). Yet I have no reason to doubt that most reports of surprise (from doctors or others) are authentic (even if sometimes worded more dramatically than necessary), since anomalies by definition diverge from the norm. (Of course, not all claimed cures are genuinely anomalous, and for this reason and others doctors' views of recoveries, based on a wider sampling of cases, may differ from patients'.) I have condensed accounts and the third element is less relevant to my purpose for reciting them.

47. Baum, "Heilungswunder," strikes the right balance; cf. also Robinson, "Challenge," 330–31; Davey, "Healing," 61; O'Connell, "Miracles," 54; Van den Berghe, "Wonderverhalen"; Ellenburg, "Review," 176, 180; symbolic significance of the feedings in Barton, "Feedings," 113; certainly John finds additional significance in his signs (see, e.g., Kim, "Significance"). On the reliability of miracle reports, see earlier Sabourin, "Powers." Those who correctly emphasize the layers of interpretation in extant sources about miracles also often recognize historical material behind them (e.g., Pilch, "Understanding Miracles," 1211). Earlier redaction critics, however, were often excessive in their speculation about layers (cf. Fuller, *Miracles*; criticisms in, e.g., Van Cangh, "Sources").

48. E.g., Keener, *Matthew*, 258–73 passim (e.g., 273), 288–91, 301–7.

Jesus's parables are introduced.⁴⁹ Modern interpreters who find exclusively non-physical spiritual significance in these accounts, sometimes allegorizing them more than other narratives,⁵⁰ may read our cultural expectations into the accounts. We do not play down the physical dimensions of healing claims with regard to shrines of Asclepius, for example; why do we limit the theology in narratives about Jesus to what feels comfortable to us as antsupernaturalists, or even as dualists emphasizing only the soul? Accounts in shrines of Asclepius seem designed to encourage faith for further cures, and Christians in much of the Majority World read the Gospels' accounts of miracles in much the same way.⁵¹ My interest here is historical, but it may also have some implications for how we can broaden our reading of these texts.

Miracle Claims for Jesus's Early Movement

If such extranormal experiences characterized the public activity of Jesus, there is no reason to doubt that they could have also characterized the activities of those viewed as his successors. Perhaps Jesus even deliberately trained his disciples as his successors, as teachers normally trained their disciples to be, expecting them to be able to perform the same activity that he did (cf. Mark 9:18–19, 28–29; 11:23; Luke 9:40–41; 17:6). Indeed, the majority of the signs claimed in Acts, as in the Gospels, are healings and exorcisms⁵²—precisely the claims Christian sources in later centuries also offered from contemporary eyewitnesses.⁵³

The writers of the Gospels plainly do not include all the miracle stories available to them; often they summarize (in the Gospels, e.g., Mark 1:34; 3:10; 6:5, 56; for “Q” see Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22). Likewise in Acts, Luke cannot be reporting all of Paul's miracles, which Paul's letters indicate pervaded his public ministry (cf. Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12).⁵⁴ In fact, given Paul's claims that such signs characterized his

49. Noted already in Everts, “Exorcist,” 360.

50. Note criticism in Judge, *First Christians*, 416–23 (esp. 416). The practice of deriving only spiritual applications from accounts of Jesus's healings has a long history, including in eighteenth-century cessationist Protestantism (see Kidd, “Healing,” 166). Some Majority World interpreters today, both on popular and scholarly levels, complain about this Western approach (e.g., Tari, *Wind*, 56; cf. Yung, *Quest*, 7; see further ch. 7); cf. also Catholic charismatics in Roelofs, “Thought,” 227.

51. Granted, some readers (e.g., more intuitively oriented persons) identify more readily with narrative characters in healing narratives than others do (see one study in Village, “Influence”).

52. In contrast to, say, commanding bedbugs to leave, as in *Acts John* 60–61. I leave aside discussion of Mark 16:17–18, which most scholars, including myself, regard as a later addition; see Metzger, *Text*, 226–29; idem, *Textual Commentary*, 122–26; though cf. the contrary case in Farmer, *Verses*, on external (3–75) and internal (79–103) grounds.

53. I treat these later in the book. The explanation for those claims will vary in part according to one's view of nature, but that is a theological and philosophical matter, not a question of historical data per se. Contemporary examples illustrate that people may believe that they have witnessed such phenomena (see discussion below).

54. See Caird, *Apostolic Age*, 64; Williams, *Miracle Stories*, 6–9; and, at length, Jervell, “Paul in Acts: Theology”; and esp. idem, *Unknown Paul*, 77–95 (pace Bruno Bauer's sometimes uncontested 1850 claim).

evangelizing of new areas, we have greater reason to believe instead that Luke selects only a few incidents and periods in Paul's life in which to describe miracles, from a much broader base of tradition available to him. Against scholars who attribute Luke's emphasis on the miraculous to legend and his fixation on marvels,⁵⁵ a more complete narrative of Paul's ministry might have included more reports than Luke does. Like Jesus, Paul was a miracle worker, although this activity may not have characterized all periods of his ministry equally.

Thus, whereas Luke does not describe miracles in Corinth, Paul reports them as a dramatic and observable part of his ministry there (2 Cor 12:12). Whereas Luke mentions miracles in merely several locations, Paul seems to believe that they occurred virtually wherever he preached (Rom 15:18–19).⁵⁶ That Paul appeals to his audiences' eyewitness knowledge that miracles occurred through his ministry (2 Cor 12:12; cf. Gal 3:5) argues against deliberate fabrication on his part; he genuinely believed that miracles were occurring through his ministry, and that his audiences in locations like Corinth would have agreed with him.

If one responds that, against Acts, most of the signs Paul himself claims might have been effected psychosomatically or coincidentally, one could provide the same response for most of those that Luke reports about Paul.⁵⁷ That is, whatever one's philosophic approach, one need not question the historical claims that such recoveries occurred. Luke associates no nature miracles with Paul. But one should note that the expectations of both Luke and Paul concerning signs (Rom 15:19) seem to have exceeded those of their non-Christian contemporaries,⁵⁸ with the possible exceptions of any signs prophets or magicians underlying the later depictions of Apollonius of Tyana and others like him.⁵⁹ That Paul anticipated noticeable

Schmithals's denial (without evidence) of the normal biblical sense of "signs and wonders and miracles" in 2 Cor 12:12 should not be seriously entertained (see Borgen, "Paul to Luke," 175–76, noting also that a meaning intelligible to the "super-apostles" is necessary here; cf. extrabiblical miracle terminology, much of it interchangeable, addressed in Remus, "Terminology," 535–51). Unlike later apologists using signs to validate Christianity in general, Paul often had to validate his own (see Kelhoffer, "Paul and Justin").

55. E.g., Scott, *Literature*, 101. Many scholars treat many miracle stories in Acts as edited legends or reworked pagan stories (see, e.g., Kanda, "Form," passim, e.g., 547, 550–51).

56. Nor does Luke invent the cases that he reports. Despite the opportunity to parallel Paul's experience in a storm with Jesus, who stilled one (Luke 8:24–25), Luke does not bring a miraculous end to the storm, though he does recount that all miraculously survived it (Acts 27:24–26, 44, in "we" material). This is in spite of his work's heavy emphasis on paralleling characters (e.g., Ehrhardt, *Acts*, 12–13; Boismard and Lamouille, *Actes*, 2:26; O'Toole, "Parallels between Jesus and Disciples"; Verheyden, "Unity"; Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 181–84; recently and in significant detail, Clark, *Parallel Lives*).

57. Skeptical observers and those who claim healing often differ over whether supernatural causes are at work (though some do not completely rule out the alternate explanation, e.g., *Science Digest* contributing editor William Nolen in "Woman," 36–37, addressing accurate prediction of the spontaneous remission of a tumor).

58. At least, of those about whom reports remain extant. Signs workers drew dramatic attention, but usually only elite writings have survived, meaning that names in philosophic schools, which were propagated by their followers, are better attested; Jesus's movement as a genuine one founded by a miracle-working sage is distinctive.

59. Most of the extant evidence for Apollonius is significantly later (see below); Josephus's sign prophets are from a more relevant period but do not perform healings or, as far as Josephus is concerned, even their promised sign. For a cross-cultural approach to folk healers, see Pilch, "Sickness," 193–94.

miraculous phenomena in the Christian communities (1 Cor 12:9–10, 28–30; Gal 3:5) distinguishes those communities from other synagogues and religious associations in antiquity (such associations contrasted with, say, temples of Asclepius, where healings were expected).⁶⁰

Granted, accounts of unusual phenomena could grow over time; even a third-generation oral tradition with exact attributions could report dramatically paranormal events such as apparitions,⁶¹ some of which may have grown with time. But only a few scholars date Luke this much later than Paul,⁶² and certainly on the view of authorship argued in my commentary on Acts⁶³ a three-generation duration of transmission will not do as an explanation for Luke's accounts in Acts. The same should be noted for the Gospels: Mark is replete with miracle stories and probably appears within four decades of Jesus's crucifixion.⁶⁴ Contrary to assumptions that miracle stories would always grow in time, other Gospels' use of Mark shows that abbreviation was as common as development.⁶⁵ Although expansion sometimes added details for good storytelling,⁶⁶ ancient rhetorical practices reveal that often even these developments could appeal to common sense or other oral traditions.⁶⁷ Writing within the lifetime of some witnesses and those who knew

60. For healing deities and aretalogies, see, e.g., Stambaugh and Balch, *Environment*, 43; Grant, *Gods*, 54. But as I have noted, these differ from human agents of healings such as we find in the Gospels, Acts, and Philostratus's accounts of Apollonius.

61. Eunapius *Lives* 459–60. Eunapius (b. ca. 345 C.E.) idealizes Neoplatonists “to compete with the biographies of Christian saints” (Matthews, “Eunapius,” 569) and hence does not provide strong background for our period.

62. See Keener, *Acts*, introduction, ch. 10; for surveys of views from those who date Acts later yet recognize that the large majority of scholars date Acts in the first century, see Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 359–63; Tyson, “Dates”; idem, *Marcion*, ix.

63. Treated in Keener, *Acts*, introduction, ch. 11; see also my excursus on the “we narratives” at Acts 16:10 in that commentary.

64. I tend to prefer a date for Mark ca. 64 (with, e.g., Bruce, “Date,” 78, citing consensus), less than three and a half decades after the crucifixion; soon after 66 the warning to flee to the mountains (Mark 13:14) became irrelevant (Bruce, “Date,” 80–81); for a fit after Nero's persecution, see Senior, “Swords.” Nevertheless, dating the Gospels unfortunately includes a substantial amount of guesswork. For 65–70, which may be the majority position, see, e.g., Anderson, *Mark*, 26; Aune, *Dictionary of Rhetoric*, 289 (citing “critical consensus”); pre-70, Hengel, *Mark*, 20. As Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 16–17, notes, those who date it after 70 date it not long after (for shortly after 70, see, e.g., Juel, *Messiah and Temple*, 212; Theissen, *Gospels in Context*, 261–62; even Smith, *Magician*, 11, dates it no later than 75). A smaller number prefer even substantially earlier dates (cf., e.g., Kennedy, “Source Criticism,” 134–35, citing external evidence).

65. See discussion in Léon-Dufour, “Fonction,” 324–26; in the Gospel tradition generally, see Sanders, *Tendencies*, 19, 46–87, 88–189, 272 (effectively refuting Bultmann); cf. Stein, “Criteria,” 238–40; Frye, “Analogies in Literatures,” 283–84. This pattern holds true in the second century and later: the church told the original stories less rather than more (Achtemeier, *Miracle Tradition*, 178, 215, 217, followed by Hultgren, “Stories,” 134).

66. Cf., e.g., Plutarch *Alex.* 70.3.

67. For rhetorical elaboration without changing meaning, see, e.g., *Rhet. Alex.* 22, 1434b.8–11; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Lit. Comp.* 9; Theon *Progymn.* 4.37–42, 80–82; Longinus *Subl.* 11.1; Hermogenes *Progymn.* 3. On Chreia, 7; Aphthonius *Progymn.* 3. On Chreia, 23S, 4R; 4. On Maxim, 9–10; cf. Menander Rhetor 2.3, 379.2–4. For supplementing from other sources, see, e.g., Pliny *Nat. pref.* 17; Eunapius *Lives* 494; Kennedy, “Source Criticism,” 138–39; Aune, *Environment*, 65. Mediterranean storytellers regularly drew on a wider range of tradition than they specify; for example, though countless allusions in Homer (e.g.,

them, Mark's portrait of Jesus as miracle worker makes sense only if those who knew him believed him to be such.⁶⁸

Seeking to distinguish earlier tradition from Luke's editing in the miracles Luke recounts in Acts, Benjamin Williams compares Luke's editing of miracles in Mark. By this method he identifies consistent redactional patterns relevant to Luke's portrayal of miracles.⁶⁹ Williams's approach should follow in a general way from the logical premise that Luke would value historical tradition in his second volume (a historical monograph) no less than in his first (on its own terms a biography).⁷⁰ Williams concludes that, for example, Luke both retains the substance of Mark's accounts and feels free to compose audience reactions of astonishment, fear, and so forth if Mark lacks these (though one might well infer the likelihood of such reactions from human nature). Luke especially adds acclamations of praise to God.⁷¹ He nowhere adds discourses to his miracle stories, though he could abbreviate, "improve the vocabulary, or even omit discourses altogether."⁷² The essential substance of the miracles themselves remains unchanged.

One might object that the nature of Luke's sources in the second volume could differ from those in the Gospels. Probably there is at least some difference; in contrast to many of his sources in the Gospel, many of his sources in Acts were probably oral, altering the character of the "editing."⁷³ At the same time, we might

Od. 12.69–72) were developed later, they are often so incomplete by themselves that it is clear that Homer alludes to commonly known fuller stories that he does not record. I treat these issues more fully in Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 126–61, 459–82 *passim*.

68. See Ellens, "Miracles and Process," 1–2.

69. Williams, *Miracle Stories*, 13, 35–54. For example (52), Luke exercises the greatest redactional liberty in reformulating the conclusion of Markan miracles; Luke reshapes Markan crowd reactions thoroughly (e.g., in Luke 5:15, 26; 6:11; 8:47), allowing overlap with Mark only in "individual words." Their readily memorable form makes miracle stories one of early Christian tradition's most recognizable narrative forms (Williams, 15). Still, Weissenrieder, *Images*, 336–37, suggests that there may be differences between the approach to healing in the Gospel and Acts; cf. also Kanda, "Form" (e.g., 230, 534, 547, though in my opinion overstated). Some might reflect the difference between Jesus as bearer of numinous power and his followers; others may reflect the new Diaspora milieu in Acts. Early Jewish writers redacted biblical miracle accounts to varying degrees (Koskenniemi, *Miracle-Workers*, 300).

70. On the Gospels as biography, see, e.g., Talbert, *Gospel*, *passim*; Aune, *Environment*, 46–76; Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 117–36; Burridge, *Gospels*, 109–239; idem, "People," 121–22; idem, "Biography, Ancient"; Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*; Keener, *Matthew*, 16–24; idem, *John*, 11–37; idem, *Historical Jesus*, 73–84; Ytterbrink, *Biography*; on Acts as some form of ancient historiography, see, e.g., Palmer, "Monograph" (1992); idem, "Monograph" (1993); Johnson, *Acts*, 3–7; idem, "Luke-Acts," 406; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 127; Balch, "ΜΕΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ," 141–42, 149–54 (political history); idem, "Genre," *passim*, especially 11–19; idem, "Gospels (forms)," 948–49; Marguerat, *Histoire*, 49 (although noting overlap with biography); idem, "Pionnier"; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 77–78; Flichy, "État des recherches," 28–32; further discussion in the introduction to Keener, *Acts*. On ancient biography of recent characters including substantial historical information, see, e.g., idem, "Otho."

71. Williams, *Miracle Stories*, 53.

72. *Ibid.*, 54.

73. The exact wording of discourse was probably also fluid in oral traditions behind any written accounts even in the Gospels, with the exception of some carefully remembered sayings of Jesus (see, e.g., Dunn, *New Perspective*, 112 [with 110], 118, 122; cf. Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 333–34; Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 275–85). On the special question of speech material, see Keener, *Acts*, introduction, ch. 8.

expect Luke's historical interests in the second volume to remain analogous to those in the first⁷⁴ and hence expect him, as Williams argues, to continue to shape rather than begin to fabricate his miracle stories in his second volume.⁷⁵

More tellingly, whatever we might lose from the nature of Luke's sources in his second volume, we gain more. Some of his miracle reports appear in eyewitness material much closer to Luke than his Gospel sources were. That is, claims of what we might call extranormal activity, including healings and one raising, appear in his "we" narratives, usually attributed at least to an eyewitness source or (for many scholars) even to Luke as an eyewitness (Acts 20:9–12; 21:11; 27:21–26; 28:3–6, 8–9).⁷⁶ Luke is clearly convinced that miracles occur; Paul is likewise convinced that they happened through his ministry (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12). Modern scholars are also usually convinced that Jesus and many early Christians (e.g., second-century exorcists) were believed to perform miracles. If Jesus and his first followers believed that they experienced healing miracles firsthand, they witnessed recoveries that they believed to be divinely extranormal in character. How can modern hearers relate to these claims?

Methodological Questions

From a modern perspective this evidence raises two kinds of questions. First, although early Christian literature emphasizes an abundance of miracle workers not attested to this degree in other first-century movements, miracle claims in other settings were abundant in antiquity. How do the bulk of the Christian claims compare with analogous claims? Should all be explained psychosomatically, as deception, as misinterpretation, or in other nonsupernatural terms? Are some claims likelier than others, and in which circles? Must every claim be explained in the same manner?

Second, if modernist assumptions are incompatible with supernatural claims, does that conflict therefore justify ruling out a priori the possibility of such activity? Or should we consider the other alternative, reevaluating some assumptions of modernity, and thus leave open at least the possibility of nonnatural (in this

74. If anything, the second volume's character is more often regarded as ancient historiography than the first, and ancient historiography, despite its differences from its modern namesake, does involve historical interest (see Keener, *Historical Jesus*, ch. 7).

75. Because some forms of miracle stories, particularly exorcisms and a form of raising the dead story, characterized their Middle Eastern origin more than Hellenism (Williams, *Miracle Stories*, 22–26, 32), he hopes to identify the period in the Jewish missionary movement's expansion into the Hellenistic world from which some characteristics derive (32–33). Far from being primarily late forms, "the bulk of these stories mirror the needs and convictions of Christians in the first three or four decades of the new movement, during which they essentially took shape" (168).

76. See, e.g., Nock, *Essays*, 827; Dupont, *Sources*, 164–65; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 103; Thornton, *Zeuge*; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 66, 82; Fusco, "Sezioni-noi"; Hanson, *Acts*, 21–24; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 312–34; Barnett, *Birth*, 190–92; Cadbury, "We in Luke-Acts"; Dibelius, *Studies in Acts*, 135–37; and sources mentioned in the note in the introduction to this book.

case, most often theistic) explanations? Whatever answers I give to the second set of questions will not satisfy everyone, but I will not have addressed the historical question fully without at least raising them. The veracity of the events aside, the question of explanatory models remains a legitimate subject of historical inquiry, and causation, albeit especially human causation, is a common historical concern. Nevertheless, for purely historical purposes, in the final analysis, the question of whether or not eyewitnesses claimed such phenomena does not depend on the explanations or models proposed for these phenomena. Thus, although the question of whether events happened may overlap with the question of causation (most theistic believers, certainly, treat them together), in principle I allow for these questions to be treated separately. This book focuses especially on the former question but will also repeat and offer a challenge to rethink the nature of the second one.

Ancient Miracle Claims outside Christianity

Even the gods have spoken of me as of a divine man, not only on many occasions to private individuals, but also in public. —Philostratus *Ep. Apoll.* 48.¹

They tell of R. Hanina b. Dosa that he used to pray over the sick and say, “This one will live,” or “This one will die.” They said to him, “How knowest thou?” He replied, “If my prayer is fluent in my mouth I know that he is accepted; and if it is not I know that he is rejected.” —*m. Ber.* 5:5.²

The Gospels and Acts belong to the biographic³ and historical⁴ genres, respectively, with the Gospel of Luke possibly straddling both.⁵ Nevertheless, they

1. Trans. F. C. Conybeare, LCL 2:445.

2. Trans. H. Danby, 6.

3. Talbert, *Gospel*, passim; Kennedy, “Source Criticism,” 128–34; Aune, *Environment*, 46–76; Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 117–36; idem, *New People*, 63–64; idem, *Gospel Truth*, 137 (reversing his earlier skepticism in Stanton, *Gospels*, 19); Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, 10; Burridge, *Gospels*, 109–239; idem, “People,” 121–22; idem, “Biography, Ancient”; Cross, “Genres,” 402–4; Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*; Plümacher, *Geschichte*, 13–14; Keener, *Matthew*, 16–24; idem, *John*, 11–37; idem, *Historical Jesus*, 73–84; Ytterbrink, *Biography*; Crossan, “Necessary,” 27. For the historical character of biographies concerning recent persons, see Keener, “Otho.”

4. Dibelius, *Studies in Acts*, 123–37; Cadbury, *Acts in History*, passim; Plümacher, “Luke as Historian,” 398; idem, *Lukas*, 33–38 (comparing mission speeches), 137–39; idem, *Geschichte*, 1–32; idem, “Cicero und Lukas,” 772–73; idem, “Monographie”; idem, “Historiker”; Palmer, “Monograph” (1992); idem, “Monograph” (1993); Schmidt, “Influences,” 59; Fuller, “Classics,” 189 (addressing George Kennedy’s comments); Petersen, “Genre”; Bovon, *Theologian*, 5; Johnson, *Acts*, 3–7; idem, “Luke-Acts,” 406; Stagg, *Acts*, 17; Wall, “Acts,” 12–13; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 127; Cross, “Genres,” 404–6; Tuckett, *Luke*, 29; Ehrman, *Historical Introduction*, 142–44; deSilva, *Introduction*, 349–51; Balch, “ΜΕΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ,” 141–42, 149–54 (political history); idem, “Genre,” passim, especially 11–19; idem, “Gospels (forms),” 948–49; Marguerat, *Histoire*, 49 (although noting overlap with biography); idem, “Pionnier”; Eckey, *Apostelgeschichte*, 20–31; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 77–78; Flichy, *L’oeuvre de Luc*; idem, “État des recherches,” 28–32 (reviewing recent research); Rothschild, *Rhetoric of History*, 296; Guijarro Oporto, “Articulación literaria”; Riesner, “Zuverlässigkeit,” 39; see further discussion in Keener, *Acts*, the introduction.

5. Cf., e.g., Keener, “Luke-Acts and Historical Jesus”; on the possibility of mixed genres, cf. Spencer, *Acts*, 13–14; Barrett, *Acts*, lxxviii–lxxix; for mixed genres being common in the early imperial period,

report signs more often, given the amount of space available, than typical ancient biographers or historians did. Various factors help to account for this disparity, such as greater skepticism among elite readers, who account for the target audience of the bulk of extant histories, but the disparity especially reflects the different focus of the Gospels and Acts. Unlike most other works, the Gospels offer the biography of a miracle worker and Acts the history of a charismatic movement's missions thrust. Reporting sample and significant miracle accounts was thus part of the story they had chosen to recount.

Despite this relative contrast, belief in and reports of miracles were widespread in antiquity. In this chapter, I shall survey first pagan⁶ accounts from the Greco-Roman world and then Jewish ones, which are closer in character to the religious world of Jesus and his earliest followers. Other scholars have explored or surveyed these works in much greater detail, and my point is not to rehearse their work. In this book, as I have noted, I wish to emphasize the possibility of genuine eyewitness claims to extraordinary recoveries and the like; hence, I resort especially to socially analogous contemporary claims where there is less possibility of legendary accretion. It is nevertheless necessary, at least by way of survey, to point out claims of similar phenomena from antiquity. The appropriateness of explanations ranging from eyewitness reports to legend may vary from one example to another, composed as they were at various chronological distances from the events they depict.

Gentile Greco-Roman Miracle Accounts

Greek and Roman stories of paranormal phenomena provide a context for how many early auditors, especially those from Gentile backgrounds, would have heard miracle stories in the Gospels and Acts. Nevertheless, Bultmann unfortunately sometimes exaggerated the parallels between Hellenistic and Gospel miracle stories, and certainly he exaggerated the likelihood of the former influencing the traditions in the latter.⁷ Indeed, as I shall note later, it is modern Western academic

see Aune, "Problem of Genre," 10–11, 48; idem, *Dictionary of Rhetoric*, 307; Burridge, *Gospels*, 33–34, 56–61. Luke and Acts need not, however, belong to the same genre (cf. Palmer, "Monograph" [1993], 3; Parsons, "Unity," esp. 45–48).

6. I here follow the conventional nomenclature, not intended pejoratively. I am more than happy to change nomenclature once a widely understood equivalent becomes available in common usage (neither "Gentile" nor "polytheist" quite captures the sense, and "non-Christian Gentile," while adequate, is cumbersome).

7. See Bultmann, *Tradition*, 236–39; idem, "Study," 36–37; Kundsinn, "Christianity," 123; note the concerns in McGinley, *Form-Criticism*, 67–68, 73–75; Sabourin, *Miracles*, 67; for trends away from seeking such analogies already half a century ago, see Neil, "Nature Miracles," 370. Some scholars think that Bultmann was more cautious than to treat the Hellenistic stories as *sources* for the Gospel narratives, but that he regarded them as merely part of the milieu (Loos, *Miracles*, 136–37, summarizes and critiques this approach as a generalization that proves nothing with respect to influence); but some of his language in *Tradition* sounds even stronger than this. He did allow that the Palestinian church ascribed miracles to Jesus, treating the "Hellenistic" stage as later (Bultmann, *Tradition*, 239).

skepticism about superhuman phenomena that is historically idiosyncratic, so it is logically illegitimate to lump together all supernatural claims as if they reflect historical borrowing.⁸ Nevertheless, the Evangelists produced their gospels for a milieu in which claims of superhuman healings and other phenomena were widespread, and we must survey this context.⁹

Belief in miracles was alive and well in the Roman Empire.¹⁰ One could treat here a variety of paranormal claims, but some appear more relevant than others. For the sake of space, for instance, I leave aside discussion of prodigies, which appear abundantly in ancient historians but are widely agreed to differ in character from the sort of paranormal phenomena we are investigating here.¹¹ Most ancient supernatural or suprahuman healing accounts, especially in the first century, appear to involve particular healing sanctuaries, which are not readily comparable with accounts in the Gospels and Acts. I treat these first below. But we also have some reports of Greek miracle workers, which may prove more relevant and to which I will turn afterward.

Healing Sanctuaries

Deities like Asclepius and Serapis, who were believed able to provide practical benefits like healings, often supplanted more traditional, less practically benevolent deities in popular devotion.¹² Although healing was particularly associated with

8. Scholars often emphasize that the Gospels belong to a nonmodern setting, when people believed in miracles (e.g., McKenzie, "Signs," 5, with examples on 8–9), often without recognizing that the modern West is what is historically and culturally more idiosyncratic. While "folk literature" may relish "extraordinary" subjects (see, e.g., Thompson, *Motif-Index*, 4–200, as cited in Pyysiäinen, "Fascination," 21), even a true account of the universe as we know it would have comprised "marvels" to our predecessors.

9. The soundest approach takes seriously the context in which Jesus worked without seeking to reduce him to that context (see here helpfully Mills, *Agents*, 12); each ancient figure had some distinctive characteristics, and this is not least true of Jesus.

10. E.g., Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 26 (following Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 274), though noting that the relevant models are Elijah and Elisha and the closest parallels appear in Hellenistic Jewish sources (Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 27–28). For a collection of sources, see Cotter, *Miracles*, 35–47 (for Hellenistic heroes; for biblical miracle workers, see 47–53; more briefly, idem, "Miracle Stories"); Cotter rightly warns (*Miracles*, 7) against abusing the collection in a way that looks for genetic sources rather than a cultural framework for understanding. More briefly, see the survey in Achtemeier, *Miracle Tradition*, 205–9; Van Cangh, "Miracles grecs," 213–26; McGinley, *Form-Criticism*, 119–43; George, "Miracles"; earlier, see Herrlich, *Wunderkuren* (as cited in Sabourin, *Miracles*, 250). For a concise but plentiful listing of ancient miracle stories, see Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 57–61 (plus the Gospels and Acts, 61–62).

11. See Léon-Dufour, "Conclusion," 359–63. For an extensive albeit not exhaustive listing of ancient prodigy reports, see Keener, *Matthew*, 568–69 (including Livy 21.62.1–5; 24.10.6–11; 27.11.2–5; 33.26.7–8; 43.13.3–6; Arrian *Alex.* 4.15.7; Aulus Gellius 4.6.2); also, e.g., Tacitus *Ann.* 12.43, 64; 14.32; 15.22, 47. Prodigies could sometimes be called "signs" (Arrian *Alex.* 4.15.8), but for prognostication of future events rather than revelation of divine character. Collections of prodigies also appear in China from the Six Dynasties (317–589) and the T'ang eras (618–906), with about three thousand examples (McClenon, *Events*, 152, citing Kao, *Tales*, 48), and in medieval Japanese and 1600s Korean collections (McClenon, *Events*, 155).

12. See Grant, *Gods*, 38, 54, 66–67; Nilsson, *Piety*, 171; Kee, *Miracle*, 104. On healing deities, see Graf, "Healing Deities"; Martins Terra, "Milagres"; for Baal, but critiquing the view that he was *primarily* a healing deity, see Brown, "Asclepius"; in ancient Egypt, Jansen-Winkeln, "Healing Deities"; in Roman Egypt, Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 46–52; for a collection of sources, see Cotter, *Miracles*, 11–34 (Heracles,

Asclepius, on whom I comment further below, it was not limited to him. Many people believed that the Egyptian deity Serapis brought healing dreams daily in Alexandria;¹³ he was also known for healing through dreams in his Corinthian sanctuaries.¹⁴ Some people even identified Serapis with Asclepius since both specialized in healing.¹⁵ Isis, associated with Serapis, was known as a healing deity.¹⁶ People also honored other deities¹⁷ and (increasingly over time) heroes¹⁸ associated with healing powers. The Epidauros inscriptions¹⁹ suggest that Apollo was honored alongside Asclepius;²⁰ Apollo was also a deity traditionally associated with healing.²¹

ASCLEPIUS SHRINES

But Asclepius was the Greeks' most prominent superhuman healer. According to the usual version of the ancient myth, he was originally a mortal whom Zeus struck dead for raising too many fellow mortals or for raising particular mortals from death.²² But it was widely believed that Asclepius, now immortal, continued to heal

Asclepius, and Isis). On Asclepius and his healing cult, see Klauck, *Context*, 155–68; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 173–76; Wickkiser, “Asklepios”; Martin, *Religions*, 50–52; Kee, “Self-Definition,” esp. 129–33; idem, *Miracle*, 78–104; Van Cangh, “Miracles grecs,” 213–22; Avalos, *Health Care*, 49–51. On limits of comparability to the Gospels, see Sabourin, “Miracles,” 296–300 (on 300 viewing the genuine cures as reflecting good care or psychosomatic factors).

13. Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 32.12. Yet one could also die after such a dream (Toner, *Culture*, 41).

14. Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 105. Some healing reports today remain associated with dreams (e.g., Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 153–54; Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 51, 61).

15. Tacitus *Hist.* 4.84. But sometimes Egyptians were said to identify Asclepius instead with an ancient king with medical skills; Manetho *Aeg. frg.* 11 (from Syncellus, p. 104); also frg. 12a (from Syncellus, p. 106), and frg. 12b (Armenian version of Eusebius). The primary healing deity was a hybrid, Imouthes-Asclepius (*P. Oxy.* 11.1381, lines 32–52, in Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 238), the local Imhotep being identified with Asclepius (Lewis, *Life*, 99). For some possible but uncertain evidence for an earlier Egyptian healing deity, see Kaiser, “Pantheon,” 94.

16. E.g., Diodorus Siculus 1.25.2–3. Note also healings at the sanctuary of Isis and Serapis at Delos (Heyob, *Isis*, 65), an island especially associated with Apollo. See discussion in Avalos, *Health Care*, 51–53.

17. Cf. perhaps the cult of Diana at Philippi (Abrahamsen, “Reliefs,” 119–21); also the sanctuary at Eleusis (Burkert, *Mystery Cults*, 20). Cf. Asclepius's association with Hygieia in Kent, *Inscriptions*, #64 (plate 7, inv. 877 = Meritt #118; *SEG* 11.88); esp. Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 100.

18. E.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 4.10; 16.1; 28.5; Pausanias 6.11.9. On Amphiaras, see, e.g., Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 173. Priests at Egyptian sanctuaries were also reputed to perform magical healings (Dunand, *Religion en Égypte*, 125); for magic and healing, see also *PGM* 18b.1–7, 1–2.

19. Archaeologists have found these, but inscriptions at the sanctuary are also mentioned in Pausanias 2.27.3. For the inscriptions, see, e.g., in Edelstein and Edelstein, *Asclepius*; for brief samples, see, e.g., George, “Miracles,” 97–100.

20. Klauck, *Context*, 160. Asclepius's healing gift derived from his being Apollo's son (Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 3.44).

21. E.g., Homer *Il.* 5.446–48; 16.526–31; Euripides *Lycymnius* frg. 477 (from Macrobius *Sat.* 1.18.6); Menander *Dyskolos* 192; Horace *Carmen Saeculare* lines 62–64; Ovid *Fast.* 3.827; (Ps.-Tibullus) 3.10.1–12; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 32.56–57. Narrative necessity sometimes dictated different outcomes; Apollo could not raise a dead maiden he loved (Ovid *Metam.* 2.617–18; cf. the sun god's inability to heal a beloved in *Metam.* 4.247–49).

22. Panyassis frg. 5, in Sextus Empiricus *Math.* 1.260; Lucian *Dance* 45; on him raising the dead, see also Pausanias 2.26.5. Supposedly the Muses taught this son of Apollo both healing and prophecy (Apollonius Rhodius 2.512).

the sick,²³ often through dreams in his temples.²⁴ People expected him to be able to cure even blindness and hence might suggest that a blind person spend the night in Asclepius's temple.²⁵ Some traveled to Asclepius sanctuaries to entreat deities even to heal others.²⁶ Like other deities, however, Asclepius could also exact judgment; one who ordered this deity's sacred grove cut down to build ships was killed.²⁷

Asclepius sanctuaries were most often situated near healthy springs.²⁸ Because of its warmth, Epidauros's water had long been associated with healing.²⁹ (Entirely apart from healing sanctuaries, therapeutic springs were widely appreciated,³⁰ including in Palestine,³¹ and continue to be appreciated in many places.) But the healing claims associated with Asclepius were not limited to therapeutic waters.

Asclepius's cult was widespread. Strabo praises Asclepius's healing power at Epidauros, Cos, and Triccê.³² Pergamum in Asia Minor was the leading cult center for Asclepius during the period of the empire.³³ Its Asclepius temple was massive,³⁴ and it was known for the snake associated with Asclepius;³⁵ like other sites, it featured healing through dreams.³⁶ The sanctuary at Cos was also significant and renowned.³⁷

23. Sophocles *Phil.* 1437–38 (sent by the now-deified Heracles); Suetonius *Claud.* 25.2; Maximus of Tyre 9.7.

24. Pausanias 2.27.2; Aelius Aristides *Or.* 2.30–36, 74–76; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.25.536; 2.4.568; Iamblichus *Myst.* 3.3; Herodian 4.8.3. Modern readers approach these accounts from various angles; for a psychoanalytic approach, see Rousselle, “Cults.”

25. Aristophanes *Plut.* 410–11, 620–21. Isis was also among deities supposed to be able to heal the blind (Heyob, *Isis*, 65).

26. Lucian *Dem.* 27 (for a son).

27. Valerius Maximus 1.1.19.

28. Vitruvius *Arch.* 1.2.7.

29. Xenophon *Mem.* 3.13.3. Aelius Aristides credited a well in Asclepius's temple for bringing him healing (*Or.* 39.14–15).

30. E.g., Vitruvius *Arch.* 8.3.4; Pliny *Nat.* 31.31.59–61; Plutarch *Sulla* 26.3; also waters thereafter dedicated to Diana in Velleius Paterculus *Compendium* 2.25.4. For hot springs more generally, e.g., Menander Rhetor 1.2.349, line 30; Eunapius *Lives* 459; Philostratus *Hrk.* 23.30; cool springs were thought less healthy (Pliny *Ep.* 2.8.2). For hot water for health more generally, e.g., Valerius Maximus 2.4.5.

31. For the hot springs of Tiberias, see, e.g., Josephus *War* 2.614; 4.11; *Life* 85; Pliny *Nat.* 5.15.71; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 11:16; *Eccl. Rab.* 10:8, §1 (cf. more general mention in Josephus *Ant.* 18.36; *p. Ber.* 2:7, §3; *b. Sanh.* 93a; 108a; *Shab.* 40b; 147a; *p. Ned.* 6:1, §2; *Gen. Rab.* 76:5); in Palestine elsewhere or more generally, see Josephus *War* 1.657; Pliny *Nat.* 2.95.208; 5.15.72; Hirschfeld and Solar, “Hmrh's'wt”; idem, “Baths”; Dvorjetski, “Healing Waters.”

32. Strabo 8.6.15.

33. Klauck, *Context*, 157; Fronto *Ad M. Caes.* 3.9.1; for its importance, see also Statius *Silv.* 3.4.23–24; Tacitus *Ann.* 3.63; Pausanias 2.26.9; Lucian *Icar.* 24; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.11, 34; *Vit. soph.* 2.25.611. It had long been famous (Homer *Il.* 5.446–48).

34. 425 by 360 feet (McRay, *Archaeology and New Testament*, 271, also providing further details on the sanctuary).

35. Statius *Silv.* 3.4.25; also evident on coins and other representations from there (Ramsay, *Letters*, 286; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:182; Hemer, *Letters*, 84–85). The snake is also associated with Epidauros, though that one was allegedly transferred to Rome (Valerius Maximus 1.8.2). The connection of snakes with healing is Eastern and pre-Greek (Kaiser, “Pantheon,” 42–43).

36. E.g., Herodian 4.8.3; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 1.25.536.

37. E.g., Pliny *Nat.* 20.100.264; Tacitus *Ann.* 4.14; cf. Grant, *Religions*, 4–6. For its architecture, see Owens, *City*, 120.

Closer to a center of Paul's mission, near Corinth, the sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidauros³⁸ was similarly well known.³⁹ The Epidauros cult even claimed that Asclepius was born at that sanctuary.⁴⁰ Romans believed that Asclepius at Epidauros cured a Roman plague, for which reason the Romans enticed the god to come to Rome.⁴¹ Epidauros continued to be associated with successful healings.⁴²

Not far from Epidauros,⁴³ Corinth's Asklepieion, built near the city's northern wall, was one of that city's more prominent cult sites,⁴⁴ situated so as to have its own water supply.⁴⁵ It was not comparable to the great Asclepius sanctuaries at Epidauros, Cos, or Pergamum but resembled the more modest ones at Troezen and Athens.⁴⁶ For this reason, it is likely that it was used mainly for locals; it did not house supplicants from far distances for sometimes months at a time like the great sanctuaries did.⁴⁷

The Asclepius sanctuary in Ephesus venerated Asclepius and Hygieia.⁴⁸ Apparently at Dor, an Apollo temple became an Asclepius temple before its later transformation into a Byzantine basilica.⁴⁹ Asclepius also was said to reveal himself in dreams at his sanctuary at Aegae in Cilicia;⁵⁰ similarly, he had long had a sanctuary at Agrigentum in Sicily⁵¹ and eventually had a very popular shrine on Mount Ida in Crete.⁵²

COMPARISON WITH THE GOSPELS

How do such ancient miracle reports compare with those in the Gospels? As I have noted earlier, the form of miracle stories typically proves less distinctive than their content. Various records of cures in the Epidauros inscriptions were stylized

38. Pausanias 2.26.1–2.27.6.

39. I mention Paul as a point of reference, but Christian competition with pagan sites is not impossible even at this early period; cf. comments on "power encounters" in appendix B.

40. Klauck, *Context*, 158. Pausanias appears convinced (2.26.8).

41. Valerius Maximus 1.8.2.

42. Ovid *Ex Ponto* 1.3.21.

43. As often noted (e.g., Pliny *Nat.* 4.5.18); Epidauros is included (2.26.1–2.27.6) with Corinth in bk. 2 of Pausanias's *Description of Greece* (under the title "Corinth"), unlike the rest of Achaia (reserved for bk. 6). For Epidauros in Corinth's inscriptions see West, *Inscriptions*, p. 57 on #71. Cf. the sanctuary in Pausanias 2.10.2.

44. Rothaus, *Corinth*, 42 (for its later history, see 47); especially Roebuck, *Asklepieion* (for the sacred precinct, see 23–64). It adjoined the gymnasium (Biers, *Bath*, plate 56; cf. Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 151; Pausanias 2.4–5).

45. See Roebuck, *Asklepieion*, 1, 3, 96–99.

46. *Ibid.*, 25.

47. Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 100–101.

48. Aurenhammer, "Sculptures," 266–67. For Asclepius worship in Ephesus, see *I. Eph.* 105, 1253–54 (though this is far less prominent than Zeus—*I. Eph.* 1239–43—and about as prominent as Dionysus or Demeter).

49. Dauphin, "Apollo and Asclepius."

50. Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 1.7, 10.

51. Cicero *Verr.* 2.4.43.93.

52. Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.34.

into standard forms for posterity.⁵³ The introductory notes present in discrete accounts at Epidauros and in the Talmud would be dropped when miracle stories were incorporated into connected narratives similar to those we find in the Gospels.⁵⁴

As I noted earlier, the most basic format of a miracle story is, as one would expect, a description of the circumstances of the healing, the healing itself, and its confirmation or effects on the audience.⁵⁵ The exact format varies somewhat depending on the situation addressed by a particular collection's editors. A sampling of Epidauros inscriptions, for instance, could yield the following steps in the description:⁵⁶

1. Statement of the suppliant's original infirmity, sometimes including the infirm person's name and home city, probably for documentation
2. The suppliant comes to the sanctuary
3. (Optional: the suppliant sometimes mocks the cures listed in the inscriptions)
4. (Usually) the suppliant sleeps in the sanctuary
5. (Usually) Asclepius appears to the suppliant in a dream
6. When day arrives, the person emerges cured

Some features, such as the suppliant coming to the sanctuary and the practice of incubation (sleeping in a deity's sanctuary to receive a dream),⁵⁷ specifically characterize a local healing shrine as opposed to a traveling miracle-working teacher.⁵⁸ The two elements most comparable to the Gospels' miracle stories are the statement of the problem and its supernaturally effected cure—elements almost necessary for recounting miracles in narrative form, regardless of the culture or the story's historical veracity. That is, the limited parallels in form do not define for us the historical authenticity of any traditions behind the accounts. They need not even demonstrate that the Gospel writers regularly drew on Hellenistic forms to recount miracles; much less do they imply that use of these forms, even if some

53. See Dibelius, *Tradition*, 170.

54. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 128–29.

55. Aune, *Environment*, 50. For people marveling after miracles, see, e.g., Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* passim.

56. Drawn from the sampling in Grant, *Religions*, 56–58. Pausanias 2.27.3 notes that the inscriptions list the names of the healed, their disease, and how they were cured. Cf. also records of healings in Horsley, *Documents*, 2:21–25.

57. Grant, *Gods*, 66–67; Aelius Aristides *Or.* 2.30–36, 74–76 (Grant, *Religions*, 53–55). This practice of incubation was already in vogue probably for at least two millennia before our period; note AQHTA i, “The Tale of Aqhat,” 149–55 in *ANET*, 150; less relevant; KRTA i, “The Legend of King Keret,” 142–49 in *ANET*, 143; cf. Gen 15:12; 1 Sam 3:3–15; 1 Kgs 3:4–15. For its continuance in early Christianity, see Marksches, “Schlafkulte”; Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 23–25.

58. For the contrast between healing at the shrine at Epidauros and Jesus healing in the open air, see Van Canghai, “Miracles grecs,” 222–23. Aelius Aristides attests that Asclepius sometimes healed away from the shrine as well (Grant, *Gods*, 66). On other sanctuary-based healing cults, see Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 173–77 (Amphiaras); Asclepius at Cos (Grant, *Religions*, 4–6); possibly Diana at Philippi (Abrahamsen, “Reliefs,” 119–21); healing miracles were also attributed to Eleusis (Burkert, *Mystery Cults*, 20) and were associated with Apollo (Horace *Carmen Saeculare* 62–64). A Jewish version delegates authority over illness to Raphael (1 En. 40:9; cf. *T. Sol.* 18).

instances were to prove borrowed, mean that the stories so shaped must have been invented by later Hellenistic Christians.

HOLISTIC MEDICINE IN PAGANISM, JUDAISM, AND CHRISTIANITY

In contrast to a minority of modern healing movements (e.g., that of John Alexander Dowie), recourse to these ancient forms of supernatural healing did not entail rejection of physicians.⁵⁹ Whereas Epidauros has turned up votive tablets announcing miraculous cures,⁶⁰ Asclepius's shrine on Cos turned up medical instruments, suggesting that no barrier separated physicians from divine activity.⁶¹ Pliny the Elder even records an antidote for venomous bites preserved on the wall of the Asclepius temple at Cos.⁶² Doctors trained at Asklepieia.⁶³

Jewish people recognized that God was ultimately the healer⁶⁴ and sought his help in prayers.⁶⁵ Opinions differed on the role that physicians played in healing; a popular ancient sage declared that God's word rather than medicaments heals,⁶⁶ and some Jewish traditions preferred trusting God rather than physicians.⁶⁷ By the late second century, R. Judah mentions physicians among socially proscribed professions; although this may be partly a matter of class division, R. Judah assigns

59. Because most people could not afford physicians, however, folk cures may have predominated. Because perhaps 70 to 90 percent of treatments in cultures like Taiwan and the United States occur on a popular rather than medical level (Eve, *Miracles*, 356, following Kleinman, *Healers*, 50), it seems reasonable to suppose no smaller a proportion in antiquity (Eve, *Miracles*, 356). (Chin, "Practices," 1, suggests that 85 percent of Taiwan follows folk religion.) On the use of remedies but also physicians when needed, see Avalos, *Health Care*, 77 (on health care in antiquity more generally, see *passim*).

60. E.g., Strabo 8.6.15; confirmed archaeologically. Some locations, like Corinth, include models of body parts healed (e.g., Klauck, *Context*, 165; Hill, "Temple of Asclepius"; at Delos, see Heyob, *Isis*, 65). The practice of votive offerings, including models of body parts, for healings continues in some Christian traditions (cf. votive offerings in Oktavec, *Prayers*, esp. xvi, 55, 195–98; body parts in Duffin, *Miracles*, 156).

61. Goppelt, *Theology*, 1:141; cf. Klauck, "Ärzten"; Marksches, "Schlafkulte"; Van Cangh, "Miracles grecs," 223. Even at Epidauros, rather than rivalry, each sphere had its place (Klauck, *Context*, 166–67). Ancients did not distinguish medicine from religion as we do today; traditions linked Hippocrates with the "sons of Asclepius," physicians at healing shrines (Kee, "Hippocratic Letters," 498–99).

62. *Nat.* 20.100.264.

63. Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 101. They could gladly attribute their art's origins to deities like Apollo and Asclepius (see, e.g., Quintilian *Decl.* 268.21).

64. E.g., Exod 15:26; Wis 16:12; *b. Pes.* 68a (Raba). Sickness was sometimes associated with sin (Gen 20:7, 17; Num 12:10; 2 Kgs 5:27; 15:5; 2 Chr 26:21; Job 42:8; Sir 38:9–10; Jas 5:14–16; Rev 2:22–23; *Gen. Rab.* 97, NV; *Lev. Rab.* 18:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 22:5; cf. 4Q560 in Naveh, "Fragments"). In a possibly first-century document, Raphael is assigned over diseases, wounds, and (apparently) healing (1 *En.* 40:9); angel invocation drives away the spirits causing infirmity in *T. Sol.* 18.

65. A prayer in text 42.12 of the Aramaic incantation bowls (Isbell, *Bowls*, 101); Sir 31:17; 38:9; Jas 5:14–15; *m. Ber.* 5:5; *b. Ber.* 60b; *Gen. Rab.* 53:14; cf. synagogue prayers, especially the eighth benediction when applied to physical infirmities (cf. *p. Taan.* 2:2, §7; *Song Rab.* 7:2, §3). Medical help was normally sought only as a secondary line of defense (Goppelt, *Theology*, 1:142), and one who needed to go to a physician should pray for God's healing (*b. Ber.* 60a).

66. Wis 16:12.

67. 2 Chr 16:12; *T. Job* 38.7–8/11–13; cf. Job 13:4. Nevertheless, physicians in ancient Judah probably had more medical knowledge than we often assume (Wright, *Archaeology*, 171).

the best of them to Gehinnom.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, at least some Palestinian Jews with a more cosmopolitan education made use of physicians (Josephus *Life* 404), and a sage whose wisdom circulated widely in the first century praised physicians and their medicine as instruments of God (Sir 38:1–9).⁶⁹ The school of the second-century R. Ishmael held that God could work through physicians;⁷⁰ even Galilean physicians could earn a great deal.⁷¹ Some thought that one should not reside in a city lacking a physician.⁷²

Some of the rabbis appear to have been familiar with Hippocratic traditions, including about climate and health;⁷³ some ancient doctors had some sound empirical knowledge of anatomy and physiology,⁷⁴ and some scholars argue that rabbis sometimes surpassed the best Greek medicine, avoiding excessive reliance on theory.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, they still faced the limitations of medical knowledge available in their era. Jewish folk medicine, like many other forms of ancient medicine, mixed what many would consider magic with scientific elements.⁷⁶ Although Galilean physicians probably lacked formal Greek training, they adopted some Greek medical practices.⁷⁷ Galilean physicians, like Greek ones, mixed genuine medical knowledge⁷⁸ with what we would regard as superstition.⁷⁹

It is not surprising that Christians in later centuries, perhaps having learned from the earliest Christian concern for bodily as well as spiritual cures, combined both approaches no less than did some Asclepius sanctuaries and some Jewish sources. Although the church opposed medicine and medical schools in some

68. *M. Kid.* 4:14; cf. *Ab. R. Nat.* 36A.

69. Cf. also Sir 10:10. Sirach 38:15 could be directed against physicians but in context probably is directed only against sickness. For the positive view of physicians in Sirach, see McConvery, “Ancient Physicians”; idem, “Praise.” Kraemer, “Doctor,” treats Sirach as transitional between the usually negative biblical tradition and more open talmudic approach. For archaeological evidence for medical and dental equipment in ancient Palestine, see Avalos, *Health Care*, 78.

70. *B. Ber.* 60a (though many voices in the text attribute healing only to God).

71. Goodman, *State*, 60, cites *tos. B.B.* 10:6. Inadequate treatments appear in Mark 5:26, but Mark is not alone in antiquity in reporting inadequate medical cures (see von Bendemann, “Arzt”).

72. So *p. Qid.* 4:12, §2. “Honor your physician before you are sick” was a proverb for praying before trouble comes (*Exod. Rab.* 21:7).

73. Newmyer, “Climate.”

74. See discussion in Vallance, “Anatomy.” For earlier forms of medicine, see, e.g., Weeks, “Medicine”; in various regions, see Avalos, “Medicine.” One digested faster lying on one’s right side (Pliny *Nat.* 28.14.54).

75. Newmyer, “Medicine.”

76. See Urbach, *Sages*, 1:101; Safrai, “Home,” 764–66; *b. Bek.* 44b; *Pes.* 111ab; *Git.* 68b–70b; *Shab.* 66b–67a; 108b–111a; cf. perhaps Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 63; *1 En.* 7:1; 8:3; Brayer, “Psychosomatics.” Mixing magical and medical counsel was standard in antiquity, e.g., in Egyptian medicine (Jordan, *Egypt*, 157).

77. Goodman, *State*, 60, includes anatomical details (such as “the number of limbs,” *m. Ohol.* 1:8; cf. also *tos. Ed.* 2:10; *Ab. R. Nat.* 16A; *Pesiq. Rab Kah. Sup.* 3:2; *Gen. Rab.* 69:1; *Lev. Rab.* 12:3; *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on *Gen* 1:27).

78. Goodman, *State*, 60, lists *m. Pes.* 2; *tos. Shab.* 12(13):10–11; and cites skilled operations (*m. Bek.* 8:1; *Ker.* 3:8; *tos. B.K.* 6:20; *Ed.* 1:8; *Ohol.* 2:6).

79. Goodman, *State*, 60, lists *m. Yoma* 8:6; *tos. Shab.* 4(5):9. On ancient medical superstition, see Keener, *Acts*, introduction, ch. 11.

places,⁸⁰ perhaps due to lingering pagan associations, monks preserved and used medical traditions.⁸¹ In ca. 350 C.E., Antioch's bishop began the use of buildings specifically devoted to caring for the sick, a model that became widespread in Christendom and constituted the beginning of hospitals as we know them;⁸² the Islamic world continued the Christian practice.⁸³ Whereas much of the Western church downplayed medicine during the medieval period, Eastern Christianity remained more holistic and educated, hence accepted both miraculous healing and medicine.⁸⁴ The combination has remained an appealing one through most of history.⁸⁵ The traditional reputation of one of Paul's traveling companions as a

80. Dawson, *Healing*, 172–74. This seems odd, given the common objective of patients' wholeness, but ancient medicine was unregulated and varied in its scientific content, and connections with Asclepius in many locations probably rendered it suspect in a way not relevant to the vast majority of medical practice today.

81. Dawson, *Healing*, 174–77. For the positive use of medical work in Christianity, see, e.g., Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 46–60. For dependence on Greek medical writers, see, e.g., Dawtry, "Modus Medendi," 25–27; Palmer, "Plague," 87–88; for the positive nature of Jewish interest in the body, see Kaplan, Schwartz, and Jones, "View." Against some, Christianity did not work against ancient science (Lindberg, "Rise").

82. Nutton, "Hospital," 525–26; Porterfield, *Healing*, 51–54 (including discussion of early Christian medicine); Hart, *Delusions*, 29–30 (cf. medical science in 70–74); Schmidt, *Influence*, 151–69; see Miller, *Birth* (esp. 21–29); on medieval Christian hospitals, see Bird, "Medicine"; idem, "Texts"; briefly, Koenig, *Medicine*, 33; cf. nursing orders in Scherzer, *Healing*, 40–45. Some grew quite large; Nutton notes ("Hospital," 526) that St. Sabas in Jerusalem in 550 C.E. "had over 200 beds, whilst the one of St. Sampson in Constantinople had almost double that number." Precursors existed in the Asklepieia and in Jewish hostels (524); cf. also Dawson, *Healing*, 156–59, 177; Asclepieia in Constantelos, "Physician-Priests," 141–42, 149–50; the relationship to the Christian universal charity ethic in Nutton, "Medical Ethics," 555; Nutton, "Medicine," 580. Christians started and still run hospitals in many parts of the world (Wilson, *Healing*, 64). More recent Christian healing movements also have often viewed their work as compatible with medicine (e.g., Kuhlman, *Miracles*, 15; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 126, 131; Venter, *Healing*, 62). Cherry, *Healing Prayer*, 129–43, offers medical case histories of recoveries involving faith (sometimes using medicines but with outcomes unexpectedly positive from a natural perspective).

83. Nutton, "Hospital," 527. The medieval Islamic world initially made heavy use of the majority Christian population in their lands, who mediated the older Greek learning, including in medicine (see Irvin and Sunquist, *History*, 277–78); Muslim scholars in turn influenced Western Christians (Efron, "Christianity," 84). Against the idea that medieval Islam was unfriendly to science, see Haq, "Culture."

84. Porterfield, *Healing*, 75–77; on Eastern physician-priests, see Constantelos, "Physician-Priests" (both in early centuries, 142–44, and medieval times, 145–49); Horden, "Saints"; on the frequent complementarity of these healing modes (though not so much in the *Miracles of Artemios*), see Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 44–45. Medical practice was not absent from the West: for Benedictine medical care for the sick in England, see Dawtry, "Modus Medendi"; for apparent Waldensian medical practice, see Biller, "Curate infirmos"; for medical works in the West, cf., e.g., those usually attributed to Hildegard of Bingen (e.g., in Maddocks, *Hildegard*, 279–81; Schipperges, *Hildegard*, 59, 66, 73–75, though these works, like others of their era and earlier, certainly differ from modern medical perspectives). On medieval medicine, see especially Biller and Ziegler, *Medicine* (for "depaganizing" earlier sources, see Nutton, "Galen"); on science in medieval universities, see Shank, "Suppressed"; against the myth that medieval Christians thought the earth flat, see Cormack, "Flat" (against nineteenth-century propaganda noted on 28–29).

85. E.g., an eighteenth-century archbishop of Canterbury had been trained as a physician (Guy, "Physician"); in general, see Sheils, *Healing*. Note especially medical missions, e.g., Williams, "Healing"; Walls, "Medical Missionary"; idem, *Movement*, 211–20; Grundmann, *Heal* (esp. early indigenous medical

physician (Col 4:14) cannot have hindered the welcoming of medicine alongside prayer.⁸⁶

Pagan Miracle Workers

Probably more relevant in Greek tradition for the Gospels and Acts than healing sanctuaries, but far less often documented for this period, are stories of individual wonder workers. I shall note significant differences, but first I must survey pagan miracle workers, including magical associations and the anachronistic “divine man” construct. One may take, for example, the later fictitious account (in a novel) of an Egyptian prophet-magician who performs a resuscitation of someone dead.⁸⁷

The widely recited powers of Asclepius before as well as after his apotheosis⁸⁸ refutes in advance any possible suggestion that pagans had no pre-Christian stories of healers.⁸⁹ Certainly stories of the distant past abounded with regular divine interventions in heroes’ lives.⁹⁰ But apart from their shared supernaturalist worldview and belief that divine activity could be mediated through human agents (more common than not among human societies in general), such stories about the mythical past offer weak parallels for biographies or historical works about recent persons. Political propagandists made good use of two healings associated

missionaries in 159–62, such as, in India, Rev. Abdul Masih, 1776–1827; and in China, Kwan Ato, 1818–74, and Dr. Wong Fun in the late 1800s); the training of indigenous nurses in Mogashoa, “Survey.” Medical missions became prominent starting especially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Williams, “Healing,” 271–73), though it was initially emphasized particularly in otherwise unresponsive regions (Walls, “Medical Missionary,” 288–91; Williams, “Healing,” 274–76) and reflected the cultural emphasis on benevolence (Williams, “Healing,” 277–80, 283). The scale has proved massive and influential; for example, 90 percent of nurses in India were Christians in 1940, and Roman Catholics operated 205 hospitals there in 1964 (Pirouet, *Christianity*, 63). Note also examples of Lutheran medical missions in China (e.g., Skinsnes, “Hospital”; Kravig, “Heal”; Peterson, “Hospital”; Guldseth, “Cases”), some even after the Japanese invasion of their area (e.g., Guldseth, “Hospital”; idem, “Power,” 3; Skinsnes, “Reopening”). Medical missions involved significant commitment; e.g., over a course of six years “five doctors of the Baptist Missionary Society in China, young men for the most part, died at their posts through illness or overwork” (Walls, “Medical Missionary,” 291).

86. See most helpfully Weissenrieder, *Images*; cf. also the reading of Acts 28:8 in view of medical sources in Keener, “Fever,” though the primary point is the different conceptualization of disease in antiquity.

87. Apuleius *Metam.* 2.28. This particular tale is probably meant to parody the telling of such tales more generally.

88. The myth appears in, e.g., Achtemeier, *Miracle Tradition*, 205 (citing, e.g., Apollodorus *Bib.* 3.10.3.5–4.1; Xenophon *Cynaegeticus* 1.1–6; following Edelstein and Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 1:3, 9, 54, 56).

89. Price, *Son of Man*, 21, 131, thinks these the best parallels to some miracles attributed to Jesus. Yet they belong to a distant past era, and it is unlikely that Jesus’s first Jewish followers (particularly disciples, normally charged with accurately representing teachers) would invent such stories without a basis in the tradition. It is inconceivable that within a generation they would so thoroughly embellish the tradition about him that healings and exorcisms would pervade every stratum of the tradition, but Price is not addressing healings and exorcisms here. Few scholars have found persuasive Price’s appeal to Greek myth as background for much Jesus tradition (see, e.g., the critique in Costa, “Review”).

90. Compare, for instance, the *Argonautica* of the second-century B.C.E. poet Apollonius Rhodius.

with Vespasian.⁹¹ These might represent genuine recoveries, but these are the only two healings associated with him.⁹²

By contrast, the most significant pagan parallels to Christian miracle-worker stories, such as the only extant literary account of Apollonius of Tyana, first appear in third-century literature,⁹³ after Christian miracle stories had become widely known, and Christian and pagan expectations influenced each other more generally. Relevantly, the older “divine man” hypothesis for Jesus, treated in more detail below, has fallen on hard times. The primary reason that many have abandoned this view is that the combination of traits scholars once found in this composite category were blended together only in much later sources, potentially influenced by Christianity, not likely to have influenced early Christianity, and still less likely to have influenced the historical Jesus and his immediate Galilean followers.⁹⁴ I discuss this problem further below.

MAGICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Not everyone viewed all of these wonder workers in a positive vein; although miracle working tended to be public and magic secretive, miracle workers in the Greco-Roman world could easily be understood as sorcerers.⁹⁵ Magicians were generally feared and usually detested (hence the antimagical apologetic in Mark 5:7, 9; Acts 8:9–11; 13:8–11; 19:13–19).⁹⁶ Society usually viewed magic as subversive

91. Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81 (citing surviving eyewitnesses who attested the story even after it was no longer politically useful); Suetonius *Vesp.* 7.

92. Hume, *Miracles*, 41–42, cites the evidence and then simply dismisses it (in a manner that Gaskin, *Philosophy*, 125, justly criticizes as “obscurantist”). Yet it is clear that both historians depend on prior material here; while the context is propagandistic and I would deem these historians’ actual contact with these eyewitnesses less secure than the dominance of eyewitnesses in the formation of the Gospel tradition (see Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*; Keener, *Historical Jesus*), I think we should entertain the possibility (against many interpreters) that these unexpected recoveries did occur; Flew, “Introduction,” 15, similarly accepts them as historically likely (though psychosomatic). (Cf. similarly Licona and Van der Watt, “Adjudication of Miracles,” 5, noting that these reports appear within roughly the same span after Vespasian as Mark’s Gospel in relation to Jesus’s ministry.) Although the stories predate their written form, Eve’s suggestion that Mark’s report of Jesus’s healing spittle (see Mark 7:33; 8:23; cf. John 9:6) contrasts Jesus’s messianic claim with Flavian imperial pretensions (Eve, “Spit”; idem, *Healer*, 45–46) would require knowledge of these stories to be widely known in Rome when Mark writes, which for other reasons (not least the likely comparative dates) I find less persuasive. Some theists allow that God permitted these miracles to confirm Vespasian as emperor (see already John Leland in 1732 [in Burns, *Debate*, 117], though he prefers the explanation that the miracles were staged [Burns, *Debate*, 116]).

93. Blackburn, “ANΔPEZ,” 199–204.

94. See the critique of the “divine man” hypothesis in earlier NT scholarship in Holladay, *Theios Anēr*; Gallagher, *Divine Man*; Pilgaard, “Theios Anēr”; Blackburn, “ANΔPEZ”; Tiede, *Figure*; Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 305; Sabourin, “Miracles,” 291–95; Twelftree, “Message,” 2524–27; and other scholars and discussion cited in Keener, *Spirit*, 66–67; idem, *John*, 268–69. Individual pagan miracle workers arose especially in the first-century East and thereafter developed in competition with early Christianity (Frataantonio, “Miracles,” 53).

95. Harvey, *History*, 105.

96. Each of these accounts in Acts concludes with God’s word spreading (Acts 8:12; 13:12; 19:20); for antimagical apologetic in Luke-Acts, see Spencer, *Philip*, 99–102; Trémel, “Risque de paganisation”;

and antisocial, because it was often used for harm.⁹⁷ (This perspective remains prevalent in many societies today.⁹⁸) Nevertheless, many people were fascinated by stories of magic, even when it was considered malevolent.⁹⁹ Thus Lucian tells of one Lucius who rejected good advice and craved magic.¹⁰⁰ His quest is rewarded with the wrong potion, transforming him into an ass,¹⁰¹ with an implied consonant moral. Some officials eventually tried to suppress the flourishing private practice of magic,¹⁰² albeit unsuccessfully.

People feared magicians on account of their malevolent activity.¹⁰³ Thus, for example, particular magical gestures were held to betray the activity of harmful sorcerers present during childbirth.¹⁰⁴ Already Rome's twelve tables decreed punishments against those who cast spells against crops or did other magical harm.¹⁰⁵ Some apparently thought it helpful to slay sorcerers if one were able to catch them.¹⁰⁶ In novels, tremendous power was attributed to the most powerful sorcerers.¹⁰⁷

Scholars have long labored to distinguish magic from miracle or religion, but the line between their respective common definitions is not always clear.¹⁰⁸ One typical distinction is that magic conventionally seeks to manipulate spirits or forces, whereas religion and miracle do not.¹⁰⁹ This distinction does not always

esp. Garrett, *Demise*. Accusations against Christians for magical involvement (e.g., *Eccl. Rab.* 1:8, §4) made such apologetic all the more imperative.

97. E.g., SIG 3/985 (= LSAM 20), lines 12–15, from Asia Minor (Klauck, *Context*, 66); see further Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 239–42; Yamauchi, “Magic,” 90; Kippenberg, “Magic”; cf. Carastro, “Divination et magie.” It was thought efficacious even against good persons (Apuleius *Metam.* 9.30), and to employ parts of corpses (Apuleius *Metam.* 2.20, 30; cf. PGM 1.248–49; Pliny *Nat.* 28.2.4, 7; a crucifixion nail in *m. Shab.* 6:10). Welch, “Miracles,” 369–71, argues for its illegality, but most of his primary evidence involves predictions of death.

98. “Black magic” remains antisocial in many societies, although others practiced “benevolent” magic (see, e.g., Kadetotad, “Practices,” 383–84); in many societies, it is used to kill (e.g., Tippet, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 15) and especially thought dangerous among co-wives (Stephens, *Family*, 68; Whisson, “Disorders,” 288); for a variety of uses, but especially harmful or selfish ones, see Mbiti, *Religions*, 196, 200, 203–4, 221, 258, 275, 278, 328; for societies’ condemnation of witches, see, e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 209. Through medical diagnosis and rehydration, some following traditional “voodoo death” sequences have recovered (Eastwell, “Voodoo Death,” esp. 5).

99. Lucian *Lucius* 4; Apuleius *Metam.* 3.19.

100. *Lucius* 4–5. In 56, he acknowledged the danger of his curiosity.

101. *Lucius Lucius* 13.

102. See Horsley, *Documents* 1, §12, pp. 47–51 (from a prefect in late second-century C.E. Egypt).

103. This remains true in many societies that believe that sorcery can kill, seduce, and so forth (e.g., Tippet, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 15).

104. Pliny *Nat.* 28.17.59.

105. Pliny *Nat.* 28.4.17. But Rives, “Magic in XII Tables,” contends that these early laws were not originally antimagical. Certainly by the first century B.C.E., Roman law condemned it (Smith, *Magician*, 75–76).

106. *Lucian Lucius* 54. Cf. Exod 22:18; *Hammurabi* 2; today, Mbiti, *Religions*, 263, 275.

107. Apuleius *Metam.* 2.5; 3.15.

108. See Aune, “Magic,” 1511–12; Grant, *Religions*, 45–46 (though noting that most magic lacked a religious interest).

109. Thus, e.g., Arnold, *Power*, 19; Klauck, *Context*, 215–18, esp. 218 (“coercion is typical of magic, and petition typical of religion”); Reimer, *Miracle*, 3–7 (summarizing the view), 250.

hold, however,¹¹⁰ since even some civic religion sought to manipulate deities.¹¹¹ The use of spiritual power for selfish or nonedifying purposes was another criterion for identifying magic, though again the distinction was not always observed.¹¹²

Ancients often employed a more subjective criterion,¹¹³ namely, labeling supernatural activity in alien social groups as magic, in contrast to similar activity among themselves.¹¹⁴ In general, public, civic activity was viewed as religion; secretive and subversive activity was viewed as magic. This prejudice could lead to negative perspectives on miracles in early Christian household associations as opposed to public temples like shrines of Asclepius. Nevertheless, another issue was more critical. Ultimately, as I have noted, a major issue was whether people believed that the power was used for personal advantage or the common good.¹¹⁵ Thus, for Philostratus's perspective on Apollonius,¹¹⁶ various criteria distinguish magic from miracle working, but most important is the issue of greed. Magical charges were common against all who did miracles, but the best accepted answer to these charges was to keep using miraculous power without seeming to desire it and without seeming greedy.¹¹⁷

Some magicians were recognized as charlatans.¹¹⁸ Skeptical intellectuals sometimes set out to expose them,¹¹⁹ as in the case of Lucian's opposition to Alexander the false prophet. Alexander allegedly would open sealed questions to the god and then answer them as he thought best (*Lucian Alex.* 20), gaining up to 80,000 obols a year by this means (*Alex.* 23); when a prophecy failed he changed it in the records (*Alex.* 27–28). He also found a way to project a voice into a serpent skin (*Alex.* 26) and offered detailed oracles to people who, unknown to the audience,

110. See Remus, *Conflict*, 52–62; Reimer, *Miracle*, 7–8. Some others, like Smith, *Magician*, 69, go too far. In many societies today, diviners themselves use spirits to divine what spirits are causing problems (see, e.g., Berends, “African Healing Practices,” 283; Ritchie, *Spirit*, 24–25; for protection against witchcraft, Kapolyo, *Condition*, 103); shamans can use power for curing or harming (Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 61, 63; Ritchie, *Spirit*, 28).

111. See, e.g., rain-making rituals in *b. Taan.* 25b; Moore, *Judaism*, 2:44–45 (comparing the functions of libations among pagans); Ringgren, *Religion*, 190; Harrelson, *Cult*, 69; Uval, “Streams”; I have explored this practice somewhat more fully in Keener, *John*, 723–24. Note also Roman concerns for exact protocol; e.g., Pliny *Nat.* 28.3.11–14; Plutarch *Cor.* 25.3.

112. See Remus, *Conflict*, 62–67. The purpose for which spiritual power is employed is a criterion for distinguishing good and bad power in African traditions (Mbiti, *Religions*, 258–59).

113. Modern anthropological approaches seek to avoid imposing modern interpreters' value judgments (Aune, “Magic,” 1509).

114. Remus, *Conflict*, 67–72; Remus, “Magic or Miracle?”; cf. Reimer, *Miracle*, 8–10 (summarizing the view, but see 10–12). For magicians as deviant from the religious community, see Reimer, *Miracle*, 248.

115. See Reimer, *Miracle*, 139–41 (emphasizing the importance of fringe status). Cf. diverging Christian and pagan interpretations of an event reported for 172 C.E. (DeFelice, “Legend”).

116. *Vit. Apoll.* 1.34.

117. Reimer, *Miracle*, 246. Cf., e.g., Matt 8:20//Luke 9:58; Acts 3:6; 20:33–34.

118. The term γόης (cf. 2 Tim 3:13), which can mean “magician” (cf. *T. Jud.* 23:1; Plato *Meno* 80A, figuratively; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 7.17; Porphyry *Marc.* 33.509), means “impostor” in Babrius 57.13 (cf. deception in 2 Macc 12:24). Some suspected that magic was merely “the illusion of all the greatest liars” (Quintus Curtius 7.4.8, LCL 1:153).

119. See Plato's criticisms as well (*Rep.* 2.364BC).

did not exist (*Alex.* 50). Lucian and others trapped him repeatedly (*Alex.* 53–55), but his ilk were probably not uncommon.¹²⁰ Some fraudulent healing techniques today follow quite ancient precursors.

Magic was not exclusive to the least educated. Some held the opinion that a truly well-educated person would not succumb to practicing magic.¹²¹ But while magic is thought to have circulated especially among the lower classes,¹²² more adept practitioners of magic had to be able to read with sufficient literacy to use and follow the right spells.¹²³

Curse invocations were central to ancient magic.¹²⁴ Virtually anything harmful could be attributed to magic.¹²⁵ Erotic charms were meant to secure sexual influence.¹²⁶ Some spells were to cheat in sports (e.g., a spell to overturn and wreck rival chariots).¹²⁷ Other spells were for defensive magic, for protection¹²⁸ (e.g., in childbirth).¹²⁹ Magic could also be associated with achieving invisibility¹³⁰ or

120. The translator's note in Lucian *Alex.* LCL 4:173 notes that inscriptions verify Alexander's widespread popularity.

121. Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.10.590.

122. Aune, "Magic," 1521; Arnold, *Power*, 19. Its use among those without access to other means of social power is probable, but in Egypt apparently at least it started with the priests. Kee, *Miracle*, 213, argues that sorcery accusations are more common in upper classes, but they may simply be more commonly preserved there. In many traditional societies, more fortunate and wealthy individuals are more often targeted by jealous witchcraft attacks (Gelfand, "Disorders," 167).

123. E.g., Lucian *Lucius* 11. Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 228–29, connects this literacy especially with the priesthood in Egypt. Koester, *Introduction*, 1:201, notes the use of magic among the well educated.

124. Klauck, *Context*, 223–26; Harder, "Defixio," 175; see, e.g., Jordan, "New Curse Tablets." This is also true in some more recent forms of magic (cf. Mbiti, *Religions*, 276; MacNutt, *Power*, 74–75; Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 61, 63; Lewis, "Possession," 189, 214; traditions about sorcerers "sending" spirits in Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 198). On "the evil eye" (though I have listed together various conceptions of it; some mean only stinginess), see *P. Oxy.* 292.11–12; Aelian *On Animals* 11.18; Pliny *Nat.* 7.2.16–18; Aulus Gellius 9.4.8; *b. Ber.* 20a; *SSb. Sanh.* 93a; *Lev. Rab.* 16:8; 17:3; *Num. Rab.* 12:4; *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on Gen 42:5; Kern-Ulmer, "Evil Eye"; Dickie, "Evil Eye"; Elliot, "Fear"; Pilch, "Eye." Rab attributed nearly all diseases to this cause (Yamauchi, "Magic," 124). (Appearance in one translation of 4Q477 2 II, 4, 7 is reconstructed.) Cf. the concept more recently in Kadetotad, "Practices," 384; Mbiti, *Religions*, 259.

125. Faraone, "Spells."

126. See, e.g., *PGM* 13.304; 32.1–19; 36.69–133, 187–210, 291–311, 333–60; 62.1–24; 101.1–53; Pliny *Nat.* 27.35.57; 27.99.125; Philostratus *Hrk.* 16.2; *T. Reu.* 4:9; Frankfurter, "Perils"; Jordan, "Erotic Spell"; cf. Theocritus *The Spell* (in *Greek Bucolic Poets* LCL 26–39); the charm in Horsley, *Documents* 1:33–34. In a novel, a witch might attract young men or other things once she had a piece of their hair (Apuleius *Metam.* 3.16–18). Against novelists' emphasis on female practitioners, both genders employed these (Dickie, "Who Practised Love-Magic"; cf. the emphasis on male practitioners in Lewis, *Life*, 96). Apuleius even had to defend himself against this charge (Bradley, "Apologia"). In more recent societies, see, e.g., Tippet, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 15.

127. *PGM* 4.2211–16.

128. See some examples in Whittaker, *Jews and Christians*, 219–20 (along with "black magic"); today, MacNutt, *Power*, 74–75.

129. E.g., Dunand, *Religion en Égypte*, 114.

130. E.g., *PGM* 1.222–31, 247–62 (esp. 1.256–57); cf. (in farce) Tibullus 1.2.58; further Keener, *John*, 773–74. Similarly, the ring of Midas (Pliny *Nat.* 33.4.8) or Gyges (Lucian *Ship* 42; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 3.8). In more recent times, see, e.g., Owusu, "Strings," 146.

changing one substance into another.¹³¹ Some apparently claimed to be able to procure whatever they wanted by magic.¹³²

The means of magic differ in various cultures.¹³³ Often in Greco-Roman antiquity magicians were thought to manipulate spirits,¹³⁴ hence, from a strict early Jewish and Christian perspective, to traffic in demons.¹³⁵ Beings intermediate between mortals and deities were supposed to be most common,¹³⁶ though deities were also involved.¹³⁷ Magic could employ drugs, that is, potions and poisons.¹³⁸ Josephus interprets the biblical prohibition of witchcraft as directed against those who poison others.¹³⁹ Potions could be used to make a rival infertile,¹⁴⁰ or, in pure fiction, to turn people into beasts.¹⁴¹ Witches were also thought to change themselves into beasts to accomplish their harmful plans.¹⁴²

The danger of magical associations affected the recounting of stories about individual miracle workers. The Pythagorean Empedocles reportedly “performed magical feats” (γοητεύοντι)—a term that generally had unpleasant connotations.¹⁴³ Likewise, Ferguson is probably right that “behind Philostratus are two older views of Apollonius—as a magician and charlatan or a wonder-worker.”¹⁴⁴ The magical

131. Homer *Od.* 10.239–40; Ovid *Metam.* 14.414–15; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2.

132. Lucian *Dem.* 23 (noting that Demonax countered this claim by insisting that he could procure what he desired by money).

133. In some societies, magic can even function by violating taboos, not just by sympathetic magic based on analogy (Makarius, “Violation,” esp. 232).

134. See, e.g., *PGM* 1.88–89, 164–66, 179–85, 252–53; 2.52–54; 4.3043–44; Lucian *Men.* 9; *Alex.* 13; cf. Klauck, *Context*, 228; Nilsson, *Piety*, 171; Smith, *Magician*, 97–99; Arnold, *Power*, 18. For modern shamans manipulating spirits, see, e.g., Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 178.

135. CD XII, 2–3 (which compares those controlled with demons to necromancers; see also Gaster, *Scriptures*, 85); *L.A.B.* 34:2–3; *b. Sanh.* 67b.

136. Klauck, *Context*, 214. See discussion in appendix A.

137. Graf, “Initiation”; e.g., *PGM* 1.298 (Apollo); 2.98–117 (Osiris); 4.2626–29 (requiring a charm lest one anger Selene when invoking her); 12.67 (gods in general). For attempts to manipulate deities, Pliny *Nat.* 28.4.19.

138. E.g., Diodorus Siculus 4.45.3; Philostratus *Hrk.* 25.13; *Sib. Or.* 5.165 (Rome’s destruction for desiring φαρμακίην); *T. Jos.* 5:1 (deadly poisons); 6:1 (love charms in the food); cf. Guthrie, *Orpheus*, 17–18 (on Orpheus). Judaism opposed their use (*Sib. Or.* 3.225, probably second century B.C.E.; Gal 5:20; cf. the probably later curse invocation against those who secretly “poisoned” a loved one in Deissmann, *Light*, 424). Roman law treated poisoning harshly (Grant, *Paul*, 114, citing Paulus Dig. 48.19.38.5). Drugs could impair the senses (Isaeus *Astyph.* 37, φαρμάκων). The more general medical sense of φάρμακον was different (Diodorus Siculus 17.31.6; Appian *Hist. rom.* 6.14.87).

139. Josephus *Ant.* 4.279.

140. Euripides *Andr.* 355.

141. Circe in Homer *Od.* 10.235–36, 290, 317, 326; Parthenius *L.R.* 12.2; cf. Diodorus Siculus 4.45.3. Circe also used potions to bewitch animals (Homer *Od.* 10.212–13). For magic transforming substances, see, e.g., Ovid *Metam.* 14.414–15; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2; but deities also transformed substances (Homer *Od.* 13.162–63) or persons (e.g., Hesiod *Astron.* frg. 3; Apollodorus *Bib.* 2.1.3.1; Euripides *Bacch.* 1330–32; Longus 1.27).

142. Lucian *Lucius* 54; Apuleius *Metam.* 2.30. In more recent magic, see Mbiti, *Religions*, 258 (and cf. 220); Prince, “Yoruba Psychiatry,” 92; Umeh, *Dibia*, 132; Nanan, “Sorcerer,” 82; cf. also the transformation in Zemleni, “Symptom,” 99.

143. Diogenes Laertius 8.2.59, citing Satyrus’s citation of Gorgias, who claimed to be a witness.

144. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 306.

character of some of Apollonius's deeds still frequently surfaces in Philostratus,¹⁴⁵ although he is trying to clear Apollonius of the charge.¹⁴⁶ I discuss Apollonius further below.

THE "DIVINE MAN"

For many Greeks, the line between humanity and divinity was much thinner than for Jewish people.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the category modern scholars have associated with a "divine man" did not make the person a deity per se but drew attention to the person's divine qualities.¹⁴⁸ Many scholars have interpreted the NT accounts of Jesus's miracles, and sometimes those of his agents, in light of this category.¹⁴⁹

Yet, as some other scholars point out, some structural similarities between Christian and pagan ways of recounting miracles hardly make the NT accounts representative of divine-man ideology.¹⁵⁰ This warning is relevant for two reasons, both of which I explore more fully below. First, the applicability of the very category of "divine men" to first-century miracle workers is a matter of considerable dispute. Second, Judaism already had a miracle-working tradition in the Elijah-Elisha cycle that it did not accentuate for Hellenistic apologetic; this relative indifference in Judaism diminishes the likelihood that the Gospels, which are less Hellenized in their content than some of our other Jewish sources, would have done so. The supposed connections between aretologies and divine men are also inadequate.¹⁵¹

In the past, many scholars argued that the divine man was a composite type in antiquity with specific characteristics.¹⁵² Today, however, most scholars recognize that the various characteristics derive from many diverse sources and have been unified in a single type only by the creativity of modern scholarship.¹⁵³ The ancient

145. E.g., *Vit. Apoll.* 4.43; 6.43; cf. also Evans, "Apollonius," 80–81.

146. Smith, *Magician*, 87; Klauck, *Context*, 169. See further Reimer, *Miracle* (below).

147. See, e.g., the sources in Keener, *John*, 178–79, 291–93.

148. Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 20 (noting even application of "divine" to Isaiah in Josephus *Ant.* 10.35 and to Moses in Philo *Mos.* 2.188). Some have also linked this divine man with Jesus's title, "son of God," but as I have argued elsewhere, the Gospels probably apply the title to Jesus in a Jewish sense (see Keener, *John*, 291–96).

149. Reitzenstein, *Religions*, 207; Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:130; Koester, "Gospels," 230–36 (in Sabourin, *Miracles*, 253); Koester, *Paul and World*, 118–20; Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 66; cf. Mills, *Agents*, 126. I have taken much of the material in this section from Keener, *John*, 268–70.

150. Kingsbury, *Christology*, 39; cf. Kee, "Aretalogy," 422.

151. Gallagher, *Divine Man*, 173–74; cf. Gundry, "Genre," 107.

152. For one example that scholars today regard as excessive, see Bieler, *Theios anēr*. Much more cautiously, cf. Talbert, *Gospel*, who relates men who achieved immortality (26–31) to *theoi andres*, while noting that not all *theoi andres* became immortal (35–38). Aune, "Problem of Genre," 19, is more skeptical of Talbert's differentiation between "eternals" and "immortals."

153. See Tiede, *Figure*, 99 (cf. 14–29, on Pythagorean conceptions; 71–97, Heracles); Gallagher, *Divine Man*, 173; Shuler, *Genre*, 18; Liefeld, "Divine Man"; Blackburn, "ANAPES," 188–91; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 34; Martitz, "Υἱός," 8:339–40; Sabourin, *Miracles*, 47; Betz, *Jesus*, 64; Koskenniemi, "Background," 105–7. The "type" is especially inappropriate for the first century, when many of its features are not yet documented.

use of the phrase is too broad to delineate a specific type; it can refer to a literal “divine man,” an “inspired man,” a man somehow related to deity, and an “extraordinary man.”¹⁵⁴ The sense in which such a phrase appears in the third-century *Life of Apollonius* did not yet exist in the first century.¹⁵⁵ Thus Kee harshly criticizes earlier advocates of the divine man type, arguing that this type is nonexistent.¹⁵⁶

Scholars today therefore normally conclude that earlier scholars blended too many disparate features in their pictures of the “divine man.”¹⁵⁷ Those who fit the category best are Pythagoras, of whom relatively little is known historically; Apollonius, for reports of whom we are largely dependent on third-century C.E. Philostratus;¹⁵⁸ and Empedocles,¹⁵⁹ like the other two, associated with Pythagoreanism.¹⁶⁰ Although Pythagoras and Empedocles lived centuries before early Christianity, the attribution of wonders to them apparently derives from long after their lifetimes.

The later sources are even more problematic; as Howard Clark Kee objects, “To offer Philostratus or the Greek Magical Papyri as historical evidence for events reported by writers of the first century, who were operating within a very different life-world, such as the writers of the Gospels and Acts, is historiographically irresponsible.”¹⁶¹ The third century C.E. particularly accentuated the ancient longing for direct intervention by the gods, as Kee notes,¹⁶² although I believe that it was more widespread in an earlier period than Kee’s survey suggests. Some healing accounts had already become more detailed and began to appear in literary texts in the imperial period, a period in which magic also began to acquire greater prominence.¹⁶³ Some scholars argue that “fantastic tales” and other fictitious elements in works with historical settings grew popular especially beginning in the literary revival of Nero’s reign.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, lavish tales of wonder workers grew in time.

That third-century miracle narratives are much more complete than accounts in earlier historians probably suggests that pagan propagandists suited their accounts to existing Christian parallels.¹⁶⁵ Thus, parallels between first-

154. Holladay, *Theios Anēr*, 237.

155. Kee, *Miracle*, 37.

156. *Ibid.*, 297–99; cf. *idem*, *Origins*, 61–62.

157. See Klauck, *Context*, 177.

158. In Philostratus *Ep. Apoll.* 48, Apollonius claims that the gods have publicly attested him as a “divine man.”

159. Klauck, *Context*, 176.

160. Pythagorean miracle stories reflect the view “that nature’s elements were rational, living forces” that responded to them (Cotter, “Miracle,” 103).

161. Kee, *Miracle*, 288; cf. 52.

162. *Ibid.*, 288; cf. Klauck, *Context*, 170. He provides evidence for miracles as propaganda in the romances (Kee, *Miracle*, 252–89).

163. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 269–71, 274.

164. Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 22 (attributing some of this to the influence of the Jesus tradition, 27, 143; but would it have exercised such influence on Rome’s aristocracy by Nero’s reign?). In the second century, cf. the object of some of Lucian’s satires.

165. See Lown, “Miraculous.”

century Christian stories of Jesus raising the dead and third-century accounts of first-century Apollonius of Tyana¹⁶⁶ doing the same may tell us more about Christian influence on paganism in late antiquity than concerning the reverse.¹⁶⁷ To argue otherwise, in the face of the chronological evidence, is difficult to defend, unless one's agenda is to postulate early Christian borrowing from Apollonius at any cost.

PHILOSTRATUS'S CLAIMS ABOUT APOLLONIUS

Of all ancient stories about miracle workers, those about Apollonius come closest to the stories about Jesus in the Gospels. Only these two figures stand out as immanent bearers of numinous power of whom multiple healing narratives are reported.¹⁶⁸ If we ask which stories circulated first, however, it is clear that miracle stories circulated about Jesus before Apollonius flourished, and Mark wrote about Jesus's miracles well over a century before Philostratus wrote about Apollonius's. The period between Jesus's crucifixion and Mark's Gospel, usually estimated at roughly forty years, may be less than a third of the period between Apollonius's death or disappearance and Philostratus's story about him.¹⁶⁹

As suggested above, some, and possibly the majority of sources before Philostratus, associated Apollonius with magic.¹⁷⁰ Philostratus seeks to counter this accusation in his portrayal. The antimagical apologetic in Philostratus resembles that in Acts and other sources: ethical and communal criteria were important in distinguishing benevolent miracles from harmful magic.¹⁷¹ Thus, for example, magic could seek to manipulate the divine for personal advantage.¹⁷² For Apollonius, various criteria distinguish magic from miracle working, but most important among

166. Anderson, *Philostratus*, 121–239, argues for the antiquity of the Apollonius traditions; Bowie, "Apollonius," 1653–71, and idem, "Philostratus," 181–96, argues for their lateness (cf. also Bowersock's views on the priority of the Christian stories, in *Fiction as History*). Reimer, *Miracle*, 20–22, summarizes Anderson and Bowie, and concludes that even if one rejects the narratives' antiquity, they can "illuminate shared cultural data" relevant to an earlier period (23, following Anderson, *Philostratus*, 121). I agree on this level and use Philostratus accordingly in my work.

167. Pélaez del Rosal, "Reanimación," may well be right that Philostratus read Luke; against Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 277; cf. Price, "Easters," who reads some Gospel signs in light of Philostratus and analogous sources. For significant contrasts between Philostratus and Luke here, see Harris, "Dead," 301–3. Narrative techniques in 1 Kgs 17:17–24 may have influenced Luke's composition (cf. Pélaez del Rosal, "Reanimación"; Brodie, "Unraveling"; Hill, *Prophecy*, 53), but he did not simply compose it from this source (Harris, "Dead," 299–301; Witherington, *Women*, 76; against Drury, *Design*, 71). Dependence on 1 Kgs 17 in Luke's resuscitation accounts is in any case much likelier than dependence on the story of Apollonius. Luke locates his miracle at Nain, an insignificant village, does not report the young man's revelations about the afterlife, and is otherwise similarly unadorned, reinforcing the likelihood of the story being much earlier than the later, embellished pagan parallels (Harris, "Dead," 299).

168. Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 236.

169. Over a century ago, Wilson, "Miracles," 20, suggested 140 years for this span, in contrast to the Gospels.

170. Klauck, *Context*, 169.

171. Reimer, *Miracle*, 249.

172. *Ibid.*, 250.

them, as I have noted, is the issue of greed; the most effective answer to miracle workers' critics was to keep using miraculous power without seeming to desire it or to be greedy.¹⁷³ Good intermediaries might also be expected to put themselves in danger to benefit others.¹⁷⁴ Such beliefs about ancient magic probably helped shape the apologetic of both Philostratus and the writers of the Gospels and Acts.

Philostratus's portrait suits a late second- or third-century setting (i.e., the author's own) much better than a mostly late first-century setting (i.e., Apollonius's); his accounts of Apollonius even resemble reports from Christian gospels, though especially of the "apocryphal" variety.¹⁷⁵ This is very possibly deliberate; by the fourth century, pagan writers explicitly used Apollonius as an alternative to Jesus, claiming that the pagan world offered its own healers.¹⁷⁶

Use of stories about Apollonius and others as rivals to Jesus invited Christian apologetic responses,¹⁷⁷ though it may be noted that the most significant apologetic on a popular level may have been the reports of continuing miracle workers among Christians (reports that I shall address later in the book; see ch. 10). Although scholars today often doubt the nineteenth-century view that Philostratus tried to offer Apollonius as an alternative to Jesus (apart from the cases of the strongest parallels),¹⁷⁸ it seems clear that Christian stories were at least among the serious

173. *Vit. Apoll.* 1.34; Reimer, *Miracle*, 246; cf. 139, 252. People viewed magicians as deviant, outside the religious community (248). But social marginalization was necessary and desirable for miracle workers to avoid charges of ambition (139–41, noting the apostles, and still more Apollonius and other exotic sages in Philostratus). For early miracle workers' asceticism, see Frateantonio, "Miracles," 53.

174. Reimer, *Miracle*, 85, comparing the apostles.

175. Klauck, *Context*, 170. Admittedly, stories of Jesus as miracle worker are limited in extant apocryphal gospels (Achtmeier, *Miracle Tradition*, 177–78; cf. Remus, *Healer*, 92–95). Nevertheless, miracle stories are abundant in apocryphal acts (Achtmeier, *Miracle Tradition*, 179–88; cf. Remus, *Healer*, 102–3). Miracles in the apocryphal acts fit the larger edifying framework of these works (see Bovon, "Miracles"). Second- and third-century apocryphal works conform the apostles to divine-man-type models, but canonical Gospel traditions about Jesus seem to have remained exempt (Achtmeier, "Divine Man"). Fanciful elements in Philostratus's tale (highlighted, e.g., in Purtil, "Proofs," 47) differ significantly from tamer elements in, say, Luke's history (see Keener, "Official"). Philostratus's geography is fairly accurate within the confines of the empire but depends on earlier authors and largely departs from reality in Mesopotamia and India (Jones, "Passage").

176. Klauck, *Context*, 170; Conybeare, "Introduction," xi–xii. Deists, including notably Charles Blount (1654–93), also employed this comparison regarding the Gospels (Burns, *Debate*, 72–74; Cragg, *Reason*, 77; Lawton, *Miracles*, 47; Brown, *Miracles*, 49; idem, *Thought*, 204–5), a comparison that some subsequent skeptical critics also found useful (noted in Sabourin, *Miracles*, 45). Christian writer W. Weston countered in 1746 that Philostratus borrowed Jesus's miracles in an effort to discredit Christianity (Burns, *Debate*, 116). Hume's attempted comparison of Jesus with Lucian's Alexander is plainly tendentious (see *ibid.*, 241).

177. See, e.g., "The Treatise of Eusebius, the Son of Pamphilus, against the Life of Apollonius of Tyana written by Philostratus, occasioned by the Parallel drawn by Hierocles between him and Christ" (found in Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.*, LCL, 2:484–605); he notes (ch. 1) that Celsus had already required such refutation by Origen. See further Cook, *Interpretation*, 250–76, especially 266–68. On a popular level, Christian hagiography probably responded with yet greater tales of saints' exploits (cf. Rapp, "Saints," 550).

178. E.g., Borzi, "L'accostamento" (not Philostratus himself, but other ancient writers). See further Klauck, *Context*, 170–71, himself arguing that the case should be left open.

influences on his storytelling approach, including by offering literary fodder for his miracle stories.¹⁷⁹

Thus, for example, Apollonius stops a bier and raises a dead girl¹⁸⁰—similar to accounts about Jesus (Mark 5:41–42; Luke 7:14–15). His exorcisms reflect a different understanding of demons than the one found in the Gospels and Acts (see appendixes A and B) and are more dramatized, but some similarities appear here as well.¹⁸¹ Response to Christian claims is likely in Apollonius's promise to his disciple that he will meet him at a designated location, alive, though in the disciple's view, risen from the dead.¹⁸² When he appeared to followers in a distant location¹⁸³ and they supposed him a ghost, he urged them to take hold of him and see that he was not a ghost, and they embraced him.¹⁸⁴ Some other elements are quite different, for example, getting a formerly mad dog to lick the wound it had inflicted, thereby healing the boy,¹⁸⁵ and even incantations in some of the above stories.

Yet it is noteworthy that the parts of the story most apt to be confirmed by Apollonius's letters¹⁸⁶ exhibit the least parallels with the Gospels. That is, elements in Philostratus's story closest to the Gospels are late elements, added based on now widely circulating stories about Jesus rather than early traditions about Apollonius. This is not to imply that Christian stories provide Philostratus's only source. Some other elements of the narratives, such as Apollonius dealing with a vampire or providing divination, are quite different from the Jesus of the Gospels.¹⁸⁷

Besides Philostratus writing perhaps roughly 120 to 150 years after both Apollonius's death (on the shorter end) and the first extant Gospel (on the longer), he writes in a different genre. The Gospels are ancient biography, with the strongest parallels in those sources;¹⁸⁸ Philostratus, by contrast, employs at least many novelistic elements, especially in exotic locations.¹⁸⁹ For example, Philostratus includes geographic details that are not merely mistaken, but cannot even reflect an

179. Note also that in Nero's day Apollonius leaves Rome for Spain (Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.47)—like beliefs about Paul (Rom 15:24; *1 Clem.* 5.7). Philostratus *possibly* borrows Apollonius offering wisdom to Vespasian before he becomes emperor from Josephus's earlier story (cf. also Johanan ben Zakkai), in a setting that detests the bloodshed of the Judean war (*Vit. Apoll.* 5.27–28).

180. *Vit. Apoll.* 4.45.

181. For comparisons, cf. also Wire, "Structure," 88–92; more in terms of contrast, Sabourin, "Miracles," 284–91; idem, *Miracles*, 41–46.

182. *Vit. Apoll.* 7.41. In fact, Apollonius presents himself as an immortal spirit rather than resurrected (Licona, *Resurrection*, 147, cites *Vit. Apoll.* 8.12.1; 8.31.1).

183. *Vit. Apoll.* 8.10–11. Cf. Mark 14:28; 16:7.

184. *Vit. Apoll.* 8.12; cf. Luke 24:39.

185. *Vit. Apoll.* 6.43.

186. Regardless of their authenticity (it may be doubtful), they predate Philostratus's story. The letters focus on Greek cities where Apollonius probably actually traveled (not Ethiopia, India, etc., where Philostratus's most fanciful tales transpire).

187. Van Cangh, "Miracles grecs," 224–26 (here esp. 224).

188. See discussion in Burridge, *Gospels*; more briefly, Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 73–84.

189. Purtil, "Miracles," 201, emphasizes novelistic features like Indian snakes large enough to consume elephants; such "exotic" features of distant locations characterize novels but not historical narratives such as Luke's work (see my argument in Keener, "Official").

eyewitness source (e.g., having camels cross the Caucasus to India and having the Caucasus border the Red Sea).¹⁹⁰ Likewise, Babylonian and Indian kings implausibly discuss Greek philosophy with Apollonius.¹⁹¹ Such novelistic features are not surprising in this work, however; Philostratus, like the writers of the apocryphal gospels, wrote in the heyday of Greek novels.¹⁹²

JEWISH “DIVINE MEN”?

The early Jesus movement was Jewish, and even the most Hellenistic first-century Christian reporters of signs, like Luke and Paul, regularly cite biblical sources far more than the classical ones favored by their contemporaries. If the Hellenistic “divine man” model influenced early Judaism, early Christian use of this model (via Judaism) might be more plausible.

Against the contentions of some scholars, however, it does not appear clear that Hellenistic Jewish writers accentuated the miraculous for Hellenistic audiences. Against some others,¹⁹³ Jewish sources do not consistently portray Moses as a divine man; he is a miracle worker in Artapanus and a philosopher for Philo and Josephus, but the two ideas are not brought together under a single category.¹⁹⁴ Some scholars argue that Diaspora Jewish writers like the early third-century B.C.E. Clearchus of Soli,¹⁹⁵ the third- to second-century B.C.E. Artapanus,¹⁹⁶ and others were often happy to emphasize the miraculous powers of historic Jewish heroes. While this emphasis may be true to some degree, these writers do not seem to have heightened miracle-working motifs for Hellenistic consumption; Philo even seems to diminish Moses’s miracles, and Artapanus’s embellishments of Moses do not focus on miracles.¹⁹⁷ As we shall see later, Jewish historians had reasons to tone down or explain miraculous elements for elite Gentile readers.

So different are the early Jewish portraits of past heroes from Philostratus’s third-century picture of Apollonius of Tyana that one is forced to question “just how attractive the miracle-worker motif was to pagans” in the first and second centuries, a fact that “may explain why this aspect of the Jesus tradition is non-existent

190. Wilson, “Miracles,” 20–21, esp. 21.

191. *Ibid.*, 21.

192. For the apocryphal gospels and acts, see Aune, *Dictionary of Rhetoric*, 322.

193. E.g., Georgi, *Opponents*, 122–64, especially explores the Hellenistic Jewish use of the motif; cf. also 390–409.

194. Tiede, *Figure*, 101–240 (ch. 2, “Images of Moses in Hellenistic Judaism”). Moses was “divine” in the sense that he was affected by the deity (Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.279). Cf. the probability that Josephus presents Jesus as both teacher and miracle worker (*Ant.* 18.63; as noted above, Josephus employs the same term, παράδοξα, for the miracles worked by the prophet Elisha in *Ant.* 9.182; cf. *Ant.* 2.267, 285; 10.28, 235; 13.282; 15.379). Koskenniemi, *Miracle-Workers*, 298, likewise concludes that miracle working does not point to *theios anēr* in Jewish sources.

195. See Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:241, citing Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.176–83.

196. Collins, “Artapanus,” 893, following Tiede, *Figure*, 166–74.

197. Holladay, *Theios Anēr*, 238–39.

in the apostolic fathers,”¹⁹⁸ and why emphasis on miracle working tends to decrease as sermons in Acts become more Hellenistic.¹⁹⁹

Jewish people had their own supernatural traditions. Thus, the cynical Lucian, a second-century rhetorician, dismisses miracles yet attests Jews who practiced them,²⁰⁰ and Juvenal, a second-century satirist, complains about Jewish women who tell fortunes in the name of heaven.²⁰¹ Carl Holladay, who has examined in great detail the divine man question, warns:

The preoccupation to focus attention upon the miracles as primarily means of at-testing the divinity of the miracle worker, either compared with the Rabbinic or the Hellenistic miracle-worker, obscures the more fundamental line of continuity with the Old Testament, and the corollary understanding of miracles in terms of Salvation-history, particularly their eschatological implications.²⁰²

The expression “divine man” never appears in the LXX or NT and is extremely rare in Jewish sources.²⁰³ Josephus’s single use of the term may be roughly equivalent to “man of God”;²⁰⁴ Philo’s use is closer to a Stoic conception but is unrelated to miracles.²⁰⁵ Thus, if anything, Hellenization may have made Jewish conception of a “divine man” more rather than less problematic.²⁰⁶ Judaism’s miracle-working theme derived naturally enough from the OT: God working in history especially through God’s spokespersons.²⁰⁷ By dramatic contrast to the lack of clear allusions to any specific Hellenistic miracle-worker allusions in the Gospels, allusions to the exodus traditions and Elijah-Elisha cycles recur at various points.

Application of the title to Jesus is problematic, despite suggestions of some scholars that Mark addresses this image. It is not impossible, as some scholars argue, that the crowds in Mark followed Jesus because he was a wonder worker, and that Mark opposes reducing Jesus’s ministry to such terms, insisting that the suffering aspect of his ministry must also be taken into account. While Mark is

198. Ibid., 238. It should be admitted, however, that many extant apostolic fathers aim at a philosophical rather than popular audience, whereas the Gospels do not.

199. Ibid., 239, comparing Acts 2:22; 10:38; 17:22–31 (although the last one, again, is directed toward a philosophical audience; contrast the absence in Acts 13:23–31; but cf. 1 Cor 1:22).

200. Stern, *Authors*, 2:221–23, citing *Philopseudeis* 16; *Alexander Pseudopropheta* 13; *Tragodopodogra* 171–73.

201. Juvenal *Sat.* 6.542–47.

202. Holladay, *Theios Anēr*, 239.

203. The count is from ibid., 237–38.

204. See the discussion of the passage, *Ant.* 3.180, in Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 138.

205. Tiede, *Figure*, 123, 240; cf. Philo *Names* 125–28.

206. Holladay, *Theios Anēr*, 238.

207. So also Kee, *Origins*, 62; cf. similarly Betz, *Jesus*, 64. For a survey of especially OT theology of healings in their ancient Near Eastern and Greek contexts, see especially Brown, *Healer*; on healing in the OT more briefly, see Wilkinson, *Healing*, 31–62; miracles in the OT, Laato, “Miracles”; for one survey of texts about healings, see Warrington, “Healing.”

himself charismatic rather than anticharismatic,²⁰⁸ it is possible that he opposes a Christology, or more likely, a pneumatology, that emphasizes Jesus's miracles above his passion. The term θεῖος ἀνὴρ, however, is too broad to designate such a category helpfully.²⁰⁹ It is no more appropriate in the other Gospels or Acts.

Early Jewish Miracle Workers

As I have been suggesting, Jewish parallels to early Christian miracles appear to offer closer models than do most Gentile analogies.²¹⁰ Jewish people, after all, attributed healing to the one true God (Exod 15:26), in whom Jesus believed, and prayed to God regularly for healing Israel's sicknesses.²¹¹ Some pre-Christian Jewish parallels, especially those in the OT, likewise resemble the miracle forms used in the Gospels.²¹² Similarly, some miracle stories in Acts have clear intertextual links with OT accounts.²¹³ It is intrinsically more likely that even the most Hellenized of Gospel writers, Luke, would have looked for his primary model for recounting Jesus's miracles to the LXX, whose contents and style he knew thoroughly and which he cites regularly in explicitly marked quotations, than to inscriptions at a healing shrine or to oral reports of magicians or polytheistic miracle workers.

Granted, some analogies resemble the common model that ancients often attributed to sorcery, a model available in many Jewish circles. Jewish practitioners of magic, with which some of early Christianity's detractors polemically associated it, apparently became common in the Diaspora (cf. Acts 8:9–11; 13:8),²¹⁴ espe-

208. Boring, *Sayings*, 201–2, seems wrong to suggest that Mark opposes charismatic excesses in Q; Mark in fact apparently draws on Q at places (e.g., in his abbreviated introduction; in Mark 3:22–30). But Boring rightly points out that as a charismatic, Mark could oppose charismatic excesses (203). Kümmel, *Introduction*, 93, rightly observes against Weeden that Mark does not deny Jesus's role as a wonder worker; the signs are clearly positive (Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 105; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 76–77), even if they must be read in view of the cross.

209. Vander Broek, "Sitz," 131–89. Lane, "Theios Anēr," 160, thinks the view might be attributable to the crowds. Weeden, *Mark*, 52–69, thought Mark's opponents followed a *theios anēr* Christology like the one some attribute to Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians (cf. also Weeden, "Heresy"). The term "opponents" may be too strong and *theios anēr* too ambiguous (although they may hold "a triumphalist theology characterized by . . . miraculous acts," vii). On the Corinthian opponents, see, e.g., Keener, "Corinthian Believers," 58; idem, *Corinthians*, 144–46.

210. With, e.g., Koskeniemi, "Apollonius"; idem, "Background," 107–11; idem, *Miracle-Workers*, 292–93; Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 27 (following Weiss, *Zeichen*, 22–39, who supplies considerable material). I use here material especially from Keener, *John*, 255–57.

211. The eighth benediction of the Amida, including both spiritual and physical sicknesses (Bonsirven, *Judaism*, 131).

212. Blackburn, "ΑΝΔΡΕΣ," 199–204. Resuscitation stories were not uncommon; cf. the claim for Empedocles in Diogenes Laertius 8.2.59; 4 Bar. 7:19–20 (a resuscitation "in order that they might believe," my translation); rabbis in b. B.K. 117a; Abraham in T. Ab. 14:11–14; 18:9–11A; 14:7B.

213. See Brucker, "Wunder"; also, e.g., Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 298; Stipp, "Vier Gestalten." Later Christian wonder workers also followed the model of Elijah (see Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 20).

214. See Goodenough, *Symbols*, 12:58–63; Koester, *Introduction*, 1:380–81; Gaster, *Studies*, 1:356ff.; Schäfer, "Magic Literature." For associations of Moses with magic, see Gager, *Moses*, 134–61. For Jewish

cially through their supposed access to the secret name of God (secret names were considered powerful in magic; cf. Acts 19:13; perhaps Mark 5:7–9).²¹⁵ Although many Jewish sources, including later rabbis, were officially opposed to magic,²¹⁶ magical practices infiltrated even rabbinic circles.²¹⁷ By and large, however, the teachers of the law who addressed signs in a positive way emphasized miracles wrought by God for the pious, eschewing what they or others considered magic.

Judaism knew of both biblical and postbiblical miracle workers. Some biblical prophets like Elijah and Elisha were particularly emphasized as miracle workers;²¹⁸ some others, like Isaiah, might be associated with healing occasionally (Isa 38:21);²¹⁹ and Jewish sources continued to link miracles with many of the biblical prophets.²²⁰ According to third-century Palestinian tradition, Abraham had the gift of healing.²²¹

Other miracle workers appeared closer to the contemporary period than the biblical characters, for example, Hanina ben Dosa, who according to tradition healed the sons of Johanan ben Zakkai and Gamaliel II.²²² The Jewish historian Geza Vermes has even gone so far as to suggest that holy men like Hanina ben Dosa dominated first-century Galilean religious experience more than the priests or scribes did;²²³ while this suggestion certainly goes too far, it rightly emphasizes

influence in later magical texts, see, e.g., *PGM* 1.301–2, 305; 3.405; 4.1200–1204, 2355–56, 3040–41, 3047–48; 5.114–15; 13.327, 815–18; 35.1–42; *PDM* 14.1061–62; *CIJ* 2:373–74, §1448; Aramaic incantation bowls (cf. Levene, “Heal”; Isbell, “Story,” 13). For magic among Babylonian rabbis, see Stratton, “Imagining,” 372–77.

215. For the use of names in magic, see, e.g., Lucan *Bell. civ.* 6.732–34; *PGM* 1.160–61, 167, 171–92, 216–17; 12.316; *Pr. Jos.* 9–12; *T. Sol.* 5:2, 6–9; Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 32–33, 45; Pulleyn, “Power of Names”; probably Mark 5:7, 9. On deities with unknown names, cf., e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 1.68.3; Pliny *Nat.* 28.4.18–19; Aune, *Revelation*, 926–27; Harrauer, “Agnostos Theos.”

216. E.g., *m. Sanh.* 7:11; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *R.H.* 3:8, §1; *Sanh.* 7:13, §2. Note also Wis 17:7; Ps.-Phoc. 149; *1 En.* 65:6 (Sim.); *Ascen. Isa.* 2:5; *2 Bar.* 60:2; 66:2; *T. Reu.* 4:9. For stories of hostile magicians, see, e.g., Exod 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18–19; 9:11; *Jub.* 48:9; CD V, 18–19; *L.A.B.* 34; *T. Sol.* 25:4; *Jan. Jam.* (OTP 2:428–42); *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on Gen 49:22–23; *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on Exod 1:15; 7:11; 2 Tim 3:13. Rabbis would class events performed in Israel as miracles but similar events among Gentiles as magic (Signer, “Balance,” 112–13); for the development of rabbinic views of magic, including the differences between Palestine and Babylon, see Stratton, “Imagining Power” (on Palestinian rabbis in the Bavli opposing it, see 377).

217. See Goldin, “Magic”; Neusner, *Sat.*, 80–81; *b. Sanh.* 65b; 67b; cf. *Ab. R. Nat.* 25 A (on R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus); Basser, “Interpretations.”

218. For Elijah and Elisha as examples of healing miracles in Josephus, see Betz, “Miracles in Josephus,” 219–20; as models among signs sages, see Galley, “Heilige.” Note comparisons and especially contrasts between biblical narratives about Elisha and rabbinic traditions about Hanina ben Dosa in Blenkinsopp, “Miracles,” especially 70–80, noting the different social settings of the respective narratives.

219. With Cohen, *Maccabees*, 200. Eve, *Miracles*, 385, argues that the only miracle directly attributed to Isaiah in the account was the shadow going up; but Isaiah does play a role in the healing here.

220. E.g., Sir 48:13; *Liv. Pr.* 2.3 (on Jeremiah), in OTP 2:386–87; Schermann, 81–82, §25). On early Jewish association of miracles with various biblical figures, see especially the survey in Koskeniemi, “Figures”; idem, *Miracle-Workers*.

221. *Gen. Rab.* 39:11, R. Levi; later R. Huna amplified this tradition. On postbiblical miracle-working traditions for biblical characters, see Koskeniemi, *Miracle-Workers*.

222. *B. Ber.* 34b. Later reports also apply to later rabbis (cf., e.g., Rosenfeld, “Simeon b. Yohai”).

223. Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 5. By contrast, most reports of rabbinic miracles, probably fitting the predominantly halakic character of rabbinic literature, are “rule miracles,” that is, signs to demonstrate the truth of one’s legal teaching (Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 106–12).

the popular nature of charismatic leaders and the degree to which they could become influential in first-century Galilee.²²⁴ Although our sources regarding early rabbis are limited, as I shall note later, they do illustrate a continuity in expectation within Jesus's early Jewish setting.

Josephus is more interested in, though disparaging of, some purported eschatological sign prophets, some of whose promised activities may evoke Moses, in their attempts to secure eschatological deliverance.²²⁵ Signs and wonders were often associated with Moses,²²⁶ who, it was said, used "wonders and signs" to withstand kings.²²⁷ Jesus's feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:41–42) may recall Moses (Exod 16:12–21) as well as Elisha (2 Kgs 4:42–44). Many Jewish people probably not only expected significant signs before the final deliverance and special miracles at the end²²⁸ but also pondered the signs of the messianic era promised by Isaiah, Ezekiel, and other biblical prophets (e.g., Isa 35:5–6). Consistent with such images, later rabbis taught that signs offered by biblical signs prophets anticipated the signs that would take place in the messianic era.²²⁹

Jesus's reported miracles accord well with the Q allusion to Isa 35:5–6 (Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22),²³⁰ which could suggest an eschatological interpretation of his miracles as blessings of the future kingdom in the present.²³¹ This conception of

224. Citing Matt 12:27//Luke 11:19, others have long suggested that other exorcists and miracle workers existed (so Dakin, "Belief," though insisting on 38 that Jesus's miracles went beyond others' claims).

225. See Keener, *John*, 270–71; Eve, *Miracles*, 115–16, 324. On these sign prophets, see initially Barnett, "Prophets" (= idem, "Sign Prophets"); idem, "Eschatological Prophets"; and now also Gray, *Figures*, 112–44. She contends, probably rightly, that (137) only the cases of Theudas and the Egyptian genuinely evoke the exodus and conquest traditions; but even these two examples offer sufficient evidence to suggest that such views circulated in first-century Judea (whether already in Jesus's day or perhaps even evoking some early views about him). Philo's miracles focus especially on "the distant Mosaic past" (Eve, *Miracles*, 84), like most early Jewish miracle reports (Eve, *Miracles*, 377, though noting that they were not cessationist).

226. *Jub.* 48:4; *L.A.B.* 9:7; *Sipre Deut.* 9.2.1; 4Q422 10 5; see further Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 162–63; Eve, *Miracles*, 244. But some sources such as Ben Sira may associate miracles more with prophets subsequent to Moses (Eve, *Miracles*, 115–16).

227. Wis 10:16. McCasland, "Signs," 149–50, confesses that his earlier emphasis on wonders in paganism had neglected the nearer source of the NT idiom in the LXX.

228. E.g., Sir 33:1–8/36:1–8. Eve, *Miracles*, 263–66, 379, notes that early Jewish sources could connect miracles with eschatology (citing 4Q521; *Jub.* 23:23–31) but warns (266) that the association was not "automatic." 4Q521 may refer to God restoring Israel's wounded after an eschatological battle (Eve, *Healer*, 48–49).

229. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 9:4, Amoraic; cf. related ideas in Marmorstein, *Names*, 175; prodigies in the messianic era in Hruby, "Perspectives Rabbiniques," 79–80.

230. Most accept this saying as authentic; see, e.g., Bourke, "Miracle Stories," 23–24; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:244; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:130; Sanders, *Figure*, 94; Wink, "Reply"; Witherington, *Christology*, 42–43, 165.

231. Cf. Harvey, *History*, 115, although taking matters too far; Heil, "Aspects," 281–82; Witherington, *Christology*, 171; Sanders, *Figure*, 167–68; Loos, *Miracles*, 246, 254; Mussner, *Miracles*, 41–42, 73–74; Sabourin, "Healings," 157; Montague, *Growth*, 306; cf. Léon-Dufour, "Fonction," 344–45; Van Cangh, "Miracles grecs," 232; Dunn, *Remembered*, 694–96 (Jesus viewing himself as an eschatological agent); even B. B. Warfield (in Brown, *Miracles*, 199). Kallas, *Significance*, connects Jesus's miracles inseparably with his eschatological proclamation (e.g., 112–13); some modern healing figures have also connected healing with the impending kingdom (Hickson, *Bridegroom*, 35, 387–88; note also Hickson's handwritten

an eschatological renewal of signs suits the way Luke also identifies the Christian movement from Pentecost forward (Acts 2:17–18). Most scholars recognize that in the Gospels, Jesus's miracles function as signs of the kingdom (also Matt 12:28//Luke 11:20).²³² Such a perspective relates to traditional Jewish expectations while pressing beyond most of them²³³ in affirming that the kingdom was already active in Jesus. I emphasize some contrasts with traditional Jewish models in the next chapter.

An Authenticating Function of Miracles

Charles Talbert distinguishes three basic functions of miracle stories in antiquity: legitimation, evangelization, and an opportunity for behavioral instruction.²³⁴ I focus here on the first function, legitimation or authentication. Especially since the Hellenistic period, aretalogies had used miracles as propaganda for competitive cults, not only for Greek cults like Asclepius but also for imports like Isis and Sarapis.²³⁵

Ancient writers and storytellers often used miraculous works to authenticate deities or, more often, mortal individuals.²³⁶ Such signs demonstrated that the per-

note on p. v of the copy of this volume in the library of Asbury Theological Seminary). Others adapted similar Isaianic language for the eschatological inversion (1QM XIV, 6), praying for an eschatological miracle (4Q176 1–2 I, 1). Qumran also may have combined the very texts to which Jesus alluded here, perhaps suggesting a Palestinian tradition (Evans, “4QS21,” 696; Le Cornu, *Acts*, 1388; though cf. Kvalbein, “Wunder”; idem, “Wonders”).

232. See Blackburn, “Miracles,” 372–74; Mussner, *Miracles*, 41–49; Rowland, *Origins*, 147–48; Evans, *Fabricating Jesus*, 141; Dod, “Healer,” 169–70; Finger and Swartley, “Bondage,” 19; see further Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, passim. If oral tradition developed a christological emphasis in connection with Jesus's miracles, as many argue, it presumably developed from Jesus's kingdom idea something already implicit in it (Robinson, “Challenge,” 326; Mussner, *Miracles*, 49–50), for Jesus's version of kingdom preaching is inseparable from his own messianic consciousness (cf. Matt 19:28//Luke 22:30; see discussion in Keener, *Historical Jesus*, esp. 257–58; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 234). Those who argue that miracles functioned as credentials of divinity, however, inevitably must depend on Johannine interpretation (as in, e.g., Keyser, “Rationale,” 359).

233. The Qumran Scrolls probably reveal realized eschatology (see Aune, *Cultic Setting*) and the sign prophets may have expected to show that the kingdom was present in them (though ultimately failing to work the requisite sign).

234. Talbert, *John*, 162, finding parallels for each of these in John's Gospel. For legitimation, he compares the case of the imperial candidate Vespasian's alleged miracles; for evangelization, Lucius's conversion to the cult of Isis after his restoration (Apuleius *Metam.* 11); and for instruction, Wis 16:26; Aelian frg. 89.

235. Versnel, “Miracles.” Cult officials collected them and intensified the miraculous dimension for propaganda purposes (Klauck, *Context*, 161, 166); they need not, however, constitute a distinct literary genre (Aune, *Dictionary of Rhetoric*, 57), and they differ in genre from NT healing narratives, which belong to broader narratives rather than lists (Klauck, *Context*, 167; for other contrasts, 168). Overemphasizing the propaganda value of Hellenistic miracles, Hobbs, “Miracle Story,” thinks secular television commercials a suitable modern analogy (on 117 rejecting modern revivalist claims as an analogy).

236. I used this material also in Keener, *John*, 272–74; and my forthcoming (but completed) commentary on Acts.

son indeed possessed numinous authority to justify his²³⁷ claims. Patristic sources continued to use miracles and particularly exorcisms as proofs verifying their claims.²³⁸

Such authentication appears in pagan as well as biblical sources. When applied to deities, as in the case of the healing list at Epidauros, testimonies of miracles were meant to convince people to trust for themselves to be healed;²³⁹ this especially applies to Asclepius's healing of skeptics.²⁴⁰ Analogously, it seems likely Mark's reports of healings, in addition to symbolic functions, encourage his hearers to trust their risen Lord to act among them. Thus disciples are reproved if their own faith for miracles is inadequate (Mark 4:38–40; 8:14–21; 9:18–29; 11:20–25),²⁴¹ although the passion and suffering cast a larger shadow over Mark's narrative (Mark 3:6, 21–22; 6:14–29; 8:34–38; 12:3–8; 13:9–13, 20–22; 14–15). Mark's promises for faith, as in Mark 11:20–25, are substantially greater than those of the Epidauros inscriptions, however; the former virtually made all believers "holy persons" with direct access to God, whereas the latter sought to "cushion disappointments" as well as "increase expectations."²⁴²

Miracles came to possess such propagandistic value that Romans could employ those of the Isis cult for political propaganda.²⁴³ Ancient writers report the healings attributed to Vespasian before the inauguration of his Flavian dynasty, undoubtedly a form of propaganda meant to authenticate his claim to rule.²⁴⁴ Any common idea of miracle-working sages, however, normally applied only to "divine" sages²⁴⁵ and developed only over time. First-century philosophers emphasized the divine wisdom of true sages rather than miraculous authentication; by the second century, writers like Lucian contested the growing popular ideal of such authentication; by the third century, many thinkers had capitulated to the popular ideal, portraying the intellectual heroes of the past as wonder workers as well. This trend increased as astrology, magic, and other customs from the East supplanted some of the traditional reliance on the more rationally oriented cultus of Roman religion.²⁴⁶

In the general sense, biblical and Jewish miracles also could authenticate persons. Hebrew Scripture reported both miracles performed directly by God and those performed through his agents, certain kinds of prophets;²⁴⁷ Jewish hopes for both

237. In the vast majority of cases, these wonder workers were men, although we do encounter exceptions such as the later Sosipatra.

238. Lampe, "Miracles," esp. 215–17. For how patristic theology handled this, see also Wiles, "Miracles."

239. Also Dibelius, *Tradition*, 170; cf. Grant, *Gods*, 66. Compare the translation of some of these accounts in Grant, *Religions*, 55–58.

240. Inscriptions 3 and 4 (Grant, *Religions*, 56, 57).

241. Signs are positive if inadequate in Mark; see Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 105; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 76–77.

242. On this function of the Epidauros inscriptions, see Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 283–84.

243. Kee, *Miracle*, 128–31.

244. Tiede, *Figure*, 91, citing Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81; Dio Cassius 65.8; Suetonius *Vesp.* 7. On Suetonius's report (*Vesp.* 7.2–3), see more fully Spahlinger, "Sueton-Studien II."

245. Greek biographers, in Aune, *Environment*, 34. Cynics, for example, show little interest in miracles (Downing, *Cynics*, 222–23).

246. Tiede, *Figure*, 99.

247. See Kee, *Miracle*, 147.

kinds of miracles continued in the period of Christian beginnings. On a popular level, miraculous answers to prayer probably authenticated Hanina ben Dosa,²⁴⁸ Honi the Circle-Drawer, and the other teachers Vermes has called “charismatic rabbis.”²⁴⁹ Because Honi was before God like a special son to a father, he was said to be able to change God’s mind on matters.²⁵⁰ He was so highly respected that it was said, “When Haninah ben Dosa died there were no workers of miracles left.”²⁵¹ These signs authenticated those who performed them; a holy man had power to make things happen, because he was holy.²⁵² Such motives are important also to the later medieval hagiographic tradition.²⁵³

In similar traditions, perhaps more relevant for at least Acts, signs could attest one’s message.²⁵⁴ Some halakists like R. Eliezer and R. Joshua also reportedly performed miracles to validate their halakah, although this story is clearly a homiletic one.²⁵⁵ Such stories not only glorified the signs worker but also offered a more widely applicable moral. Most accounts of such miraculous works by past rabbis, while sometimes hagiographic, made a point about piety or impiety; God hears the pious and punishes those who disregard proper teaching of the law, especially those who would not believe without miracles.²⁵⁶

Later rabbis were, however, more scribal than charismatic and subjective. Without ruling out supernatural activity in the present, they did not expect miracles normally on the same level as in the biblical period.²⁵⁷ More important, most later rabbis carefully subordinated miracles²⁵⁸ and even the heavenly voice²⁵⁹ to tradition in halakic interpretation. Prophets must be attested by signs, some later rabbis insisted, but elders as interpreters of the law may be accepted without

248. Cf. Moore, *Judaism*, 1:377; Strack, *Introduction*, 110, for his miracles in *b. Ber.* 33a; 34b; *Taan.* 24b; and that he was contemporary with Johanan ben Zakkai (*m. Ab.* 3:9, 10; *Mek.* on Exod 18:21).

249. On Honi and Hanina, see, e.g., Daube, “Enfant”; on Hanina, see Vermes, “Hanina”; for examples of Jewish miracle stories in general, see Montefiore and Loewe, *Anthology*, 339ff.; for discussion of early Jewish (esp. rabbinic) views on miracles, see Hruby, “Perspectives Rabbiniques”; McGinley, *Form-Criticism*, 96–118. Bokser, “Wonder-Working,” suggests that Palestinian tradition stressed God’s protection of the pious man, whereas Babylonian stressed such a man’s responsibility to others.

250. *P. Taan.* 3:10, §§61–63.

251. Moore, *Judaism*, 1:378, citing *m. Sot.* 9:15, “a late appendix.”

252. *P. Taan.* 3:11, §4; cf. *b. A.Z.* 18a (on R. Meir); *Meil.* 17b (R. Simeon ben Yohai); *Suk.* 28a (Jonathan b. Uzziel). Cf. *b. B.M.* 86a in Neusner, *Sat.*, 77–78, where signs are recorded to glorify Rabbah b. Nahmani.

253. See appendix C.

254. *P. Sanh.* 6:6, §2, about a man sent to Simeon ben Shetah. Cf. Acts 4:29–30; 14:3; later, Mark 16:20.

255. *B. B.M.* 59b, where Joshua, rather than losing the debate, finally declares that halakah is not settled by miracles; see especially Baumgarten, “Miracles,” for the importance of miracles confirming halakah. Wire, “Structure,” 92–96, compares Gospel accounts intertwining both law (e.g., Sabbath controversy) and miracle.

256. Cf. also Dibelius, *Tradition*, 145–46; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:108–9.

257. See Signer, “Balance,” 115–16. They also cited miracles of earlier rabbis yet seemed reticent about miracles in their own day (Signer, “Balance,” 120–21). Some stories are simply literary constructs, like the Babylonian Talmud’s legend of Hanukkah oil (Noam, “Miracle”; idem, “Cruse”).

258. E.g., *tos. Yeb.* 14:6, “the rabbis” to R. Meir. Cf. Hruby, “Perspectives Rabbiniques,” 89–90.

259. E.g., *b. Hul.* 44a; *Pes.* 114a; *p. M.K.* 3:1, §6. Cf. Hruby, “Perspectives Rabbiniques,” 86–88.

signs.²⁶⁰ Vermes thinks that charismatics like Hanina sometimes flouted rabbinic law, and while the rabbis dared not discipline them because of their divine power,²⁶¹ they were wary of supernatural proof when formulating legal decisions.²⁶² These rabbis clearly subordinate the status of miracle workers to that of halakists like themselves.²⁶³ Thus, later rabbis could complain that even Honi's prayers were delayed, and explain that this was because he failed to approach God humbly.²⁶⁴

The rabbis' earlier respect for rule miracles probably diminished further in response to the much greater Christian use of authenticating miracles, as some scholars have argued.²⁶⁵ Christian miracles authenticating Jesus were problematic for later rabbis; Urbach suggests that this may be why the rabbis stressed that one should depend on the God of Abraham, not on Abraham as a miracle worker himself.²⁶⁶ From Paul's letters²⁶⁷ through rabbinic literature,²⁶⁸ Christians and outsiders alike continued to perceive the early Christian movement as confirming itself with signs like those of Jesus.

The Gospel writers do wish to authenticate Jesus as well as his message, but not as one sage among others. One Gospel writer, Luke, provides a second volume about Jesus's agents. Here, in Acts, signs continue to attest Jesus more than his agents (except in the sense that it confirms that they are his agents); it is Jesus's name that heals (Acts 3:6; 4:7, 10, 30; 16:18; 19:13, 17; cf. Acts 14:3; Luke 9:49; 10:17). The Jesus who healed in the first volume thus continues to perform the signs in the second, through his agents (see esp. Acts 9:34).²⁶⁹ The use of signs for authentication also carries on in some later Christian sources.²⁷⁰

260. *P. Sanh.* 11:4, §1.

261. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 80–81, appealing to *m. Taan.* 3:8; *p. Taan.* 67a; *b. Taan.* 23a.

262. Cf. also *b. B.M.* 59b (cited in Longenecker, *Paul*, 4n17).

263. Dibelius, *Tradition*, 149–50 and references.

264. *P. Taan.* 3:9, §3.

265. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 107; cf. Guttman, "Miracles"; Hruby, "Perspectives Rabbiniques," 90.

266. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:117.

267. Aune, *Prophecy*, 194, cites as examples Gal 3:5; Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Thess 1:5; 1 Cor 2:4 for Paul's picture of himself as a miracle worker; he clearly also believed such activities characterized the early Christian communities (1 Cor 12:8–10, 28–31). Koester, *Paul and World*, 25, argues against use of 1 Thess 1:5 (citing v. 6, which, however, refers to receiving the message rather than bringing it); the matter is debatable.

268. Christians healed in the name of Yeshu ben Pandira (*tos. Hul.* 2:22–23; see also Urbach, *Sages*, 1:116; Herford, *Christianity*, 103–11; Klausner, *Jesus*, 40; Pritz, *Nazarene Christianity*, 96–97).

269. On the idea of agency and representatives, see Keener, *John*, 310–15. For a related discussion of the relationship between healing in the two volumes, see Warrington, "Healing Narratives"; Shelton, "Response." Rightly underlining parallels between Jesus and the disciples but noting that disciples do not emulate Jesus's messianic ministry, Warrington emphasizes healing's christological function ("Healing Narratives," 195) and that healings reveal his presence ("Healing Narratives," 217); he argues that Jesus's healings are not paradigmatic for individual followers (Warrington, *Healer*, 160–62; cf. idem, "Response"). Shelton, who responds to Warrington, also seems right to affirm that Jesus's healings are also paradigmatic for the church ("Response," 221–22, 224), if we take that as the church as a whole (through some who are gifted). On Jesus's exorcisms as a model in Luke-Acts, see especially Twelftree, *Name*, 130–37.

270. E.g., Justin *Dial.* 35.8; cf. Ward, "Monks," 133–34; for apologetic for orthodoxy, e.g., Griffith, "Signs" (esp. 160–61).

Conclusion

The most common means of seeking divine healing in the ancient Mediterranean world involved healing sanctuaries, where supplicants often received healing through dreams on the sacred grounds. This method, however, has nothing more in common with Jesus and his first followers than the notion of healing by a deity, a widespread conception throughout history. More relevant, then, would be individual healers, especially those who were also sages; unfortunately, historical Gentile examples of this category do not become common in our extant sources until a later era, when stories about Jesus were widely circulated. Jewish models may offer more fruitful comparisons from the relevant period, although some differences remain, and they are also not abundant in our extant sources for this era.

Understanding how miracle workers were viewed in the first century helps us appreciate the context of miracles in early Christianity, both where elements are comparable and where they differ noticeably. Although I have observed some differences in this chapter, I explore them more fully in the next one.

Comparison of Early Christian and Other Ancient Miracle Accounts

Apollonius was built up as a rival figure to Jesus Christ on the basis of Philostratus' book: the argument was that the classical religion too had its own saviours and healers. And in fact, much in Philostratus is reminiscent of the gospels, though more the apocryphal than the canonical texts. —H. J. Klauck¹

Whereas Jesus apparently actually did perform a number of miracles (healings and exorcisms at least), there is no indication that the signs prophets in fact did so (and healings and exorcisms seem not to have formed part of their repertoire). —Eric Eve²

Nowhere else are so many miracles reported of a single person as they are in the Gospels of Jesus.³ . . . The uniqueness of the miracles of the historical Jesus lies in the fact that healings and exorcisms which take place in the present are accorded an eschatological significance. . . . Nowhere else do we find a charismatic miracle worker whose miraculous deeds are meant to be the end of an old world and the beginning of a new one. —Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz⁴

Among early Christians or among God-fearers steeped in the LXX, the Gospel writers' supranormal claims would hardly have seemed implausible. Elite ancient historians might well despise their emphasis on miracles as sensationalistic, given the unusual abundance of miracles and divine communications (which we would expect to this degree only in works, historical or otherwise, concerning miracle workers, as we have in the Gospels), but it fits the biblical worldview. Modern Western readers usually concur with elite ancient historians' negative estimate of popular historiography concerning wonder workers' signs and portents, but this preference may partly reflect a coinciding of our cultural bias with theirs.⁵

1. Klauck, *Context*, 170.

2. Eve, *Miracles*, 321.

3. Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 290

4. *Ibid.*, 309.

5. Our bias might also reflect some classical influence on some Enlightenment foundations, though not from the dominant classical tradition. Modern assumptions about prescientific thinking, however,

Whereas the supernatural beliefs of most ancient auditors prevented early Christian miracle accounts from seeming problematic, that very context proves a stumbling block to many modern auditors. Some scholars, pointing to the parallels between early Christian and some other ancient miracle accounts, have suggested that both are fabricated.⁶ While the conclusion need not follow logically from the premise—either because both kinds of accounts could often be accurate, or because the similar form could reflect cultural options for expression rather than identical activity—the implied premise (that all other ancient miracle accounts were false) may be open to some question.⁷ For the moment, however, I will focus on differences between most extant first-century Christian accounts and the most typical accounts of their contemporaries. Some parallels do appear, but observers must also take account of the differences among the various kinds of miracle stories, including the Christian miracle stories.

That all the accounts strike many modern Western readers as so similar may stem partly from our cultural assumptions in view of which all miracle reports diverge starkly from our construction of reality. In this perspective, it is our cultural assumptions that are unusual in the wider scope of history as well as of the world's cultures today, as I shall seek to illustrate extensively later in this book.

Differences between Early Christian and Most Pagan Miracles

I began exploring differences with pagan accounts in the previous chapter, so here I confine myself to some more general observations. Each circle and body of literature (e.g., Philostratus or the rabbis) had its own distinctive traits in its miracle stories; my focus, however, is on those in the Gospels and Acts. While our earliest Christian miracle reports share some characteristics that commonly appear in other miracle stories (e.g., a problem solved and often public appreciation), differences invite comment here.⁸ An analysis of the miracle stories collected by

are exaggerated (Sider, "Methodology," 29), as is modern dismissal of any substantive content in ancient historiography (see Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 95–108, 441–50).

6. Some earlier scholars also committed parallelomania: cf., e.g., Bultmann, *Tradition* (1963), 222: "H. Jahnow has shown the probability . . . that the removal of the roof in Mk. 2¹ goes back to an exorcist custom," forgotten or changed during transmission.

7. Historians' generalizations from putative parallels also work at a much lower level of probability than generalizations from science do. See the discussion on this argument regarding miracles in Sider, "Methodology," 32.

8. Emphasizing differences, see, e.g., McGinley, *Form-Criticism*, 145–52; Sabourin, "Miracles," 305 (followed in part by Maher, "Writings," 169); Sabourin, *Miracles*, 39–55; also others cited by Sabourin (Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, cxxiv–cxxi; Zeilinger, "Wunderverständnis"). If some critics would, via an *ad hominem* argument, charge the acknowledgment to apologetic motives (i.e., impugning motives), one could counter that denying distinctions can be charged to a reductionism that looks at parallels without appreciating distinctions among them. Bias can occur in either direction, either the agenda of reducing or augmenting NT miracles' distinctiveness (cf. Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 11). If it is fair to examine analogous elements, one must also note the many great distinctions.

Theissen⁹ shows that some motifs, especially those intrinsic to miracle narrations in any setting, were widespread. At the same time, such an analysis will reveal that some other NT miracle motifs exhibit rare, perhaps only coincidental, parallels.¹⁰

Likewise, some frequent examples of pagan workers of paranormal phenomena, albeit in sources much later than the objects of their comment, have few early Christian parallels: for example, Musaeus, Calais, Zetes, Abaris, and a Hyperborean magician in Lucian could fly,¹¹ but the only possible first-century Christian parallel (Acts 8:39) apparently instead specifically borrows biblical language (drawing on Ezek 8:3; 11:1, 24, where, however, the experience was visionary). Similarly, one account reports that Pythagoras taught in two places at the same time;¹² the instant travel of John 6:21 and the sudden disappearance of the postresurrection Lord (Luke 24:31) are the closest first-century Christian parallels one can adduce to this wonder, but even these examples are meant to transcend the limits of location, not of time. Love magic;¹³ a continual fast;¹⁴ a fifty-seven-year nap;¹⁵ magicians' self-transformation into animal forms;¹⁶ and revealing golden thighs¹⁷ are among the sorts of miracles unparalleled in the Gospels,¹⁸ which generally stress healings and exorcisms as benevolent acts of compassion (e.g., Mark 1:41; 6:34, 41–42; cf. 8:2, 6–8).¹⁹

9. See Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 47–72.

10. Cf. the detailed comparison chart in McGinley, *Form-Criticism*, 145–49. The survey is overschematized, but it nevertheless balances the uncritical lumping together of all supernatural claims by Bultmann (who includes even modern fairy tales) and others.

11. Blackburn, "ANAPEΣ," 190. For the text conveniently, see also Cotter, *Miracles*, 191. For a modern (hearsay) claim of flying witches, see the traditional African informant in Naipaul, *Masque*, 123.

12. Blackburn, "ANAPEΣ," 190.

13. The Hyperborean (*ibid.*, 191).

14. Abaris (*ibid.*). Surprisingly, such claims do persist in our own generation, where they can be tested; see "Indian man 'survives without food or water for decades,'" at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8652837.stm (accessed April 29, 2010).

15. Blackburn, "ANAPEΣ," 191. With due respect to Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle, the story line of a long nap is an ancient one (e.g., Varro *Lat. Lang.* 7.1.3; Pliny *Nat.* 7.52.175; Pausanias 1.14.4; Maximus of Tyre 10.1; 38.3; Alciphron *Farm.* 36 (Eudicus to Pasion), 3.38, paragraph 2; 4 *Bar. S.* p. *Taan.* 3:9, §4).

16. Periclymneus, Nectanebus (Blackburn, "ANAPEΣ," 190, 193). On magicians transforming substances, see, e.g., Homer *Od.* 10.239–40; Ovid *Metam.* 14.414–15; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2; for themselves into animals, Ovid *Am.* 1.8.13–14; Lucian *Lucius* 4, 12, 54; Apuleius *Metam.* 2.30; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.10. Various cultures today suspect witches and others of transforming themselves into animals (Mbiti, *Religions*, 258; Umeh, *Dibia*, 132; Zemleni, "Symptom," 99).

17. Pythagoras, Alexander Abonuteichos (Blackburn, "ANAPEΣ," 193). This is the closest these texts come to Jesus's transformation (Mark 9:2–8), a narrative far more evocative of Moses's transformation on Mount Sinai (cf. Bultmann, *Tradition*, 229; Glasson, *Moses*, 70–71; Davies, *Sermon*, 20–21; some commentators appeal more to general apocalyptic images).

18. Contrast also many of the supernatural acts in traditional religions, e.g., in Mbiti, *Religions*, 258. On comparisons with Greek heroes, see further Blomberg, *Gospels*, 115–19; like Blackburn and others, he notes (116), "the majority of the miracles in Greek religion bear no resemblance to those of Jesus: humans talking with the animals and birds, and even transforming themselves into other creatures, charming rocks and trees with their music; appearing and disappearing, or appearing in two places at the same time, travelling the world without eating, or sending their souls on journeys while their bodies remained at home."

19. Benevolence dominates most of Jesus's miracles (cf. Sabourin, *Miracles*, 54; Dod, "Healer," 170; LaCocque, "Competition," 97; discussion of Jesus's miracles and ancient benefaction in Neyrey, "Miracles," 24–27); for this motivation in modern healing movements, see Lee and Poloma, *Commandment*.

Some scholars have also pointed to “matter-of-fact restraint” rather than amplification in most miracle stories in the canonical Gospels,²⁰ though this may be partly because there are so many of them to narrate in so little space. Nor do the Gospel writers write like typical epic poets or mythographers; in contrast to Virgil’s *Aeneid*, for example, they offer no scenes explaining “what God is thinking or how God views the events unfolding in the human realm.”²¹ The difference in genre is a key issue.²² The Gospels are ancient biography about a recent character for whom many sources remained; they are thus not analogous to collections of mythography (like those by Apollodorus or Ovid) or novels (like those by Petronius or Heliodorus).²³ They do not report fictions about exotic lands, do not report internal workings of divine courts, and do not report monsters or other fabulous creatures.²⁴ They do report healings and prophecies, but we know from Paul’s writings that early Christians truly believed that these events were genuinely occurring in their time (Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 12–14; 2 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:5; 1 Thess 5:20), just as probably the majority of Christians in most parts of the world believe they are occurring today (see chs. 7–12). The same texts reveal that Paul believed this claim not in some theoretical sense, but that he and in some passages the churches believed that they were participating in the experience of such phenomena.

Moreover, although pagans naturally understood Jesus’s works as those of a possibly malevolent magician (Mark 5:15–17),²⁵ Jesus’s miracles have little in common with magic as most frequently defined, especially the magic elaborately documented for us in the third-century magical papyri. Part of the debate about magic and Jesus’s miracles turns on one’s definition of “magic,”²⁶ discussed earlier,

20. Gundry, *Use*, 190; Witherington, *Christology*, 161–62. Contrast Bultmann, who highlights expansion of miraculous elements where they occur or appear to occur (*Tradition*, 228, citing few sources in the Gospels but on 229 citing parallels to expansion even from German and Russian folktales). As Sanders showed (*Tendencies*), narratives can be either expanded or condensed; see my comments on rhetorical elaboration and condensation in antiquity in ch. 1.

21. Alexander, *Context*, 179, on Acts.

22. With also, e.g., Licona and Van der Watt, “Historians and Miracles,” 4. Some offered this observation (with respect to mythography) already in the eighteenth century (see Burns, *Debate*, 243).

23. Regarding the Gospels’ genre, see far more extensive discussion and sources in Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 73–94, 428–41; for the Gospels’ sources, see 126–61, 459–82 (and the evaluation of much individual material in light of its Palestinian Jewish environment, 163–348, 482–590 *passim*); for ancient biographies of recent persons being substantially historical in character, see *idem*, “Otho.”

24. Many of these elements were common in popular literature (cf. Penner, *Praise*, 134). Some scholars have sought to compare Luke’s account of the African court official (Acts 8:26–40) to novels’ use of exotic lands (Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 32), but detailed examination of the actual sources shows that such accounts are barely comparable in content (Keener, “Official”).

25. See Keener, *Matthew*, 287–88, and sources cited there. Although Morton Smith’s citation of the charge against Christians in Tacitus *Ann.* 15.44.3–8 as “a charge appropriate to magicians” (Smith, *Magician*, 51–52) is unhelpful (pagans charged Jews with the same “hatred of humanity”), he has probably correctly identified the way the earliest Gentile witnesses of Jesus’s miracles would have perceived him, as well as the perception of Jesus’s opponents in Mark 3:22 *par*.

26. Cf. Aune, “Magic,” 1557; Blomberg, “Reflections,” 449; discussion in the previous chapter. Thus Hull, *Magic*, 54–56, 142, allows acts of will as magic, despite the lack of formulas found in magical papyri; yet his definition of “magic” seems so broad as to make this link inevitable.

but to the extent that “religion” and “magic” are distinguished, the normal criteria readily distinguish Jesus’s most commonly reported activity from magic.²⁷ Granted, Jesus was accused of magic by his detractors (Mark 3:22, probably also in Q Matt 12:24//Luke 11:15).²⁸ This accusation was not, however, surprising, for it was the easiest charge to bring against wonder workers. In Q’s temptation narrative, Jesus rejects the temptation to transmute stones into bread (Matt 4:3–4//Luke 4:3–4); changing one substance into another,²⁹ like changing one’s own form,³⁰ was characteristic of magicians. Luke is eager to absolve early Christians as well as Jesus from the charge, by way of contrast with those who misunderstood or opposed them (Acts 8:9–11; 13:6–8; 19:11–19).

Jesus as a Galilean sage and prophet moved in an environment quite different from the Hellenistic environment that formed the magical papyri.³¹ Pagan magicians typically sought to coerce deities or spirits by incantations; Jesus simply commanded as God’s authoritative agent.³² Of course, pagans could also articulate such a difference between magic and divine involvement when it served their interests; thus, for example, magic turned Lucius into an ass, but Isis’s transformation of him back into a human is portrayed as counter to magic.³³ (Jewish rabbis also had to seek to distinguish the two.³⁴) I have already addressed comparisons with Apollonius. But whereas the Gospel tradition provides many miracle stories, none involve incantations;³⁵ their paranormal claims do not fit dominant forms of ancient magic in such respects.

One may also note differences among the kinds of sources claiming the performance of various nonmagical miracles. After carefully comparing the accounts

27. Kee, *Miracle*, 214–15; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:537–52; Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 190–207; Goergen, *Mission*, 173–75; Vermes, *Religion*, 6; Sabourin, *Miracles*, 54.

28. On the two-document hypothesis, agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark in the pericope (esp. Matt 12:28/Luke 11:20) suggest a common source additional to Mark. See discussion in Keener, *Spirit*, 104–9; Stanton, “Magician,” 174–80; cf. discussion on John 7:20 in Keener, *John*, 714–16.

29. E.g., Homer *Od.* 10.239–40; Ovid *Metam.* 14.414–15; p. *Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2. Deities also were thought to transform substances (Homer *Od.* 13.162–63) or persons (Hesiod *Astron.*, frg. 3; Aegimius 3 in Apollodorus *Bib.* 2.1.3.1; Euripides *Bacch.* 1330–32; Longus 1.27; into stone, Lucian *Lucius* 4).

30. Ovid *Am.* 1.8.13–14; Lucian *Lucius* 4, 12, 54; Apuleius *Metam.* 1.9; 2.1, 5, 30; 3.21–25; 6.22; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 1.10. Deities could also transform themselves (Homer *Od.* 4.417–18; Ovid *Metam.* 1.548–52). See discussion in Keener, “Human Stones” (commenting on Luke 3:8).

31. With, e.g., Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 306–7. The magical papyri probably also include Egyptian influences; for the influence of old Egyptian priestly religion in what others characterized as magic in the period of the Roman Empire, see especially discussion in Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*; idem, “Magic”; idem, “Curses.”

32. Drane, “Background,” 122–23; cf. similarly Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 296; Yamauchi, “Magic,” 133; Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 172–73.

33. Apuleius *Metam.* 3.21–25; he returns to human form in *Metam.* bk. 11.

34. See Urbach, *Sages*, 1:102–3.

35. Use of Aramaic commands, that is, commands in the native language of Jesus and most of his Galilean hearers, is not genuinely comparable, however it may have sounded to some Gentile hearers of the Gospels. Because both Jesus and his Galilean audience probably spoke Aramaic as a first language (cf. Goodman, *State*, 66; Levine, *Hellenism*, 80–84; Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 85–102, esp. 91–102; Poirier, “Linguistic Situation”), Mark’s preservation of Aramaic does not represent magical words (see Aune, “Magic,” 1534–35; Riesenfeld, *Tradition*, 23; pace Smith, *Magician*, 95; Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 61).

of Jesus's miracles with those of others, Meier concludes that "the early dating of the literary testimony to Jesus's miracles, i.e., the closeness of the dates of the written documents to the alleged miracles of Jesus's life, is almost unparalleled for the period."³⁶ His conclusions for the Gospels' testimony to Jesus would apply a fortiori to Acts, which reports some miracles even roughly thirty years after Jesus's public ministry (Acts 28:8–9), thus within living memory of the author on the range of dates most commonly proposed for Acts.³⁷

Comparison of Early Christian and Jewish Miracle Accounts

The miracles of Jesus and his followers in the Gospels and Acts resemble especially those of Elijah, Elisha, and Moses in the HB,³⁸ and the use of such patterns was probably deliberate for Jesus, for those who reported the tradition orally, and for those who recorded the pattern in the Gospels and Acts. For one brief example, one may illustrate some of the links between Jesus and Elijah or Elisha in a short segment of Luke's Gospel (Luke 4–10):

Activity	Jesus	Elijah	Elisha or others
Heals leprosy*	Luke 5:12–13	—	2 Kgs 5:14; cf. Num 12:13–15
Raises the dead relatively privately	Luke 8:51	1 Kgs 17:19–23	2 Kgs 4:33
Child's life returns	Luke 8:55	1 Kgs 17:22	2 Kgs 4:35
Upper room as scene for raising	(Peter in Acts 9:37–39)	1 Kgs 17:19, 23	2 Kgs 4:10, 21, 32
Multiplies food	Luke 9:16–17	1 Kgs 17:16	2 Kgs 4:3–7, 42–44
"Greet no one"	Luke 10:4	—	2 Kgs 4:29
Explicit comparison	Luke 4:25–27	—	—

*Most scholars differentiate this disease from what we call leprosy today; see e.g., Seynold and Mueller, *Sickness*, 138–39; Trapnell, "Health," 459; Gundry, *Commentary*, 139; Matthews and Benjamin, "Leper"; Mull and Mull, "Leprosy"; Malina, *Windows*, 14; Davies, *Healer*, 68; but cf. Zias, "Lust"; on skin diseases in the Qumran Scrolls, see Baumgarten, "Fragments." Davies, *Healer*, 68–69, reads the Gospel tradition as Jesus pronouncing leprosy cured rather than curing it; but aside from contrary details in the sources themselves (Mark 1:40–42; Luke 17:14; cf. usage in Luke 4:27), why would people have had Jesus pronounce them clean when the law required a priest to do so (Lev 13:6, 13, 17, 23, 28, 34, 37, 39; 14:2–32; Mark 1:44; Luke 17:14)? For criticism of the view that Jesus cured lepers socially but not physically, see Gaiser, *Healing*, 180–81, who correctly warns that such a view would make little sense for most non-Western contexts (though himself recognizing the distinction between healing and cure, 178–79).

There are also some conspicuous and undoubtedly deliberate contrasts (here I add a reference from Luke 1):

36. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:624; see further 2:536, 576–616; Clark, "Miracles," 207.

37. See, e.g., the majority range in Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 359–63 (which differs from his own view).

38. See also, e.g., Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 27; especially Brown, "Elisha"; cf. Eve, *Miracles*, 377; for Elisha and the feedings, Barton, "Feedings," 113; further comment at Acts 1:9–11 in Keener, *Acts*; idem, *Historical Jesus*, ch. 17, esp. 243–44 (also material on Elijah's expected return in idem, *John*, 434–36). Elisha's miracles also evoke those of Elijah (Levine, "Twice"). Parallels were noted already by D. F. Strauss (Kee, "Aretalogy," 419).

Elijah or Elisha	Jesus
(Elijah honors him, Luke 9:30–35)	Jesus repudiates the idea that he is a new Elijah (Luke 9:8, 19–20)
Elijah calls down fire (1 Kgs 18:37–38)	Jesus refuses to call down fire (Luke 9:54–55)
Elijah permitted Elisha to bid farewell to his family (1 Kgs 19:19–21)	Jesus's demands are higher than Elijah's (Luke 9:61–62)
—	John rather than Jesus is the new Elijah, forerunner for the Lord (who is Jesus; Luke 1:17)

Some of these links could reflect Lukan adaptation, but the majority of the similarities are from Luke's source Mark, which draws less attention to the confluence of such links. Links between Elijah and Jesus in the written Gospels do not make one suspicious of their authenticity in the tradition³⁹ if one grants that the miracle workers themselves could have looked to the earlier biblical accounts for examples. Of course, the early Christians would have viewed the correspondences as favorable, and certainly as counter to the magic charge. More to the point here, Jesus and his early followers, like some other Jewish wonder workers,⁴⁰ may have deliberately emulated these models. Unlike other models that some propose, these biblical examples are clearly earlier than our early Christian accounts and were clearly known to Jesus, his audience, and to those who told, wrote, and heard about him.

Rabbinic Miracles

Nevertheless, beyond clear echoes of Elijah or Elisha in the tradition, I must also address some other comparisons that some scholars have offered.⁴¹ In some respects, comparisons of Jesus's miracles with those attributed to the rabbis are more difficult than even comparisons with some Greco-Roman accounts because of the striking differences in genre in the sources that report them. Some writers have overstated contrasts by debasing rabbinic miracles as more magical than Jesus's,⁴² but despite some activities whose only parallels occur in magic, magical elements appear in only some, not the majority of, stories of rabbinic miracles. More relevantly, although Morton Smith's contrast between the Gospel tradition's interest in a miracle worker and rabbinic tradition's interest in teachers⁴³ is exaggerated, he is correct that the two kinds of accounts describe different kinds of

39. As Eve, *Healer*, 150–51, seems to argue. Eve argues (152) that behind Mark's account of the feeding lies an allusion to the Elisha narrative, though Eve is elsewhere normally suspicious of hypothetical sources (84–89).

40. As models among signs sages, see Galley, "Heilige." On attempted emulations of Moses or Joshua among sign prophets, see, e.g., Eve, *Miracles*, 115–16, 324.

41. Although charismatics like Honi and Hanina may have followed Elijah's model, they seem to have usually developed different aspects of it (such as rainmaker) than Jesus usually did (though many of his Galilean followers may not have made such distinctions). For comparisons with rabbis, see, e.g., Fiebig, "Wunder"; for refutation of Fiebig, see Schlatter, *Wunder* (cited in Loos, *Miracles*, 142–45; Sabourin, *Miracles*, 247, 264; Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 18–20). The real problem with Fiebig's approach is the lateness and nonanalogous genre of the rabbinic material, not a lack of miracle stories.

42. Alexander, *Possession*, 59.

43. Smith, "Tradition," 173–74.

characters and communicate different sorts of information about them. At least some rabbinic miracle stories, for example, are simply homiletic illustrations. The differences between the two kinds of accounts are considerable; as Smith points out elsewhere, miracle stories are common in early Christian texts but proportionately quite rare in rabbinic texts.⁴⁴

The genre question is critical. Rabbis generally related accounts of rabbis who wrought miracles to make a homiletic point concerning a teaching; the Gospels and Acts recount miracles of Jesus and his followers primarily to validate Jesus's person and mission rather than just a particular teaching.⁴⁵ By implication, this pattern about signs focusing on Jesus and his mission in the Gospel tradition also applies to Paul's Gentile mission in Acts, which in Luke's theology perpetuates Jesus's ministry to the outsider.⁴⁶ Moreover, most of the leading protagonists in the Gospels and Acts (Jesus, his apostles, and some others) are miracle workers; the leading positive characters who appear most often in rabbinic literature do not work miracles, especially not characteristically or in the earliest sources about them.

Whereas genre affects the focus of miracle stories, however, their content also offers another specific contrast. Although first-century Christian texts recount other kinds of miracles, most of which also function as benevolent acts helping those in need, they especially claim healings and exorcisms. Rabbinic stories, by contrast, address the (also benevolent) procurement of rainfall (following the model of a major miracle of Elijah) more often than healing.⁴⁷ (Miracles are not, however, constrained even to such biblical categories. In the Mishnah, God even temporarily expands space in the temple to accommodate the prostrated worshippers.⁴⁸) Later Jewish stories often recognize the particular association of healing miracles with Christians.⁴⁹

Indeed, when one surveys Jewish tradition in general, it provides few parallels to the characteristic ways that Jesus and his followers healed; perhaps the closest

44. Smith, *Parallels*, 84. Sabourin, "Miracles," 300–304, doubts any true, historical miracles in ancient Jewish (esp. rabbinic, 301–3; idem, *Miracles*, 51–53) texts.

45. With, e.g., Eve, *Miracles*, 285–86. Somewhat similarly, Dibelius notes, rabbinic accounts extol saintly men; the Gospels narrate the epiphany of God's power through his agent Jesus (Dibelius, *Tradition*, 150–51).

46. See, e.g., Acts 9:34; cf. Warrington, "Healing Narratives."

47. Harvey, *History*, 100; followed also by Blomberg, "Reflections," 450–51. See, e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 14.22; *m. Taan.* 3:8; *tos. Taan.* 2:13 (an anonymous man, but resembling Honi); *Ab. R. Nat.* 6; *b. Taan.* 8a; 19b–20a (Naqdimon b. Gurion); 23ab (including Honi and others in 23a; and not only Abba Hilkiah but also his wife, in 23b); 24a–26a; *p. Taan.* 1:4, §1; 3:9, §§6–8; 3:11, §4; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 8.343–46; 14.22; Empedocles in Diogenes Laertius 8.2.59–60; Aeacus's prayer in Pausanias 2.29.8; further information in Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 70, 76; for morals in the stories, cf. Schofer, "Cosmology." For the link with corporate piety, see *1 En.* 101:2; *Pss. Sol.* 17:18; *Gen. Rab.* 13:14; *Lev. Rab.* 34:14; 35:10; *Num. Rab.* 3:12; cf. *b. Taan.* 19b; on the miraculousness of rain (included in the benediction of the resurrection), cf. *b. Ber.* 29a; 33a; *Taan.* 2b; 7a; *p. Taan.* 1:1, §2; *Gen. Rab.* 13:6; *Deut. Rab.* 7:6. Rainmakers are prominent in many cultures (e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 89, 234–37). More generally, for gods and heroes controlling wind and sea, see Cotter, *Miracles*, 131–65.

48. *M. Ab.* 5:5; cf. Segal, "Few Contained Many."

49. Cf. Herford, *Christianity*, 50–51, 54–56, 211–15; Bagatti, *Church*, 95–96, 106–7; Manns, "Jacob." *P. Shab.* 14:4, §3, may be an example but is uncertain; cf. magic in *Eccl. Rab.* 1:8, §4.

parallel involves Jesus's rare use of saliva (Mark 7:33; John 9:6).⁵⁰ Harvey points out that at least eight of Jesus's reported cures involved the deaf, mute, blind, or lame, but that such miracles, though noted at pagan healing shrines, are absent in Jewish accounts.⁵¹

Eve's Detailed Comparisons

To date, the most detailed comparisons and contrasts with other early Jewish sources have been those of Eric Eve, who concludes that Jesus's healing and exorcistic ministry, while exhibiting some parallels to its general Jewish framework, differs in serious respects from other early Jewish models.⁵² As he notes, most of the miracles in non-Christian early Jewish sources differ in kind from those reported in early Christian sources.⁵³ Eve notes that most of the types of miracles in Josephus differ from those in the Gospels and Acts, with little interest in healings;⁵⁴ meanwhile, stories of postbiblical miracles are not very common outside Josephus,⁵⁵ and healings remain particularly rare.⁵⁶ Apart from some works like *Lives of the Prophets*, most early Jewish sources display only limited interest in miracles, far less than in our earliest Christian sources.⁵⁷

The miracles that most interested early Jewish sources were miracles of national deliverance, which are not the category of miracles most often associated with Jesus's ministry.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, some of the sign prophets who emerged in the decades following his ministry⁵⁹ could each announce a major eschatological sign but did not perform them.⁶⁰ Unlike them, Jesus "healed and exorcized, but seems not to have promised a particular spectacular sign."⁶¹

50. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 65; cf. Van Canghai, "Miracles"; Harvey, *History*, 100n10. Cf., however, Bourgeois, "Spittle," 32–33.

51. Harvey, *History*, 115; in pagan accounts, see Blackburn, "ANAPEΣ," 192.

52. Eve, *Miracles*, passim. Cf. similarly Avery-Peck, "Charismatic," 164, especially focusing on the date of the sources.

53. The only parallels he finds are in Christian sources or some isolated depictions of an antichrist figure (Eve, *Miracles*, 244–45); I suspect that the latter are late, like much antichrist material (cf. Keener, *Matthew*, 573–75).

54. Eve, *Miracles*, 52 (concluding his discussion of miracle in Josephus, 24–52). Like Josephus, Philo overlaps with the Gospels primarily in miracles of provision (Eve, *Miracles*, 84–85).

55. Eve, *Miracles*, 244. They do appear more in later Amoraic haggadah.

56. *Ibid.*, 253, 378. He acknowledges some exorcists but questions whether they were common (378). (Given the different focus of most of the other surviving first-century documents, it is hard to be sure.) He also notes rightly that some exorcists have magical associations (378).

57. *Ibid.*, 243.

58. *Ibid.*, 377; *idem*, *Healer*, 6–12.

59. Eve, *Miracles*, 324, emphasizes that those reported by Josephus are apparently all later than Jesus.

60. Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 308–9. Many scholars have built on the category of sign prophets (see early Barnett, "Prophets"). Eve, *Miracles*, 296–325 (esp. 324), thinks them a disparate group, despite Josephus lumping them together, but he might underestimate common factors.

61. Eve, *Miracles*, 385, noting that healings and exorcisms were "not that essential to the prophetic role," since even most OT prophets did not perform them. On these sign prophets not performing miracles, especially healings and exorcisms, see also *ibid.*, 321.

While Honi (Onias) was undoubtedly known for getting answered prayer regarding rain,⁶² most of the details we hear about him surface only in Amoraic tradition—perhaps half a millennium after he lived.⁶³ At the very least, much of the rabbinic characterization of Honi is later. Thus, for example, we do not know if “Honi the Circle-Drawer” actually drew a circle around himself, as in the rabbinic legend by which he acquires this name (but not in Josephus)⁶⁴ or merely prayed for rain. Eve further contends that it is not clear that Honi represents a larger class of people beyond himself.⁶⁵

The other example in rabbinic literature, Hanina ben Dosa, is usually assigned to the first century.⁶⁶ Like Jesus, he was Galilean, though he is the only other Galilean we know of to whom signs are attributed.⁶⁷ He appears several times in early third-century sources,⁶⁸ where he could tell when he prayed whether the sick would recover or not,⁶⁹ and where a lizard who bit him as he prayed died.⁷⁰ Later material about Hanina is much more abundant, but was transmitted and developed over the course of three or four centuries.⁷¹ Moreover, even if the tradition is reliable, it differs from Jesus in some significant respects: whereas Jesus was itinerant, traveling widely to help people, people apparently only came to Hanina for prayer, and few of the divine interventions mentioned involve healing.⁷² In their respective sources, Hanina was a petitioner of numinous or divine power, whereas Jesus was its bearer.⁷³ We cannot know much about

62. Josephus *Ant.* 14.22; cf. Eve, *Miracles*, 277–78, arguing that Josephus’s focus is not on this but on his role in the war (which is also Josephus’s focus). Rainmaking is the only miracle common to both Honi and Hanina and is absent from Jesus’s ministry (Blackburn, “Miracles,” 378–79). Even Josephus’s report about Onias’s prayer for rain is perhaps one and a half centuries after the reported event (Licona and Van der Watt, “Adjudication of Miracles,” 5).

63. The only Tannaitic account is *m. Ta’an.* 3:8 (Eve, *Miracles*, 274–75), and W. Scott Green and Neusner both deny reliable information even there (*ibid.*, 275–77). The fuller account in the Jerusalem Talmud may place Honi in the sixth century B.C.E., five centuries before Josephus places him (Licona and Van der Watt, “Adjudication of Miracles,” 5), but anachronism is not uncommon in rabbinic stories (e.g., *b. Ber.* 3b; *Gen. Rab.* 74:15; *Exod. Rab.* 1:13; *Pesiq. Rab.* 11:3).

64. One could use drawing a circle for an ultimatum (Livy 45.12.5; Valerius Maximus 6.4.3; Velleius Paterculus *Compendium* 1.10.1–2; for drawing circles in the ground more commonly, see Hermogenes *Inv.* 4.8.195).

65. Eve, *Miracles*, 274 (against Vermes); *idem*, *Healer*, 13–14.

66. Eve, *Miracles*, 281, notes that this date is uncertain (on 282 conceding, however, that he was probably from the Second Temple period). Amoraic traditions place him in the first century (see *ibid.*, 287–88).

67. Blackburn, “Miracles,” 378.

68. Eve, *Miracles*, 280–81, cites *m. Ber.* 5:5; *Sot.* 9:15 (= *tos. Sot.* 15:5); *Ab.* 3:10–11; *tos. Ber.* 3:20; *Mek.* on Exod 18:21.

69. *M. Ber.* 5:5.

70. *Tos. Ber.* 3:20.

71. Eve, *Miracles*, 282–83 (four centuries, on the Bavli); *idem*, *Healer*, 14–16; Blackburn, “Miracles,” 378 (three centuries, on the Yerushalmi).

72. Eve, *Miracles*, 285. None involved exorcism (294).

73. *Ibid.*, 289, 295. He also argues (292–93) that the Mishnah’s category for Hanina, “men of deed” (*m. Sot.* 9:15), need not specify miracle workers, noting that the semantic range of “deed” is much broader than “miracle.” Petitioners and mediators of numinous power are more common in ancient accounts than

other Galilean folk healers, but we have enough evidence to suggest that Jesus was no ordinary one.⁷⁴

Thus, Eve concludes, early Jewish parallels do not advance the closest parallels to Jesus's signs: the biblical models of Elijah, Elisha, and (for the sea and feeding miracles) at least some links with Moses.⁷⁵ He argues that the evidence "leaves Jesus as unique in the surviving Jewish literature of his time as being portrayed as performing a large number of healings and exorcisms," and especially as a bearer, not just a mediator or petitioner, of divine power.⁷⁶

Eve is not alone in his observations. Theissen and Merz appear representative of many today in concluding that while Jewish wonder workers offer closer parallels than pagan ones do, they differ significantly from Jesus, especially in working only through prayer and lacking eschatological miracles.⁷⁷ No other early Jewish source reports as many miracles concerning an individual as the Gospels do regarding Jesus,⁷⁸ and Jesus stands alone among prior miracle workers in using miracles, in his case healings and exorcisms, to indicate the coming of the eschatological order.⁷⁹

None of these qualifications rule out the relevance of these parallels in helping us understand how Palestinian Jews may have viewed Jesus or his first disciples. No parallel is complete in all its aspects, and the differences do not rule out some relevance for showing some of the ways that Jesus's contemporaries may have approached him. By appealing to these parallels, Geza Vermes has helpfully shown that one need not look to more geographically distant Gentile healing traditions for the historical Jesus; though Jesus was distinctive in many ways, the possibility of benevolent divine activity working through individuals was intelligible within his own milieu.⁸⁰ Moreover, the Jewish activity of Elijah is an early and widely available source, and in view of Mal 4:5–6, can be construed as eschatological as well. Jesus may have combined relevant elements from models followed by any other claimed signs workers and eschatological prophets. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that Jesus and his followers who emulated him were also distinctive in many respects.⁸¹

bearers of it; whereas Asclepius and others filled this role in Greek tradition, Israel's God was bearer of numinous power in Jewish tradition (Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 234).

74. Eve compares Mexican folk healer Pedrito Jaramillo, who stood out above other folk healers of his era (Eve, *Miracles*, 357–59, 379).

75. *Ibid.*, 377. I suspect that the Mosaic emphasis in the feeding miracle may be stronger than Eve recognizes; he tends to downplay these, e.g., 324–25.

76. *Ibid.*, 378. He argues from this both the likely authenticity of the Gospels' consistent portrait of Jesus and a Christology implicit in his activities no less than in his sayings (*ibid.*, 386).

77. Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 307–8; also Blackburn, "Miracles," 379, who notes that Jesus rarely is said to pray before working a miracle.

78. Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 290.

79. *Ibid.*, 309.

80. On Jesus as a Jewish charismatic, see further Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, passim (e.g., 58–80); *idem*, *Jesus and Judaism*, passim; *idem*, *Religion*, passim (e.g., 6, 70–74); cf. Borg, *Conflict*, 198, 234–37; *idem*, *Vision*, 39–56, 150–71; *idem*, "Experience."

81. See again Eve, *Miracles*, 384–86, esp. 386.

Parallels and the Authenticity Question

Parallels in form (or even function) need not imply the inauthenticity of the accounts in the Gospels and Acts, as some have argued;⁸² ancient healing stories in general usually share the same form because they necessarily follow the same course. As Pierre Benoit asks, “Is there any other way of relating a miracle?” He concludes that “it is not the literary form which distinguishes one from the other; it is the substance, the external authentication, the internal probability.”⁸³ (For that matter, the substance did not always differ; presumably many supplicants at ancient healing shrines also did recover, a point I will briefly revisit below.) As readers should recognize later in the book, a vast number of modern miracle reports follow the same basic format⁸⁴ as in the Gospels and Acts; this similarity could stem in part from the literary influence of the Gospels and Acts, but again reflects the basic elements needed to recount a miraculous healing.⁸⁵

Healing Sages?

The nature of the healing accounts in various kinds of sources is not altogether the same. As the survey of ancient pagan accounts above has suggested, most pagan claims fall into one of several categories: healings at healing shrines, often involving dreams; direct intervention of deities; mythographers’ tales regarding the semi-prehistoric past; secretive magic; and at most perhaps occasional reports of the traveling sage-healer, a form not clearly dominant until the third century and perhaps affected in part by the growing challenge of Christian claims by that period.⁸⁶ Nor in the case of healing sages is healing usually the sage’s dominant supernatural activity to the extent found in the Gospels and Acts, and where we have very close parallels, some of the accounts, which are later, clearly reflect the literary influence of the Gospels and Acts (as noted above). Although we have some dream revelations and direct intervention of the deity in first-century Christian

82. Concurring with Taylor, *Formation*, 128; against Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 101–3; Jeremias, *Theology*, 88–92. Jeremias’s use of parallels to question the authenticity of these miracles or to attribute them to psychosomatic activity (88–92) rests on his premise that modernity rejects the miraculous (89). One needs a better “independent standard” for separating fact from fiction than “What I can explain is fact, the rest is fiction” (Purtill, “Miracles,” 203, noting the danger to logic of such an approach). For this section, see Keener, *John*, 260–61.

83. Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:34.

84. And, more commonly than in non-Christian ancient parallels, often in content as well (though the influence of the Gospels and Acts may play a significant role in this similarity).

85. Thus the dominance of the “testimony” form may be derivative; without having done a thorough comparative study, it appears to me that it is more common in Christian miracle stories than in accounts from unrelated cultures. But where others do recount paranormal healings, they still must depict at least something regarding the problem and the cure. Some elements of narrativization are transcultural.

86. The pervasive influence went both ways, as becomes obvious by the increasing dominance of, say, Egyptian Christian exorcists; but this point is not relevant to the matter under consideration because these sources are significantly later than the Gospels and Acts.

sources, by far by the vast majority of Christian “parallels” in the texts are with the last and (outside Christian sources) rarest category.

It is possible that this model, along with exorcism, was more dominant in the East in this period than our extant sources would otherwise suggest; although most Jewish parallels are later, traditions about Honi or perhaps the Jewish exorcist in a Qumran fragment⁸⁷ are suggestive. Certainly Elijah’s model predates Jesus and was widely known among Jewish people,⁸⁸ though not focused primarily on healing. But our extant evidence does not support the claim that the Gospels and Acts imposed a preexisting pagan model on the Jesus movement’s founder and early leaders.

The Supernatural Element Not a Sufficient Parallel

In fact, the primary “parallel” between the earliest Christian sources and the dominant pagan models here is that both envision “supernatural”⁸⁹ activity, a premise utterly unobjectionable to most societies in history.⁹⁰ The apparent parallel seems striking to modern Western culture only because it is foreign to us, yet it is our culture that is most distinctive in that regard; we hardly dare assume genetic links among supernatural claims in all cultures that offer them.

In all cultures, people need health, healing, and so forth, and most cultures seek suprahuman assistance for these needs. Anyone reputed as a miracle worker or healer of some sort would be popular in *most* cultures (except rare ones like Western academia) because such figures claim to meet a central felt need. The need is transcultural, and anthropological studies show that such figures (e.g., shamans) arise in cultures without any necessary external influence connecting them. Testimonies in some religious circles today include elements that we would not expect in the first century (such as restored car engines or computers), but testimonies regarding healings are not limited to a single era.

When one moves beyond such generalities, NT stories of Jesus and the apostles have more in common with earlier Elijah and Elisha stories (models available for Jesus and the apostles to imitate) than with later stories of Philostratus and others. This observation does not rule out all value of the latter comparisons, but it does invite us to keep them in perspective.

Benoit contrasts the miracle stories of the canonical Gospels with some pagan accounts (such as the woman pregnant for five years bearing a five-year-old at

87. 4Q242 1 III, 4.

88. Eve, *Miracles*, 377, though skeptical of some early Jewish analogies to Jesus, readily accepts Elijah’s model.

89. For that matter, pagan healers do not all claim to act in the name of a deity, though often they possess innate divinity in the generalized Greek sense; “supernatural” is a catchall phrase reflecting again modern Western assumptions (not altogether compatible with modern physics) about a closed continuum of nature.

90. This observation remains true even if we exclude Asclepius shrines and address more narrowly supernatural activity through individuals.

Epidaurus,⁹¹ though this is an exceptional case), many Jewish accounts (a reported conversation between God and the angel of the sea), and most accounts in the apocryphal gospels⁹² and acts.⁹³ Of course, these other accounts are not all of a kind; some reports are not intended to depict a literal event, but some others do come closer to resembling the dominant examples in the Gospels and Acts. Nevertheless, Benoit is correct that even if we argue for parallels in narrative methods of recounting miracles, this literary form has no bearing on the authenticity of the events it reports.⁹⁴

In contrast to Benoit, however, who rejects the authenticity of the pagan accounts, many early Christians, though monotheistic, would have accepted the validity of many of the pagan claims of suprahuman activity, without approving of them (cf. 1 Cor 10:20; 2 Thess 2:9; Rev 13:13; *Did.* 16.3–4).⁹⁵ This is analogous to rabbinic and pagan criticisms of Jesus as a magician, allowing for power but attributing it to the wrong superhuman sources.⁹⁶ Dunn is probably right that the Jewish accounts of Honi and Hanina are probably also rooted in genuine tradition.⁹⁷ Perhaps some early Christians would have even Christianized such sages, especially pre-Christian ones, as genuine agents of God.

By purely historical means, we cannot a priori exclude the possibility of some eyewitness claims of sudden, unexpected recoveries that the beneficiaries believed were caused by deities; indeed, both inscriptions and votive offerings of body part

91. Cf. Van Cangh, "Miracles grecs," 223. Boring et al., *Commentary*, 65, compares this possibly fourth-century C.E. legendary embellishment of an earlier account here with the Gospel tradition, but the differences such as lapse of time and the continuance of eyewitnesses for the Gospel tradition mitigate the force of the comparison. The original votive tablet depicts only a "fantasy pregnancy," upgraded to a real one in the later interpretation (see clearly Klauck, *Context*, 161–62; on pseudopregnancy, sometimes with physiological effects, see Benson, *Healing*, 43–44, citing historic examples and Fried et al., "Pseudocyesis"; Knight, "Pregnancy").

92. Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:34. The conversation between God and the angel Benoit mentions is a homiletic illustration, not historical in genre. For earlier contrasts with apocryphal gospels, see, e.g., Trench, *Miracles*, 32–35.

93. Fabulous elements include "talking dogs" and "sky travels" (as in *Acts of Peter*), "obedient bed-bugs" (*Acts of John*), baptized lions (*Acts of Paul*), and so forth (Hofmann, "Novels: Christian," 847). Apocryphal acts marshal all traits of their narrative, including miracles, to amplify divine glory (Bovon, *Studies*, 253–66). Cf. "Miracles, Miracle-Workers," 54: the apocryphal gospels and acts "sought to respond in a folkloric or novelistic way to the needs of Christian circles for entertainment, edification, and glorification of the heroes of the faith, magnified miracles to the point of exuberant fabulousness." But miracle stories are much more common in the apocryphal acts than in the apocryphal gospels (Achtemeier, *Miracle Tradition*, 177–88). For some Jewish writers like Artapanus retelling biblical stories for entertainment value, see Koskenniemi, *Miracle-Workers*, 296.

94. Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:33.

95. Cf. further 1 Cor 12:2; 1 John 4:1–3; *Herm.* 43.2–4. Some early twentieth-century Christians also made common cause with spiritualists against the dominant materialist worldview (Mullin, *Miracles*, 219–20).

96. In contrast to public Western "magic" since the Enlightenment period, ancient magic was not limited to illusions (though it could include that; Quintus Curtius 7.4.8; *Sipra Qed.* pq. 6.203.2.1–2; *Sipre Deut.* 171.4.1; 171.6.1; *b. Sanh.* 67b).

97. Dunn, "Demythologizing," 291. On Onias (Honi) in Josephus, where some aspects of his depiction resemble Elijah, see Gray, *Figures*, 145–47.

models at some Asclepius sanctuaries indicate that many people did believe this. We might reject the usual ancient interpretation of such an event, but that rejection involves a theological rather than a historical judgment.⁹⁸ The distinctiveness of Christian accounts is indeed noteworthy, but that does not by itself rule out the more general observation that others also made some healing claims attributed to supernatural agencies.

Resolving the differences among groups, however, is not necessary to argue the basic thesis of this book: eyewitnesses and those dependent on them can report extranormal claims that they believe are genuine miracles.⁹⁹ That events that observers classify as miracles occur also does not resolve the philosophic questions regarding supernatural involvement. I return to such questions later in the book.

Those who would simply dismiss early Christian accounts by insistence on ancients' credulity, however, overestimate the latter. Not only were some ancients not very credulous (see discussion in ch. 4) but also something distinctive about the cumulative force of early Christian claims rendered them more persuasive than mere myths about the past or claims about some particular folk healer. The movement did not spread simply because people liked fanciful stories, for fanciful stories were abundant elsewhere. The movement spread in part because the claims surrounded not only its founder but also many subsequent figures in the movement who claimed to represent him (see discussion in ch. 10).

Celestial Prodigies

I have tried to compare with early Christian sources those on the most comparable topics of healing rather than some different categories of paranormal claims (like lightning striking temples or mutant babies) frequently offered in some Roman settings. To redress this balance, one final kind of paranormal experience should illustrate the difference sufficiently.¹⁰⁰ People in the ancient Mediterranean world valued prodigies and omens, of which a particular example from the NT context will illustrate the case. Among prodigies reported before Jerusalem's fall were armies clashing in the skies and a voice declaring the "gods'" departure from the temple (Tacitus *Hist.* 5.13).¹⁰¹ Tacitus follows Josephus (*War* 6.297–99), who reports that people saw heavenly chariots moving through the clouds and surrounding cities (cf. 2 Kgs 6:17; 2 Macc 3:24–26; 4 Macc 4:10–11; *Sib. Or.* 3.805–8), and priests heard voices in the temple.

98. E.g., Sabourin, *Miracles*, 51, appears to believe that natural and psychosomatic cures could account for all the recoveries at Asclepius sanctuaries. If we do not presuppose that no superhuman entities could be involved, however, it seems to me that we cannot assert this position with much certainty.

99. This runs against Hume's emphasis that claims from different religions cancel one another out, a thesis I will address more fully soon.

100. Eve, *Healer*, 148–49, treats these as at least potentially comparable to Gospel miracles.

101. Such reports of visions of heavenly armies appear in other war reports (Pliny *Nat.* 2.58.148). Similarly, people more recently have claimed to see, e.g., a cross in the sky (Sung, *Diaries*, 106, reporting the claims of some others; similar celestial phenomena in Wacker, *Heaven*, 93). But given the mutability of clouds, reports of shapes in the sky are not the same as corporate witness of recoveries or corporate visions or experiences of a person.

Some scholars regard these apparitions as collective fantasies,¹⁰² but in principle they could also be authentic celestial images (which we are tempted to regard as very unlikely); a misinterpretation of celestial phenomena, especially among those new to the region; the sun playing tricks on eyes at dusk; propaganda to justify Jerusalem's fall after the event, which Josephus has accepted;¹⁰³ Josephus's own propaganda (he is the only extant witness concerning witnesses apart from sources dependent on him);¹⁰⁴ or a combination of such elements.

It is not impossible that Josephus was involved in generating or making explicit such a report; as a highly rhetorical historian, he may be following a standard sort of report of such events as portents of destruction.¹⁰⁵ Some writers engaged in poetic license on such topics,¹⁰⁶ such as a giant Fury stalking the city and shaking the snakes in her hair;¹⁰⁷ others were more sober historians citing reports for particular years. Portents included events such as modern interpreters might regard as natural phenomena, such as physical deformities at birth, lightning striking temples, comets, and so forth,¹⁰⁸ but also included visions of celestial figures or armies.¹⁰⁹ The armies were sometimes heard rather than seen;¹¹⁰ sights that were seen were often acknowledged as divine illusions rather than objects physically present;¹¹¹ and the apparitions of armies never drew near anyone.¹¹² Such reports were normally not verified by citing witnesses, and the historians who report them sometimes express skepticism concerning their value, at times allowing for imagination in their production¹¹³ and at times pointing out that such reports

102. Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 182–84.

103. Somewhat similarly, Saulnier, "Josèphe," suggests that Josephus borrows the tradition from Flavian propaganda.

104. Tacitus *Hist.* 5.13.2–7 likely depends on Josephus *War* 6.288–315.

105. E.g., Aulus Gellius 4.6.2. The imagery in Mark 13:24–26, however, is not historiographic but reflects prophetic and apocalyptic motifs.

106. E.g., Lucan *Bell. civ.* 1.526–57; most obviously, who reported on Charybdis (1.547–48)?

107. Lucan *Bell. civ.* 1.572–73. Lucan writes epic poetry about historical events, not history proper, and no one would construe him as claiming literal sight of the Fury.

108. E.g., many of the portents listed in Livy 21.62.5; 24.10.7–10; 25.7.7–8; 26.23.4–5; 27.4.11–14; 27.11.2–5; 29.14.3; 29.37.1–5; 32.1.10–12; 33.26.7–8; 34.45.6–7; 35.9.2–3; 35.21.3–6; 36.37.2–3; 40.45.1–4; 41.21.12–13; 43.13.3–6; 45.16.5; Lucan *Bell. civ.* 1.562–63. On portents in ancient historians, see, e.g., Keener, *Matthew*, 568–69; in medieval chroniclers, see Daston, "Facts," 100. Eager to separate demonic and natural phenomena from divine miracles, critics increasingly explained these phenomena naturalistically (Daston, "Facts," 106–8), until by the mid-seventeenth century they lost their religious connections and assumed a different place in scientific study (108–9). Francis Bacon found such anomalies helpful for undermining Aristotelian categories (110–11).

109. E.g., Livy 21.62.4–5; 24.10.10; 42.2.4; Plutarch *Them.* 15.1; Herodian 8.3.8–9.

110. Appian *Bell. civ.* 4.1.4 (43 B.C.E.); one of the portents in Livy 24.44.8 (213 B.C.E.); Caesar *Bell. civ.* 3.105; Philostratus *Hrk.* 56.2.

111. E.g., Livy 24.10.11; 24.44.8. If I correctly interpret Livy's summaries, in some cases people reported seeing figures at another location when those present at that location could not confirm them. Sometimes what the apparition supposedly portended did not occur (Plutarch *Cic.* 14.3).

112. Livy 21.62.5. Contrast Josh 5:13–15 (cf. 2 Kgs 6:17)!

113. E.g., Livy 21.62.1; Herodian 8.3.8 (though he concludes that it is credible, 8.3.9). One fictitious or amplified, after-the-fact claim (e.g., Lucian *Peregr.* 39–40) was also sufficient rumor to provide grist

fed on one another among the gullible.¹¹⁴ Some of what was genuinely seen at a distance may have been misconstrued; thus, for example, the report of two suns and light at night may reflect an aurora.¹¹⁵

In any case, claims based on construal of cloud formations and the like belong in a category different from claims to have witnessed healings and exorcisms of people in front of the witnesses, the sort of events narrated in the Gospel accounts. Ancients often accumulated prodigies that might be viewed as portending a dramatic event, but the earliest Christian writers were more interested in citing eyewitnesses committed to the veracity of a central, dramatic historical event, and stressing its bodily character (1 Cor 15:3–8). Their accounts of Jesus's healings normally reflect information that could have been known to the eyewitnesses who functioned as the tradition's chief guarantors.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

Some features of miracle stories were culturally common ways to recount extraordinary phenomena. Nevertheless, features fairly distinctive to the early Christian accounts should also be observed. Jewish sources offer more natural comparisons than Gentile ones do, but apart from biblical antecedents they are not abundantly attested, certainly not on the level characteristic of early Christianity.

The degree to which early Christian miracle accounts were distinctive is not strictly relevant to the central question of this book, namely, whether eyewitnesses would offer miracle claims. Some ancient sources probably do depend ultimately on eyewitness reports of humanly inexplicable phenomena and recoveries attributed to deities, attested most commonly at healing sanctuaries. The sorts of healings through particular human agents such as we observe in the Gospels and Acts, however, are much less commonly attested in this period, and when they do occur usually they reflect a much longer period of transmission than what we find in the Gospels and Acts. This common difference suggests that we should generally expect less legendary accretion in these first-century Christian sources than in many of the documents to which scholars have often compared them. Thus, without ruling out paranormal phenomena outside early Christian circles, we may also emphasize the dramatic and distinctive emphasis on miracles in the early Christian community.

for such a report, in contrast to what would be necessary to supply the multiple attestation for Jesus's resurrection claims in Paul and the Gospels.

114. Livy 21.62.1; 24.10.6; 27.37.2; 29.14.2.

115. See the LCL note on Livy 29.14.3; some discussion in Strothers, "Objects." Flames seen in the sky (e.g., Livy 32.8.2); showers of "stones" (36.37.3); a rainbow in a clear sky (41.21.12); meteors (e.g., Livy 43.13.3); a comet shining for seven nights (Suetonius *Jul.* 88) and many other phenomena are also plausible in this manner. Some reports, of course, were simply fabricated by someone.

116. With, e.g., Davies, *Invitation*, 115–16; at greater length, see Keener, *Historical Jesus*, ch. 10; arguing most extensively for eyewitness connections, see Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*.

Are Miracles Possible?

In both the early Christian period and the modern period, miracle claims have boasted significant detractors. For much of history, such detractors were sometimes critical of unfounded claims without ruling out the possibility of genuine supernatural activity. Since the argument of David Hume, however, much of modern academia has a priori ruled out claims of direct supernatural activity in the natural world.

Because many of the foundations of Hume's argument no longer fit our contemporary philosophic and scientific context, many scholars have begun to question the Humean paradigm. Many of Hume's contemporaries recognized the circularity of his foundational arguments even in his own day. In the next few chapters, I shall first introduce discussion about antismiraculous assumptions as an authenticity criterion in NT scholarship (ch. 4). I shall then trace briefly some of Hume's objections to miracles and counterobjections raised against his arguments, and briefly argue that his case provides an inadequate basis for a priori ruling out the possibility of supernatural activity (ch. 5). I shall then turn to some social and philosophic consequences of Hume's paradigm, as well as some further aspects of his argument (ch. 6).

Antisupernaturalism as an Authenticity Criterion?

People with an attenuated sense of what is possible will bring that conviction to the Bible and diminish it by the poverty of their own experience. —Walter Wink¹

This chapter provides a historical prolegomenon for the next two chapters, which question the dogmatic antisupernaturalism that most of modern academia has inherited from Hume and others. It is in those chapters that I will address in greater detail the antimiraculous approach that developed in the radical Enlightenment. Here I survey instead especially some classical strands of thought on which some Enlightenment thinkers drew. I will then join other voices in emphasizing that we have frequently embraced antisupernaturalism as simply an automatic, unexamined assumption and will note that it, too, reflects a specific cultural setting.

While granting that most ancient historians included at least some claims of paranormal occurrences that they attributed to deities or intermediate beings, modern critics often use supernatural elements as a criterion for distinguishing what is genuinely historical in ancient histories from what is not.² For example, I have already noted that some twentieth-century Gospels critics excluded as legendary tales those stories that betrayed a significant miraculous element that could not be explained nonsupernaturally.³

Similarly, some earlier scholars, eager to underline the greater historicity of the later chapters of Acts where Luke himself was an eyewitness, sought to do so in part by emphasizing that angels and signs dominate the first part of Acts much

1. Wink, "Write," 6.

2. For nineteenth- and mid-twentieth-century critics of some Celtic miracle traditions, see the summary in Gardner, "Miracles," 1927, 1932 (arguing against the critics).

3. See again Dibelius, *Tradition*, 70–103; Bultmann, *Tradition*, 227.

more than the Pauline portions (excepting Acts 27:23), just as they appear rare in Paul's epistles.⁴ This simplistic method of counting pericopes neglects the shorter span of time covered by Acts' later chapters and the level of detail devoted to the defense speeches. Moreover, regardless of the number of verses involving them, signs remain central in Paul's later ministry, both in Acts (19:11–12; 28:6–9) and in his epistles (somewhat in the content of his teaching, 1 Cor 12–14; but especially in descriptions of his ministry, Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12; cf. Gal 3:5).⁵ Luke devotes more space to describing visible signs of the Spirit's work than Paul's letters to churches do, but this hardly means that they were less significant in Paul's evangelistic ministry, an idea that contradicts his own explicit claims referenced above. The difference in space devoted to miracle accounts is largely a question of genre: the interests of narrative, which recounts events, versus occasional and usually corrective letters focused on current local issues.⁶

In both the Gospels and Acts, a major presupposition in the exclusion of reported events as nonhistorical has been the content criterion that genuine supernatural activity does not happen.⁷ While even in some of these cases a critic might wish to explain some occurrences as coincidence (hence to salvage the historical core of the events at the expense of their theology), one wonders why one must feel compelled to grant without argument the premise that miracles cannot happen. Because the above-noted critics simply took for granted that miracles do not happen, one might suppose that the philosophic constraints against them happening must be so firm as to be beyond debate. As we shall see in the next two chapters, however, this expectation proves unfounded. Because of weaknesses in the antimiracle argument, in fact, the possibility of miracles remains a live issue in the philosophy of religion today.

Because most of the primary protagonists in the Gospels and Acts were reputed as miracle workers, we should not be surprised about miracle claims in these works. The presence of miracle claims should not then be used as a criterion of historical genre or even accuracy; historians writing about more recent miracle workers often recount the cures effected in the context of their activity without passing judgment on metaphysical questions others raise to explain those cures. Jesus was reputed as a miracle worker, and this was how many people experienced him.

4. Harnack, *Acts*, 148–49; Knox, *Acts*, 91–93. For some concerns about Harnack's theologically slanted historiographic approach more generally, see Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 5–6, and sources cited there.

5. Cf. here also Jewett, *Romans*, 911; Parsons, *Luke*, 126–27; Keener, *Corinthians*, 242; idem, “2 Corinthians,” 822. For Paul on signs, cf. further Twelftree, “Signs”; idem, “Healing.” Moreover, claims that signs diminish throughout Acts (or that a later portrait supplanted an earlier one; cf. Hickling, “Portrait in Acts 26”) neglect the likelihood that Luke may have already successfully made his point about signs, hence need not reiterate it further; earlier, Luke emphasizes the Spirit on Jesus in Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18, but no one claims that the Spirit declines on him later (Dollar, “Theology of Healing,” 47).

6. Cf. Bovon, *Theologian*, 198–238, esp. 238. Paul emphasized the supernatural element of the entire Christian life (cf. e.g., Rom 8:2–9; 2 Cor 3:17–18; Gal 5:16–23; Keener, “Perspectives”).

7. As an example of this assumption, Wink, *Transformation*, 30–31, cites Morton Smith (“Method,” 12); see also examples in Kelly, “Miracle,” 46–48.

But legitimate as this factual approach is in itself, it is also legitimate for historians to ask questions about causes of events. Historians and theologians may often punt those questions to each other when putative causes are divine, but the politics of academic specialization does not render the questions philosophically illegitimate. How do we interpret miracle or other paranormal claims? Are they all of one kind? Neither in antiquity nor in our day is there a consensus regarding these questions.

Ancient Skepticism toward Miracles

Some ancient writers shared modern critics' concerns about undue interest in the paranormal, though not typically for exactly the same (radical Enlightenment) reasons.⁸ Some of their ideas, recovered in the West during the Renaissance, naturally contributed to discussions about miracles during the Enlightenment. One writer whose critique of traditional monotheistic religion sounds almost modern is the late second-century physician Galen. He denounced, among other contemporary positions, the views of "'Moses', according to which God is not bound by the orderly processes of nature"; Galen preferred "the rational choices of the God of nature," the true evidence of providence, to the irrational ideas of deities working contrary to the normal course of nature.⁹ Galen replaces traditional conceptions of deity with "nature" itself.¹⁰ Nevertheless, most writers in late antiquity, including Christian writers, applied the phrase "contrary to nature" only to people contravening moral law¹¹ or the norms of reason established by nature,¹² not to miracles.

Although lacking sufficient knowledge of empirical science,¹³ some ancient writers came up with naturalistic alternatives for explaining natural phenomena that

8. I say "radical Enlightenment" to distinguish the perspective from some early Enlightenment thinkers more open to supernatural reports, at least those in Christian Scripture (see comment in ch. 5). Eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers also sought a rational basis for morality, whereas current rationalism is mixed with relativistic assumptions incompatible with its earlier form. Much of this section is adapted from Keener, *John*, 261–63.

9. Grant, *Miracle*, 13.

10. *Ibid.*, 13–14.

11. *Ibid.*, 17; cf. Aristotle *Pol.* 1.2.3, 1253b (citing others); Porphyry *Marc.* 31.484; Philo *Spec. Laws* 3.39; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.273, 275; Ps.-Phoc. 190–92; *T. Naph.* 3:4–5; Rom 1:26–27 (some of these examples would be equally, or perhaps even more, relevant in the next footnote). Nevertheless, it could also apply to what was simply different from the normal course of nature (e.g., Soranus *Gynec.* 1.12.43; Rom 11:24; perhaps Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.80).

12. See, e.g., Diogenes the Cynic (according to Diogenes Laertius 6.2.65); Aeschines *Tim.* 185; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 66.37–39; Musonius Rufus 12, p. 86.8–10; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 33.52, 60; Arius Didymus 2.7.6a, p. 38.12–14; 2.7.7e, p. 48.1–2, 11–13; 2.7.7f, p. 48.14–15; 2.7.8a, p. 52.25–26; 2.7.10a, p. 56.1–3, 23–25; 58.2–5; 2.7.10e, p. 62.13–16; Iamblichus *V.P.* 30.186; perhaps Diodorus Siculus 32.10.6. But some things could be "against nature" yet prove morally indifferent (Arius Didymus 2.7.7a, p. 42.31–44.7). See appendix D.

13. If unrestrained, winds would blow away the universe (Virgil *Aen.* 1.58); Helen was carried to Egypt by winds (Philostratus *Hrk.* 25.10); winds carry along the sun and moon chariots (1 *En.* 72:2, 5); winds hold up the heavens (1 *En.* 18:2–5; *Jos. Asen.* 12:2/12:3).

differed from traditional religious explanations offered by most of their polytheistic contemporaries. Thus, for example, while some viewed the winds as divine¹⁴ and others presented them as under divine or angelic authority,¹⁵ still others viewed them as purely natural phenomena.¹⁶ Likewise, some thought that violent winds created thunder and lightning;¹⁷ others, that wind is air flowing in a single direction.¹⁸ Of course, many such explanations among ancients could prove accurate only to a very limited degree from the perspective of modern knowledge, and sometimes not at all: for example, the views that the planets and stars cause rain,¹⁹ that the fire from stars falling into clouds causes lightning storms,²⁰ or that wind can be caused by the stars moving in a direction opposite to that of the earth.²¹ The guesses were not all equally correct, but they were authentic attempts at purely or largely naturalistic explanations.

Yet skepticism applied not only to supernatural interpretations of what we would readily describe as natural phenomena today; it often applied to claims of paranormal phenomena. Such skepticism appears both among characters in fiction and in historical writing. Ovid makes some of his characters more believable by having them doubt the supernatural, while others affirm that deities can do anything²²—before they are all changed into bats for disbelieving in Bacchus!²³ Unlike most authors, Hermippus suspected that the magical sage Pythagoras was a phony.²⁴ One Diognetus taught Marcus Aurelius not to believe miracle workers, magicians, and exorcists.²⁵ Pliny the Elder emphasized that the wisest people rejected the efficacy of incantations, though he complained that mostly everyone else accepted them.²⁶ Cicero, though a member of “the priestly college of augurs” (presumably for political reasons), regarded such practices as supersti-

14. Fronto in Naber, p. 211, section 7; personified, at least, in Plutarch *Bride* 12, *Mor.* 139DE.

15. E.g., Valerius Flaccus 8.322–27; *1 En.* 4:3; *Tg. Jon.* on 1 Kgs 19:11–12; probably angels in *Apoc. Mos.* 38:3.

16. See Seneca *Nat.* 5.16.1–5.17.2; for ancient “scientific” theories on weather, see Pliny *Nat.* 2.39.105–6.

17. Pliny *Nat.* 2.38.104.

18. Seneca *Nat. Q.* 5.1.1; Pliny *Nat.* 2.44.114.

19. Pliny *Nat.* 2.39.105–6 (by contrast, Pliny offers a much more accurate explanation in 2.42.111).

20. *Ibid.*, 2.43.112.

21. *Ibid.*, 2.45.116; cf. Pliny *Nat.* 2.6.32–33, where the planets move in a direction opposite the world. More plausibly, gusts from the earth, solar heat, and irregularities in the mountains also produce them (2.44.114–15).

22. Ovid *Metam.* 4.272–73.

23. *Ibid.*, 4.402–415. Elsewhere when recounting something incredible (ghosts terrorizing Rome, Ovid *Fast.* 2.551–54), he notes that he can hardly believe it himself (*Fast.* 2.551).

24. Diogenes Laertius 8.1.41.

25. Marcus Aurelius 1.5. The Loeb note (LCL 4–5n6, citing *Dig.* 50.13.1, §3; Justin *Apol.* 2.6; Tertullian *Apol.* 23; Irenaeus *Haer.* 2.6, §2; Lactantius 5.21) may be correct that the exorcism comment applied especially to Christians, but Philostratus and third-century magical papyri suggest that it need hardly have applied to them alone.

26. Pliny *Nat.* 28.3.10. Yet he feels constrained to respect ancestral practice (28.3.12–13) and leaves such matters open to his audience to decide (28.5.29).

tious, although probably only a small minority of people shared his skepticism.²⁷ Even Philostratus, who writes about Apollonius and probably the divinized hero Protesilaos, accommodates some of the skepticism of his day, perhaps to refute his alleged associations with magic.²⁸

Various writers satirized gullibility. Petronius, for example, satirizes gullibility as the low-class merchant Trimalchio believes a werewolf story.²⁹ At greater length, Lucian recounts a person persuaded of unbelievable reports because he regards the source as believable,³⁰ whereas a more reliable character elsewhere proves more skeptical of myths.³¹ Lucian happily parodies poets and writers known for their tall tales (*True Story* 1.2–4). Most relevant, he reports that he himself embellished stories of Peregrinus's death with fabulous claims to have fun at the expense of his unlearned hearers, discovering that some not only believed his report but also went out claiming to have witnessed the very phenomena that he had just fabricated (*Peregr.* 39–40). Similarly, Lucian approves of a historian reporting potential myths, so long as one does not affirm them but leaves their veracity to the audience to decide (*Hist.* 60).³² The most thoroughgoing critique of including paranormal events in histories, however, comes from the critical historian Polybius.

Polybius's Critique of Sensationalist Historians

Polybius complained about historians who focused too much on prodigies (τερατεία) and used tragic coloring (7.7.1).³³ Some reports of signs do serve such

27. Klauck, *Context*, 180, citing Cicero *Div.* 2.83. Loos, *Miracles*, 7, cites Cicero's skepticism of miracles in *Div.* 2.28.

28. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 284–85. Like a good sophist, Philostratus sometimes provides rationalistic explanations (Macleon and Aitken, *Heroikos*, l–li, citing *Hrk.* 48.11–13; 50.1, 7–11; cf. also lxiv on Dio Chrysostom *Troikos* 11, 54, 70); cf. *Hrk.* 33.6; restrained language in 4.2; sympathy for skeptics in 51.11; distinction between eyewitness testimony and hearsay, rendering the former more credible (8.8); and the progressive persuasion of the open-minded skeptic in 3.1; 7.9, 11; 8.2, 8; the skeptic believed as a child (7.10).

29. Petronius *Sat.* 62–63. Cf. the silly story in Apuleius *Metam.* 2.28.

30. Lucian *Lover of Lies* 15, 32; an unreliable character attests the de-haunting of a house in 29–32. Others later employed this narrative approach in which a skeptical character is won over (Philostratus *Hrk.* 7.9, 11; 8.2).

31. Lucian *Dial. D.* 446–447 (9/28, *Menippus and Tiresias* 2–3).

32. Others followed this practice, e.g., Pliny *Nat.* 28.5.29.

33. Polybius also objects to historians who create such implausible obstacles that they require a *deus ex machina*, as in the tragic dramatists, to nevertheless yield the known historical outcome (3.48.7–8), inventing divine apparitions (3.48.9) not found in their sources. Cf. also George, “Miracles,” 103. In view of the existence of such writers, Plümacher contends that Luke follows this sensational form of historiography, with the goal of stimulating readers' pleasure and passion; it was a recognized form of history but one that, while interested in what happened, was not interested in that alone (Plümacher, “TERATEIA”; cf. idem, *Geschichte*, 33–84). Yet Plümacher's “tragic-pathetic historiography” neither fits Luke nor functions well as an ancient category; although tragic elements predominate more in some historians than others, there was no specific “school” of tragic historiography (see Rutherford, “Tragedy,” 513–14, following Walbank, “Tragedy” = *Papers*, 241; Hornblower, “Introduction,” 44). Because of his signs reports Dormeyer, “Historii,” sees Luke as closer to Israelite than Greek historiography (though marvels could appear in both, Dormeyer is probably correct about Luke using LXX models).

functions.³⁴ But again Luke and the other Gospel writers focus on miracles because they tell about a miracle worker, not because they resemble the sensationalist works Polybius critiques, which typically contain elaborate scenes of pathos.³⁵

Polybius's complaint about historians who focus on unusual phenomena is part of his longer complaint about those who elaborate such a narrow range of events that they must exaggerate and focus on irrelevancies rather than elucidate the behavior of important characters (7.7.1–8). This is partly Polybius's way of distinguishing and marking the superiority of his work, which covers a broader span of history and geography, from others. That Thucydides covers a narrower span than Polybius yet was a careful historian may escape Polybius's notice, but Thucydides also eschews the fantastic.

Like Polybius, some other elite historians (such as Thucydides and often Tacitus) proved skeptical of signs. Thucydides, in fact, promises to include fewer accounts "of the fabulous" than did earlier poets who focused on pleasant-sounding myths; he preferred, he claimed, to deal with probable events, namely, the sorts of events that are historically repeatable (Thucydides 1.22.4, LCL).³⁶ One orator opines that poets could use mythical language because they wrote about the gods, but historians, who wrote about people, must keep close to their sources (Menander Rhetor 1.1.333.31–1.334.5). Pliny apparently believed that stories of marvels would sell better than his dry research treatise could (*Nat. pref.* 12–13).

Signs in Critical Historians

Surely, however, not all the historians whom Polybius characterizes as sensationalist would have agreed with his description. Historians did not need to resort to wholesale antisupernaturalism to exercise critical judgment. By the imperial period, historians often included "miraculous and fantastic elements,"³⁷ and not every writer who included paranormal events was generally "sensationalist." Whereas Lucian and Polybius are skeptical, many Greek and Roman historians reported curiosities in their sources, ambivalent "between skepticism and credulity."³⁸ Others allowed

34. For example, Valerius Maximus reports many *miracula*, simply as collections of unusual phenomena (Valerius Maximus 1.8.praef.; 1.8.1–2; 1.8.ext.1–19); he justifies one report as believable simply because it appears in his sources (Valerius Maximus 1.8.7). The dangers of magic also added intrigue to novels; e.g., Heliodorus *Aeth.* 6.14.

35. One may contrast the concise depiction of Jesus's crucifixion with the elaboration of gore in sensationalist and some other ancient historians (cf. Goguel, *Life*, 527).

36. Thucydides admitted that some earlier descriptions of hardships and natural disasters, dependent on oral tradition, had been rendered credible by the more recent events he was describing (1.23.3), but part of his agenda is to render his own account unique. Thucydides offered an effective model of restraint to many of his successors (see Remus, *Conflict*, 36–37).

37. Krasser, "Reading," 554 (citing Livy, Appian, Plutarch, and others).

38. Hemer, *Acts in History*, 428–29; more fully, 428–43. Sophists employed "rationalistic explanations" where possible (Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, I, lxiv); also of astrological phenomena like eclipses (Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.5–6; see comment on Acts 2:20 in Keener, *Acts*). See, e.g., Tacitus *Germ.* 3. Some phenomena could be attributed to coincidence, though with divine involvement in the timing (Remus, *Conflict*, 45–47).

both natural and divine factors side by side.³⁹ Thus, for example, Herodotus, while not speaking of regular intervention by deities, views their activity as part of the natural order about which he writes.⁴⁰

Livy is among the writers after Polybius who chronicles reports of unusual events (prodigies) for each year;⁴¹ some of these we would regard as natural phenomena and others as originally fabricated, but they undoubtedly stemmed from Livy's sources.⁴² Livy himself often warns, however, that many of the reported prodigies may have been accepted too readily by their contemporaries;⁴³ the more that such reports were believed, he opines, the more that further reports of this nature were generated.⁴⁴

Still more reliable historians also provide reports of such phenomena, such as of signs attesting Vespasian in Tacitus and Suetonius⁴⁵ or signs surrounding Jerusalem's fall,⁴⁶ though they may do so with sufficient distancing as to retain the appearance of objectivity.⁴⁷ Sometimes reports even from an immediately preceding generation involve events about which more of us today would be skeptical than ancient critics were; Tacitus avers that a dignified historian ought not "to collect fabulous tales" merely to "delight" his readers, but warns that he "cannot

39. Remus, *Conflict*, 42–44; cf. 45–47. Koskenniemi, *Miracle-Workers*, 297, appears correct that the skeptics constituted a minority and that people of most social backgrounds enjoyed accounts of wonders.

40. Herodotus speaks of gods, but not of them intervening regularly in the narrative as "in Homer and the Attic drama" (McDonald, "Herodotus," 86); although Luke reports much divine activity, God appears directly only very rarely, as in Luke 3:22; 9:35 (though the risen Jesus appears in Acts). For Herodotus, divine powers are viewed differently among different peoples; he does not treat divine intervention "in anthropomorphic terms" (*ibid.*, 86). Herodotus views both divine and human activity as within the natural order (*ibid.*, 88–89); where he reports traditions of miracles, "he regularly indicates his reservations" (87), unlike Luke. Meanwhile, Xenophon is unapologetic in his belief in gods and their activity (Brown, *Historians*, 97).

41. Among other writers, see, e.g., Valerius Maximus 1.6.5; Appian *Bell. civ.* 1.9.83; 2.5.36; 2.10.68; 4.1.4; for other prodigies, see Cicero *Verr.* 2.4.49.108; Pliny *Nat.* 17.38.241–45; Tacitus *Ann.* 12.43, 64; 14.32; 15.22, 47; 16.13; Suetonius *Jul.* 81.3; Aulus Gellius 4.6.2; Arrian *Alex.* 4.15.7–8. In exaggerated, fictitious form, Lucan *Bell. civ.* 1.529–63 *passim*; Phaedrus 3.3.4–5. See further discussion in Keener, *Matthew*, 568–69.

42. E.g., Livy 21.62.1–5; 24.10.6–11; 24.44.8; 25.7.7–9; 26.23.4–5; 27.4.11–14; 27.11.2–5; 27.37.1–6; 29.14.2; 32.1.10–12; 32.8.2; 33.26.7–8; 34.45.6–7; 35.9.2–4; 35.21.3–6; 36.37.2–3; 40.45.1–4; 41.13.1–2; 41.21.12–13; 42.2.4–5; 43.13.3–6; 45.16.5. Justifying Livy's supernaturalism, see Laistner, *Historians*, 69 (though what he attributes to possible Stoic thought on 69–77 could simply reflect popular religion).

43. So Livy 21.62.1.

44. Livy 24.10.6.

45. Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81; Suetonius *Vesp.* 7.2–3. Cf. also Vespasian's vision in Tacitus *Hist.* 4.82; modern scholars usually suspect that such stories originated as imperial propaganda (cf., e.g., Clark, "Religions," 62) but do not for that reason disqualify Tacitus as a critical ancient historian by ancient standards. Nor would patronage claims affect Tacitus's objectivity here, since he wrote after the Flavian dynasty's demise. Tacitus has the physicians offer naturalistic explanations for the healings (emphasized by Johnson, *Hume*, 85–86), but these explanations seem to me difficult, especially in the case of the blind man.

46. Tacitus *Hist.* 5.13, probably following Josephus *War* 6.288–310. On signs surrounding Jerusalem's fall, see fuller discussion in Keener, *Matthew*, 584.

47. Thus Tacitus's account in *Hist.* 4.81 is somewhat naturalistic, and both here and especially in Suetonius *Vesp.* 7.3 Vespasian is convinced only against his own expectations.

... dare to deny the truth of common tradition."⁴⁸ Other sources strongly suggest that Tacitus personally believed at least in the gods and in sacrificing to them.⁴⁹

While Diodorus Siculus accepts some major supernatural feats, he often prefers nonsupernatural accounts and "demythologizes" them, depicting how he thinks such accounts were reworked into mythical ones.⁵⁰ Eunapius recounts a barely believable event only with hesitation, noting that none of the supposed eyewitnesses had written anything down.⁵¹ Although Arrian accepted the possibility of divine interventions,⁵² he was not extremely gullible; he complains that some writers tell of various wonders at the ends of the earth (ants that mine gold for the Indians, and water monsters and griffins also in India) only because they can get away with inventing entertaining stories about matters that their readers cannot check.⁵³ Plutarch accepted some reports but could also exercise critical discretion and could reject a tale as incredible.⁵⁴ Plutarch cautiously reports various views about the activities of statues, noting the frequency of the reports (Plutarch *Cam.* 6.1–4) and concluding that one should avoid either believing too much (superstition) or disbelieving too much (irreligion; *Cam.* 6.4).⁵⁵

Many historians sometimes qualified reports with "it is said" or similar cautionary devices.⁵⁶ Reporting wonders in their sources freely, they nevertheless distanced themselves from seeming too credulous by warning readers to evaluate

48. Tacitus *Hist.* 2.50 (LCL 1:243), reporting as an omen a bird that could not be scared from a grove until the moment of Otho's death. Tacitus *Ann.* 15.7–8 treats as foolish those who ignore omens.

49. See Pliny *Ep.* 9.10.1, where Tacitus has urged Pliny to sacrifice to Diana as well as Minerva (and Pliny replies that he has not enough boars). Tacitus's suggestion could be facetious, but probably rests on a genuine belief. Certainly he believes in prodigies and portents (Tacitus *Hist.* 1.86; on the same ruler, cf. Suetonius *Otho* 8.3).

50. E.g., Diodorus Siculus 4.47.3–4; cf. Plutarch *Alex.* 35.5–6.

51. Eunapius *Lives* 460 (the alleged event occurred two generations earlier, with but one oral link).

52. *Alex.* 5.1.2.

53. Arrian *Alex.* 5.4.3.

54. Plutarch *Isis* 8, *Mor.* 353F. After narrating some extraordinary events related to an oracle several centuries earlier (Plutarch *Cam.* 5.4), he admits that this may sound "mythical" (*Cam.* 5.5). For other paranormal phenomena in Plutarch, see, e.g., *Sulla* 27.2 (a creature taken as a satyr); for his suspicions of or lack of commitment to some reports, see also, e.g., *Alex.* 35.5–6; some different examples in George, "Miracles," 103. Mackay, "Plutarch," 108–9, holds that Plutarch could have accepted most of the miracle stories in the NT except the resurrection and incarnation (though he would have found Christianity's particularity problematic).

55. Aristotle's principle of the mean served Plutarch in this case. Most understood then, as we do today, that statues were inactive (e.g., Diogenes *Ep.* 11), but many made exceptions for unusual phenomena (I list a few of the references in Keener, *Revelation*, 351–52, 362; cf. Rev 13:15). For statues speaking, see, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 8.56.2 (in Aune, *Revelation*, 762); Valerius Maximus 1.8.3–4; Plutarch *Cam.* 6.1; for Memnon's statue, see Callistratus *Descr.* 9; Philostratus *Hrk.* 26.16; weeping, Livy 43.13.4; Lucan *Bell. civ.* 1.556–57; turning, Plutarch *Cam.* 6.3 (Aune, *Revelation*, 762, cites Dio Cassius 4.1.61; 5.4.7); bleeding, Livy 27.4.14; Appian *Bell. civ.* 4.1.4; or Caesar *Bell. civ.* 3.105; Appian *Bell. civ.* 2.5.36; 4.1.4; Plutarch *Cam.* 6.3; Philostratus *Hrk.* 19.4. Hair growing on a statue was also considered unusual, hence functioned as an omen (Livy 32.1.10).

56. Witherington, *Acts*, 221–22 (citing Josephus *Ant.* 1.108). Cf. similarly Ovid *Fast.* 2.551. Cf. even one novel's nods to objectivity (e.g., τ1 in Philostratus *Hrk.* 4.2; the selective claims of 8.8; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.45).

the veracity of such reports for themselves.⁵⁷ Yet despite a higher level of skepticism fashionable among the intelligentsia than among many others, ancient historians were not products of the radical Enlightenment. They could not simply expect all readers to disbelieve all claims of superhuman activity without argument.

Although these observations suggest that the most careful historians by other standards were sometimes the least credulous, we should note that the differences also usually correspond to the expectations of the audiences for which they wrote, the epistemological presuppositions of which are not guarantors of effective historical research per se. The majority of ancient historians were critical of some reports while accepting the possibility of others; that is, they did not a priori decide all claims of paranormal events to be either authentic or inauthentic. We do not for that reason reject their authenticity as historians or the authenticity of the other reports they offer.⁵⁸

Early Christians, as followers of a miracle worker, members of a charismatic movement, and usually not members of the Greco-Roman elite, were more open to miracle claims than were most elite historians. On what grounds do we need to suppose that this difference necessarily makes their approach inferior to that of their elite contemporaries or reduces its historical content?⁵⁹ Whatever one's response to such questions (normally based on our own philosophic assumptions), we should note that the presence of paranormal claims does not necessarily alter a work's *genre*—such reports do appear in many ancient historians.⁶⁰ The Gospels and Acts typically include them in much greater proportion because of their subject matter—that is, people whom scholars usually recognize as miracle workers.

Ancient Plausibility Structures

Certainly not all ancient intellectuals were skeptical of supernatural phenomena. Thus, for example, Stoics, despite their disdain for immoral mythology, were known for defending the gods and divination.⁶¹ Likewise, thinkers influenced by the Pythagorean tradition clearly affirmed tangible, divine supernatural activity.⁶²

57. E.g., Pliny *Nat.* 28.5.29; Aune, *Environment*, 134 (citing Herodotus 2.123; 5.45; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 1.48.1); cf. Pausanias 1.26.6 (on a statue that supposedly fell from heaven).

58. Likewise, we do not always reject their information if we disagree with their inaccurate skepticism about it (cf. the example in Flew, "Arguments," 51, though cited for a different point).

59. Those who feel that critical historians should exclude paranormal claims can simply purge the materials that historians they regard as less critical have retained; thus, if we account for their focus on miracle workers, the populist Gospels and Acts (on this view) would be no poorer sources than were the primary sources that ancient critical historians sometimes purged for us. In works such as Mark, however, one would be purging a significant proportion of the narrative.

60. While Plümacher (noted above) does not rank Luke among "sensationalist" historians lightly, critical historians were not all averse to signs; Luke records more because he writes about miracle workers and follows an Israelite and Jewish rather than sensationalist Hellenistic tradition. Moreover, an emphasis on signs in such works need not lead to a particular assignment of genre, and certainly not to all the particulars often associated with it.

61. Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.4; Lucian, *Z. Rants* 4, 40; Klauck, *Context*, 181. They salvaged myths by allegorizing them; see Cornutus *Nat. d.* §19 (33.14 Lang) (in Grant, *Religions*, 78–79); Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.28.70.

62. See the discussion of Apollonius above.

As noted above, Hellenistic histories often included portents as signs of divine action, just as did the Gospels and Acts (the latter work usually recognized today as a Hellenistic history).⁶³ Extranormal events could be viewed as the occasional activity of divine persons or heroes and hence no less plausible and distinctive than the activities of mortals. Arrian notes that the early stories about Dionysus are difficult to believe, but that what would normally be improbable cannot be dismissed when one is dealing with a divine element.⁶⁴

These writers normally employed signs not simply to entertain their readers “but as illustrations of divine guidance.”⁶⁵ We might choose to dispute the veracity of some or many of their reports, but if we do so, this dispute would not suggest that they simply invented the reports rather than derived them from sources they took seriously. While some historians were more inventive than others, we would not, for example, suspect Tacitus or Suetonius of having merely invented the reports of the signs attributed to Vespasian, whatever their historical origin.⁶⁶

This principle should also hold true for early Christian reports. Celsus and other later critics of Christians sought not to deny their miracles but to challenge the value of these phenomena by questioning their source (sorcery) or the social status of Christians.⁶⁷ Lucian was more skeptical, accusing Christians of “believing” without evidence and thus being easily exploited financially by charlatans.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, his account also thereby appears to confirm other sources’ reports that Christians were associated with and did not invent for their own literary purposes claims of such extranormal phenomena.⁶⁹ We may likewise dispute the varying interpretations ancient historians (who similarly did not all agree with one another) attached to reports of supernatural phenomena without disputing their dependence on prior information. Again, the same principle may be applied to the Gospels and Acts.

In contrast to some elite Hellenistic historians, early Jewish sources not composed for Greek intellectual consumption usually show no reticence about

63. See Laistner, *Historians*, 7, 69; especially Squires, *Plan*, 78–84; further, 89–101 for Luke-Acts and 78–89 for other historians. One may also note examples, e.g., of judgments for desecrating temples or sacred objects, as in Polybius 31.9.1–4; 32.15.3–14; Corn. Nep. 17 (Agesilaus), 4.8; Valerius Maximus 1.1. ext. 5; 1.1.18, 21; 1.1. ext. 3 (posthumously); 1.1. ext. 5; Pliny *Nat.* 33.24.83; Appian *Hist. rom.* 3.12.1–2; Babrius 78; Phaedrus 4.11.1–13; Lucian *Z. Rants* 24, 32; Pausanias 3.23.3–5; 9.25.10; 9.33.6; 9.39.12; Diodorus Siculus 14.63.1; 16.58.6; 27.4.3; 28.3.1; Athenaeus *Deipn.* 12.523ab; cf. 1 Sam 5:4; Strabo 17.1.43. Contrast Lucian *Tim.* 4. Among Jews, 2 Macc 3:25–26; Josephus *Ant.* 12.358–59; cf. 4 Macc 18:5.

64. Arrian *Alex.* 5.1.2. Cf. some philosophers who pointed out that all things were possible for the gods (Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.139, 148; cf. Luke 1:37). Sallust *Bell. cat.* 3.2, fears that some will dismiss his accounts because they report characters nobler than those the reader would expect.

65. Squires, *Plan*, 102.

66. Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81; Suetonius *Vesp.* 7.2–3. See discussion in the relevant note above.

67. Cook, *Interpretation*, 39; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 428–29.

68. Lucian *Peregr.* 13.

69. In *Peregr.* 11, Peregrinus learned the “marvel-wisdom” (θαυμαστικὴν σοφίαν) of the Christians, possibly wisdom related to signs working (cf. LXX Exod 15:11; 34:10; Josh 3:5; Mic 7:15; Tob 12:22; Wis 19:8). He noted that some after Peregrinus’s death would probably attribute miracles to his spirit (*Peregr.* 28, *perhaps* influenced by Christian healing in Jesus’s name).

reporting wonders.⁷⁰ (Popular second-century Christian accounts and later rabbinic accounts depict spectacular miracles even more lavishly.⁷¹) Josephus, writing for a more Hellenistic audience, sometimes follows the cautious conventions of his Greek contemporaries, adding a noncommittal remark after reporting biblical miracles.⁷² He plays down Elijah's miracles⁷³ and some other miracles.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Josephus did believe in miracles and wanted his audience to do the same.⁷⁵ He also used portents as a kind of "signs" (σημεῖα).⁷⁶ It appears that Josephus, like some Greek and Roman historians (as well as more than a few modern NT scholars), approved of belief in some extranormal phenomena but mostly acceded to the conventions long established for the historical genre in writing about them.⁷⁷

One of the Gospel writers was also a Hellenistic historian, yet shares the same essentially Jewish theological frame of reference held by the other Gospel writers.⁷⁸ Luke, who writes for Christians who believe in a powerful and historically active deity, is not at all reticent to report miracles. He is, however, sensitive enough to some critics' skepticism that he distinguishes his own claims for Jesus's resurrection from more incredible popular stories by citing "proofs" (Acts 1:3) and acknowledging that some find this claim unbelievable (Acts 26:8).⁷⁹ Likewise,

70. E.g., 4Q422, 10 S (Moses); 4Q176 1–2 I, 1 (eschatological); wonders in 1 En. 24:4–25:6; 27:1–4; *Let. Aris.* 99; throughout the LXX. For a survey of healing theology among OT writers and their ancient Near Eastern contexts, see Brown, *Healer*, passim.

71. For apocryphal collections of "acts" as almost aretalogies, see Aune, *Environment*, 147.

72. E.g., *Ant.* 1.108; 2.348; 3.81, 322; 4.158. Aune, *Environment*, 109; Squires, *Plan*, 84–89; Betz, "Miracles in Josephus," 212–13, who also notes that he limited them mostly to the past (218). He follows Greek historiographic convention (Aune, *Environment*, 134, cites Lucian *Hist.* 60; Herodotus 2.123; 5.45; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 1.48.1).

73. Feldman, "Elijah."

74. Feldman, "Hellenizations," 150.

75. Betz, "Miracles in Josephus," 212–13; Eve, *Miracles*, 52. Koskenniemi, *Miracle-Workers*, 228–30, notes that most scholars (and esp. Feldman) see Josephus as reserved about miracles, with some viewing him as ambivalent; but Koskenniemi also observes (295) that Josephus rarely omits and sometimes even exaggerates miracles. Betz thinks Josephus did not expect them in the present ("Miracles in Josephus," 218); if Betz is right on this caveat, Josephus must have excepted prophecy (for others, *War* 1.78–80; 2.159; for himself, Isaacs, *Spirit*, 48; Hill, *Prophecy*, 26–27, on *War* 3.351–54; see also Joshua ben Hananiah in *War* 6.300–309; Noack, *Jesus Ananiasson*; Gray, *Figures*, 158–63).

76. Betz, "Miracles in Josephus," 231–33. For this language for portents, see also Plutarch *Dem.* 19.1; Philostratus *Hrk.* 16.5; 17.4; 18.2; 31.5.

77. Greek influence may have contributed to Josephus's rationalizing, but the Jewish belief in miracles reflecting God's power contributed the more dominant influence (MacRae, "Miracle," 142).

78. On Luke as a Hellenistic historian, see discussion in, e.g., Palmer, "Monograph" (1993); Plümacher, "Luke as Historian," 398; idem, *Geschichte*, 1–32; idem, "Monographie"; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, ch. 6; idem, *Acts*; on theology in historiography, see, e.g., Squires, "Plan," 15–77; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 121–23.

79. Luke is also restrained in an eyewitness report (Acts 20:12). Moule, "Classification," 242, thinks that "Luke has a sort of rationalization (though demonstrably misconceived)," in Luke 23:45, because he attributes the cosmic darkness at Jesus's crucifixion (Mark 15:33) to an "eclipse" (BDAG there has "cease to shine" but notes that "Luke's diction is standard for description of an eclipse," citing Thucydides 2.28; 7.50.4; Xenophon *Hell.* 1.6.1; *FrGrH* 239 B 16; Plutarch *Pel.* 31.3; Sir 17:31; Philo *Mos.* 2.271). Nevertheless, well-timed eclipses were hardly explained only naturalistically. While some construed them in this manner (see Polybius 9.19.1; Valerius Maximus 8.11.ext.1; Seneca *Nat. Q.* 7.1.2; Heracl. *Hom. Prob.* 57.6; Philostratus *Hrk.* 33.6; cf. Diogenes Laertius 7.1.145–46; 10.96; Pliny *Nat.* 2.6.47; Dio

Luke does not seek to report all sorts of wonders and prodigies; his focus is signs (σημεῖα)—“signs, that is to say, of the inbreaking of the kingdom of God (cf. Luke 11:20).”⁸⁰ Luke’s story focuses on miracle workers along the lines of Elijah and Elisha; he also writes for a community that, in contrast to some readers of elite histories, already believed that Luke’s protagonists performed signs. Luke thus diverges from the norm of elite histories by reporting miracles more lavishly than they did.

Nevertheless, to link these miracles with a wider range of exotic reports in sensationalist historiography, and then to further attribute all the wider traits of that historiographic category to Luke’s work, collapses too many categories.⁸¹ It is the subject of Luke’s history rather than elaborate rhetorical license that drives his accounts of signs; as we have noted, Paul’s letters indicate that he anticipated signs even more widely than Luke claims them for him (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12). Many ancient thinkers’ determination to exercise critical judgment in particular cases, whether their conclusions were usually right or wrong, contrasts with the few ancient thinkers and many modern ones who a priori reject supernatural phenomena wholesale.⁸² It also contrasts with some modern readers’ skepticism that eyewitnesses or sources ultimately dependent on them can offer miracle claims. To observe this difference is not to affirm all the views held by many ancient thinkers, but to put modern skepticism in a larger historical context as one worldview among many.

Modern Western Skepticism toward Supernatural Phenomena

Modern scholars sometimes treat wonders as fictitious elements in ancient historiography, including in the Gospels and Acts.⁸³ We should recognize, however, that ancients with different plausibility paradigms may well have experienced genuine events that many modern Western interpreters would attribute to different causes.

Moreover, and more to the point in this particular section, modern Western interpreters who are skeptical of all such events or read all of them through a

Cassius R.H. 60.26.1–5; Livy 44.37.6–7), many others construed them as omens (see, e.g., *tos. Suk.* 2:5–6; Aristophanes *Peace* 414; Xenophon *Hell.* 1.6.1; Thucydides 2.28.1; Polybius 29.16.1–3; Diodorus Siculus 20.5.5; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.43; 8.23; much fuller comment on Acts 2:20 in Keener, *Acts*).

80. Bruce, *Acts*, 31.

81. Luke-Acts cannot readily fit the category of tragic-pathetic historiography (see ch. 4 in the introduction to Keener, *Acts*). The composite alleged category is in any case questionable (see Rutherford, “Tragedy,” 513–14, following Walbank, “Tragedy” = *Papers*, 241; Hornblower, “Introduction,” 44).

82. E.g., Philo accepts both natural laws and biblical testimony to miracles (Wolfson, *Philo* 1:347–56). A later Neoplatonist, albeit one given to credulity, charges that thoroughgoing skepticism itself reflected unproved presuppositions: since the gods are powerful, it is imprudent to dismiss marvelous claims where deities might be involved (Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.148; cf. 28.139).

83. E.g., Plümacher, *Geschichte*, 33–84, on Acts; similarly, regarding the earlier Elijah cycle, Gordon, *Near East*, 222. From a literary approach, see Aichele, “Fantasy” (comparing parabolic structure on 54; but the structure seems conventional for *narratives* more generally).

purely naturalistic paradigm are hardly neutral in their assumptions. As I shall emphasize in the next two chapters, antisupernaturalism emerged from specific historical circumstances no less than ancient or modern, Western or non-Western supernaturalist approaches. This observation need not suggest that antisupernaturalism must therefore be logically wrong; it may suggest that we need not assume it as an *a priori*.⁸⁴

No less important for readers of the text, from a literary standpoint, we must beware of simply assuming modern antisupernaturalism's unsympathetic reading of ancient texts, which diverges starkly from how the first audiences would have heard them.⁸⁵ It is a bias that can hinder us from entering their narrative worlds as fully as their first audiences could. On the level of philosophic methodology, to start from a "guilty until proven innocent" skepticism toward claims in historical narratives reflects what logicians would normally view as the "poisoning the well" fallacy. "In the history of philosophy," a critic observes, "it represents Descartes' approach to epistemology, and that is a blind alley."⁸⁶

Thus I will here briefly introduce and raise questions concerning the historic context of modern Western philosophic assumptions regarding supernatural phenomena, a context that I will address more thoroughly in the following two chapters. I will deal in later chapters with miracle claims in the modern world and some of their varied interpretations in the Majority World and in the West. A purely naturalistic paradigm that *a priori* excludes the possibility of divine causation is not the only interpretative approach to reality held by intelligent people in all cultures, nor is it self-evident to observers in all cultures.

Our Cultural Limitations

In chapter 7, I will include some severe Majority World critiques of traditional Western antisupernaturalism. Here I simply introduce the question of the cultural limitations of some of our philosophic presuppositions. Assumptions about reality are often culturally formed, and events that function as "reality" by the criteria of one culture can shape its history even if these assumptions are foreign to other cultures.⁸⁷

84. The history of ideas, including in scientific paradigms (cf. Kuhn, *Structure*), shows that the same data may be interpreted through diverse interpretive grids after paradigm shifts; interpretive models often control our perspectives on what is possible.

85. Cf. Keener, "Comparisons." Likewise, Wink, "Write," 6, notes that scholars whose background is either "rationalistic, scholastic religion" or a rigid dogmatism will not easily "enter empathetically into the spontaneity and boundary-shattering milieu of the early church." In *Transformation*, 2, Wink also warns that biblical scholarship often ignores what the authors themselves cared about. On the need to read documents sympathetically to appreciate their message, see Vermes, *Jesus and Judaism*, 63.

86. Padgett, "Advice," 296.

87. See Achtemeier, *Miracle Tradition*, 137, and the sources he notes. Remus, *Healer*, 112–13, observes (citing one anthropological study) that traditional healers can be effective if a society believes in them even if the healers are skeptical themselves. One might naturally expect a healer's confidence to, if anything, augment this effect.

Noted historian of Greco-Roman antiquity Ramsay MacMullen warns that history proper does not pass judgment on whether ancients believed rightly or wrongly about their miracle claims; history proper simply describes those beliefs. “To doubt their account of what they saw—to doubt that [the West African prophet William Wadé] Harris, or any saint, or Jesus himself truly suspended the laws of nature—could only be theology, good or bad. To doubt that Asclepius worked miracles back then would likewise be theology.”⁸⁸

Scholars today sometimes emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity to the differences between ancient and modern medicine for avoiding ethnocentric evaluations of ancient perspectives.⁸⁹ Likewise, scholars note that taking into account the differences between our modern Western critical perceptions about miracles and those of the first century can help broaden our understanding of what appears “realistic” in a given epistemic framework.⁹⁰ I shall address numerous examples of a different cultural and philosophic understanding in later chapters.

Ancient historians’ perceptions of the paranormal events they reported is a different question from the perceptions of modern historiography, but one that is legitimate to ask. If some people are tempted to despise ancient Mediterranean historiography as significantly inferior to our own derivative genre simply because it defines its task differently than we do, we should consider our own philosophic and existential horizons: aside from the susceptibility of such a methodological bias to some scholars’ postmodern critique,⁹¹ this skeptical approach seems historically naive when elevated without argument from a working assumption to an ontological affirmation.

It is difficult for those working from a Western Enlightenment paradigm to appreciate ancient claims of paranormal events, and all the more so when such claims are attributed to supernatural causation. Yet if we are to read the Gospels and Acts sympathetically, entering imaginatively into their narrative world and understanding the presuppositions that these writers shared with their ideal audience, it will help us to find other models for reading their texts than the modern radical Enlightenment paradigm.⁹²

88. MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 24. Likewise, some sociologists of religion contend that sociologists can report their subjects’ miracle claims but cannot as sociologists rule on the possibility of the subjects’ claims of supernatural activity (Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 153; cf. 104). For further comments on Harris, see ch. 7.

89. Pilch, *Healing*, 1–4. Cf. varying cultural perceptions today of, e.g., schizophrenia (Furnham and Wong, “Comparison,” comparing British and Chinese understandings).

90. Cf. especially Anderson, Ellens, and Fowler, “Way Forward,” 249.

91. Cf. Berger, *Rumor*, 52, 120–21. Some postmodernists retain modernist antisupernaturalism while being more pluralistic on other points (a position critiqued in Licona, *Resurrection*, 567); nevertheless, postmodern approaches in general are more open to multiple factors in miracle claims than modernists were (Hoffman and Kurzenberger, “Miraculous,” 75; cf. Judge, *First Christians*, 717, for a commonality between postmodernism and the Christian tradition as against the classical tradition).

92. As Roschke, “Healing,” 471, suggests, paralleling his entering into another culture, “Do we want to observe Luke’s worldview as an outsider—as The Other—or are we willing to enter into this Word . . . ?” Cf. Wink, “Write,” 6; deSilva, “Meaning,” 4; Keener, “Comparisons.”

As Peter Berger notes, true relativism must allow for the possibility of the supernatural.⁹³ Scholars now recognize the limitations of the Enlightenment claims to pure objectivity in historiography; writers' perspectives inform their ways of sorting the data.⁹⁴ In the wake of postmodernity in the West, the collapse of traditional Western paradigms has led to the reevaluation of a number of long-held interpretations of reality.⁹⁵ Other disciplines have been through paradigm shifts; some argue that such a shift is needed in ours as well.⁹⁶ As I shall note later, readers in many cultures, perhaps especially those least trained in Western paradigms, approach early Christian reports of signs not as problems but as a model for ministry. I suspect that this wider, global Christian reading is closer to that of the early Christian authors' ideal audience than our usual Western approach is.⁹⁷

After examining the historic context of modern Western skepticism about miracles, I will sample some perspectives from other worldviews. From the conventional historiographic standpoint, the issue for the Gospels and Acts is simply whether eyewitnesses can claim such events (for which the answer must be a decisive yes) rather than resolving the nature of causation. Nevertheless, putting in context our culturally informed *interpretations* of causation is an important question of its own, which at the least helps us to read the ancient interpretations more sympathetically.

I should pause to distinguish among some terms that could be used. The usual modernist prejudice is against what is supernatural, but this way of defining the question may bias the case, since both the ancient Mediterranean worldview and many other systems of thought allow for intelligent suprahuman activity that is nevertheless *part* of the natural order.⁹⁸ "Paranormal" activity is activity that is inexplicable in terms of current knowledge of the natural order, but the label is more neutral, not requiring the presupposition that suprahuman personal entities (such as a deity) are involved; hence, it is a wider term than "suprahuman." By "suprahuman" is meant, more narrowly, the claim for divine activity or that of

93. Berger, *Rumor*, 52, 120–21.

94. With reference to historical Jesus studies, see, e.g., Dunn, *Remembered*, 27–28; cf. Wink, *Transformation*, 2–3, 30–31.

95. For postmodernism's critique of Enlightenment rationalism, see, e.g., Smith, *Postmodernism*, 59–80. Postmodernity is not the first backlash against the radical Enlightenment. The violent confusion following the French Revolution encouraged popular disillusionment concerning the overly optimistic "Age of Reason," helping to fuel the backlash of Romanticism (Cragg, *Reason*, 283–84). That intolerant despots sometimes supported the elite's Enlightenment (*ibid.*, 209–33) also reminds us that most movements have some unpleasant political contexts in their history. I am not embracing radical postmodernism nor advocating discarding the many helpful insights of the Enlightenment, but I share concerns about the Enlightenment's overconfident extremes.

96. Note the invitation in Wink, *Transformation*, 13–15; in other disciplines, see Kuhn, above.

97. See Keener, "Comparisons." For the likelihood of this approach to signs in Acts as applied to the mission of the church as a whole, see discussion in the introduction to Keener, *Acts*, ch. 15 ("Some Lukan Emphases"), sect. 6, on signs.

98. Jews and Christians allowed for beings of intermediary rank between God and humans; Greeks allowed gods and demigods, which originated at some point in time and were sometimes subordinate to a supreme deity, to nature, or to fate.

other intelligent entities as allowed for in many ancient and modern religious and ancient philosophic systems.⁹⁹ Perhaps most accurate and with the least customary baggage are expressions like “extranormal” and “extrahuman,” though even these terms have weaknesses, not least their absence from general usage. Because what is at issue today is especially encompassed in “supernatural,” however, I usually accede to that language in my discussion.

Have We Privileged a Particular Western Worldview?

Some NT scholars have already challenged the traditional critical approach as prejudiced on this point, sometimes by drawing insights from other disciplines or cultures. Charles Talbert notes that some scholars, like Gerd Lüdemann, rule out any historical core of miracle stories, because miracles are assumed not to happen.¹⁰⁰ By contrast to such approaches, some writers question whether a priori dismissal of all claims for evidence of supernatural activity is a genuinely open-minded, objective approach.¹⁰¹ As Talbert notes, the question as to whether miracles are possible reflects the understanding of possibility in one’s worldview, and “worldviews are highly resistant to disconfirmation. The materialistic worldview, represented by Lüdemann, dictates that the world was and is ruled by iron physical laws that not even God could or can bend.” This is, however, a worldview, and not an argument.¹⁰² Scholars differ in their evaluations of what is possible, evaluations that in turn shape how they evaluate the historical reliability of claims in Acts¹⁰³ and the Gospels. One philosopher warns that those who dismiss miracles yet are unwilling to offer

99. One could define the term more broadly to include any beings more intelligent or equally intelligent but more powerful than humans, physical or nonphysical, the existence of which is unproved but need not be ruled out a priori; yet this definition exceeds what is relevant for the matter under discussion.

100. Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 215; idem, *Acts*, 248–49 (cf. also the favorable assessment in Parsons, *Acts*, 52). Against Witherington and Fitzmyer, who protest that rejecting all miracles is itself uncritical, Lüdemann, *Acts*, 23, contends that “one ought not to begin with the assumption that miracles occur.” But the assumption that they do not occur is not more neutral than the belief that they do; one must test evidence. Technically, though, Lüdemann, *Acts*, 22–23, claims that he does not presuppose the rejection of miracles; only that (23) one cannot presuppose God or gods and should reject the miracle explanation unless no other is available. This limitation may effectively exclude all evidence in practice and bias the investigation (since one could always find *some* naturalistic explanation, even if it is far less plausible than suprahuman intelligent causation in some cases). Nevertheless, Lüdemann is more precise and honest about his assumptions than are many.

101. The question is well put by Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 165, a physician who claims considerable evidence for paranormal healings.

102. Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 215; on the resistance of worldviews to disconfirmation, see also Wink, “Stories,” 212; on experience of healings encouraging a new worldview, see Talbert, *Matthew*, 323. For a critique of the materialist worldview from the standpoint of modern physics, see Barr, *Physics and Faith* (e.g., 256). Reacting against the completely materialist view of the mind, see, e.g., Barr, *Physics and Faith*, 167–252, esp. 225–26; Beauregard and O’Leary, *Brain* (the latter supporting dualistic connections with a universal cosmic consciousness). One need not, however, reject a materialist view of the mind to distinguish between a material universe and a source of its structure (i.e., information content) external to it. C. S. Lewis’s *Miracles*, despite its many merits, also appears to appeal more to a Platonic worldview than to modern physics.

103. Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 216.

solid arguments need to “admit that they have a faith commitment which precludes the possibility of miracles.”¹⁰⁴

Sociologists have noted the dominant tendency to interpret reality through our learned world-constructions. David deSilva warns that scholars schooled in an antisupernaturalist approach to miracle claims who cannot critically consider their own presuppositions have trouble approaching the Gospels and Acts on their own terms.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, dialogue partners that could help them to listen better to the alternative world construction in the texts are often excluded from the conversation. Those who challenge “the world-construction from within by introducing elements from other world-constructions or innovating . . . are either understood as deceived deviants (heretics, ‘uncritical’) and so tolerated or simply expelled from the conversation which has as its ultimate function” maintaining “the world-construction.”¹⁰⁶ In sociology of religion terms, this academic intolerance functions as a sort of uncritical “fundamentalism.”¹⁰⁷ Is there not something inconsistent about (in some academic circles) stifling dissent by refusing to give alternative positions a hearing, all the while claiming to uphold academic “objectivity”?¹⁰⁸

Nearly all ancient historians report some phenomena (or at least relate others’ reports of such phenomena) that most of us would find dubious. As I have noted, no one seriously dismisses wholesale the value of these works simply because they stem from writers whose philosophic (or religious, political, or moral) perspectives differ from our own. We do not even dismiss all the accounts they relate as wonders or prodigies, whether cures in Jesus’s ministry or Roman portents that look like meteor showers. Perhaps more telling with regard to our presuppositions, what we tend to dismiss in them most readily is the credibility of those reports not easily susceptible to alternative (i.e., in our case, naturalistic) explanations. In general, our suspicions are undoubtedly well-founded, grounded as they are in a fuller understanding of scientific reality and the “ordinary” course of events than was available to our ancient counterparts.¹⁰⁹

104. Kelly, “Miracle,” 52.

105. DeSilva, “Meaning,” 4 (employing P. Berger’s approach to sociology of religion); cf. similarly Keener, “Comparisons.”

106. DeSilva, “Meaning,” 6; cf. 15.

107. *Ibid.*, 20. From a psychological perspective, a rigid “all-or-nothing mentality” is “black and white thinking,” which is dysfunctional (Pugh, “Miracle,” 80).

108. Note the warning in Wink, *Transformation*, 24, 29: modern scholarly tradition has supplanted theological dogma, yet still on an epistemology of authority by tradition.

109. Science is traditionally committed to methodological naturalism, an approach that offers useful rigor in exploring patterns of cause and effect (see comment in ch. 5). (For the cultural evolution of this approach, see Numbers, “Science”; concisely idem, “Aggressors,” 17–19. Numbers himself does not write from a theistic perspective; see “Introduction,” 5–6.) But the early Western scientists who founded most scientific disciplines as we know them conceived this objective and achieved the same practical effect from their premise of order in creation rather than denial of divine design or causation. That is, their naturalism was theistic and presupposed a different philosophic metanarrative than the paradigm dominant today. See discussion in ch. 5. (Deism was itself “a new religion”; see discussion in Spickard and Cragg, *Global History*, 242.)

Yet our current understanding of “ordinary” does not comprehensively describe reality, and before we dismiss all possibility of suprahuman intervention, we are obligated to make explicit and evaluate the presupposition on which such a wholesale dismissal would be based. If we take into account the historically conditioned presuppositions favored in antiquity, we must also consider those of modern academia. These, too, constitute a legitimate context of the discussion, and will be taken into account by subsequent interpreters of current scholarship if (as we may presume likely) the worldview of our era proves as transient as those of its predecessors have. We cannot evade being explicit concerning presuppositions informing much traditional modern historiography if we are to hear the ancient narratives sympathetically, and much less can we do so if we are to honestly examine the possibility that any ancient miracle claims could reflect genuinely suprahuman causation.

We typically ground our critique of supernatural phenomena in a modern Western worldview that we do not question, and then use those untested assumptions to posit an authoritative metanarrative or construal of reality. As children of the Western Enlightenment, many Western biblical scholars reject all reports of supernatural activity out of hand without critically examining the philosophic prejudices that we ourselves bring to the table. One philosopher warns about our tendency to deplore earlier cultures’ uncritical embrace of the assumptions of their age while congratulating “our own largely uncritical obedience to the common basic assumptions of our own.”¹¹⁰ As a specialist in global healing narratives points out, our modern Western discomfort with such narratives reflects “the disenchanting implications of the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, Cartesian mind-body dualism, and Enlightenment and Darwinian science.”¹¹¹ While some of these approaches have benefited society, many believe that it is reductionist to assume that they explain the entire sphere of reality.

Today, critiques from other cultures and Western postmodernism challenge the hegemonic assumptions of Western Enlightenment tradition. Nevertheless, some modern approaches appear to continue equating critical thinking with dismissing what is essentially other societies’ worldviews. They dismiss these views in favor of many Enlightenment traditions without even evaluating the bases for the different approach.¹¹²

110. Hart, *Delusions*, 102.

111. Brown, “Introduction,” 10.

112. Although I mention here postmodern critiques, it should be self-evident, in light of my historical methodology in this book and elsewhere, that I welcome many historic Western or Enlightenment methodological contributions. Against many articulations of postmodernity, I do affirm as valuable the goal of pursuing genuine information and its most satisfactory, coherent interpretation as objectively as possible; while this goal may not be perfectly attainable, it offers common ground for academic discussion, whereas refusal to share such a common objective can readily devolve into competing factions in which political strategy and power count more highly than free inquiry (cf. Wink, *Transformation*, 21: valuing objectivity out of respect for others). Radical postmodernism’s approach does not cohere with the goal of most professional historiography in reconstructing various kinds of past events as accurately as possible

Some critics may thus immediately dismiss out of hand challenges to examine their worldview (hence may dismiss also the secondary argument of this book), but I suspect that many of these critics do so on the basis of historically conditioned *a priori*s that they have never seriously examined and that some hold inflexibly. If those who move exclusively in circles where purportedly supernatural experiences are unknown or even ridiculed charge with bias those who take some such claims seriously, those in whose circles or cultures such occurrences are believed to occur will be no less apt to return the charge. Such an impasse of dogmatic assumptions and mutual disrespect (and sometimes unarticulated class division) undercuts any basis for cross-cultural and cross-philosophic dialogue.

Thus some sociologists whose field studies noted extensive claims of miracles, many from purported eyewitnesses, warn that their research might feel threatening to Western scholars “who live out their existence within the shelter of the academy, where everything but faculty politics operates on assumptions of rationality and empirical verifiability.”¹¹³ They suggest that, for all scholars’ talk about being willing to challenge the status quo, a real challenge to the dominant paradigms of academia would be to allow consideration of such phenomena, for which the supernatural explanation is sometimes the most “parsimonious.”¹¹⁴

Similarly, NT scholar Walter Wink, a member of the Jesus Seminar, notes that he once thought that his intellectual integrity was alienating him from the world he found in the book of Acts. In fact, he discovered, his difficulty was merely his materialist assumptions about reality.¹¹⁵ Later he observed what he believed were divine healings, incompatible with the antisupernaturalistic assumptions he had once held; these included a large uterine tumor disappearing apparently immediately after prayer.¹¹⁶ “Because of that, and many similar experiences with spiritual healing,” he concludes, “I have no difficulty believing that Jesus actually healed people, and not just of psychosomatic diseases.”¹¹⁷ Scholars who would deny the truth of his story to defend their worldview, he charges, do so “not on historical grounds, but on the basis of their” materialistic worldview.¹¹⁸

(see the summary of consensus in Licona, *Resurrection*, 70–89). By contrast, multiple cultural voices enrich options to be considered. Relevant to some discussions later in this book, cf. some Pentecostals’ embrace of the postmodern critique of Enlightenment antisupernaturalism while also critiquing aspects of postmodernism (Johns, “Healing,” 46, describing Pentecostalism as “paracritical” and liminal rather than precritical); for shared emphasis on experience, see Noel, *Hermeneutics* (esp. 146–47, 164–81).

113. Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 158. DeSilva, “Meaning,” 17, similarly complains about “armchair” professors who provide mutual support in maintaining an antisupernaturalist worldview, excluding detractors from their conversation.

114. Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 158 (following Smith, *Animals*, 109). The principle of parsimony follows Occam’s razor.

115. Wink, “Write,” 4; cf. idem, “Stories,” 214.

116. Wink, “Write,” 6.

117. Ibid. Many allow for Jesus to have cured people of psychosomatic ailments (e.g., Burkill, “Miracle”).

118. Wink, “Write,” 6. In “Worldview,” Wink challenges a reductionist materialism (20–21). His “integral worldview,” drawing on a range of thinkers, new physics, and world religions, argues for an interior and exterior aspect to everything (21); he advocates panentheism (22), and the close relation of the self to the

Wink claims that “historical research depends on analogy” to evaluate the plausibility of accounts about the past,¹¹⁹ but warns that our limited experiences can unfairly constrict the analogies with which we work. “People with an attenuated sense of what is possible will bring that conviction to the Bible and diminish it by the poverty of their own experience.”¹²⁰ Not only medical research regarding mind and body connections, he argues, but especially the new physics have expanded the range of what is now considered possible.¹²¹

Other scholars have also pointed out how cultural or other experiential limitations sometimes compromise the usefulness of the analogy argument for historiography, since history is full of apparent anomalies. Some scholars develop a story, long bantered about as an illustration for competing epistemologies, about a king of Siam. Hearing from Dutch visitors about riding horses on top of rivers that became so cold that they became hard like stone, this ruler “knew that the men were liars.”¹²² The king’s inference was a logical one based on the reality with which he was familiar; it was his expectation of a rigid uniformity in the human experience of nature that proved inaccurate.¹²³ Defenders of anomalous events thus offer the king as a warning to those who, like David Hume, would rule out extranormal phenomena based on their own limited experiences.

Hume, whose polemic against miracles offers the primary foundation for modernist antisupernaturalism, responded to such critics that “the Indian prince, who refused to believe the first relations concerning the effects of frost, reasoned justly,” rightly requiring strong testimony to contravene his uniform experience.¹²⁴

universe. Murphy, “Social Science,” 32–33, values Wink’s critique of reductionism but regards it as difficult to classify philosophically. Others also critique reductionist materialism (e.g., Blessing, “Healing,” 187).

119. The approach used by Hume, *Miracles* (e.g., 38); idem, “Miracles” (e.g., 36) and many today (cf., e.g., apparently Craffert, “Origins,” 342–43) against affirming miracles.

120. Wink, “Write,” 6.

121. Wink, “Stories,” 213.

122. McClymond, *Stranger*, 83; cf. Brown, *Miracles*, 129, applying this argument against Troeltsch. (Cf. Silviso, *Perish*, 101–2, comparing the incomprehensibility of Mexico City’s smog in rural Greenland.) Likewise, Blomberg, *Gospels*, 111, argues that the real problem is not with lack of analogies (since one from a warm region might lack analogies for ice), but with analogies to what is unhistorical, e.g., UFO sightings that have so often “turned out to be air-balloons” and other such phenomena. As I shall note, the numbers involved in UFO sightings are not easily comparable to hundreds of millions claiming to have witnessed miracles.

123. Bitzer, “Prince,” treats the history of this analogy from Locke to Hume and Richard Price. The story began with Locke’s 1690 essay on the importance of testimony (Bitzer, “Prince,” 176); Hume tried to remove it from his opponents’ arsenal but proved unsuccessful (Bitzer, “Prince,” 175). Locke treats this extraordinary event as essentially a “miracle” for the king of Siam; Hume demurs, because he treats a miracle only as a violation of nature’s laws (Bitzer, “Prince,” 179). Defending Hume, Coleman, “Probability,” 208–12, contends that he used the Indian prince (in his version) simply to show a reasonable skepticism that could nevertheless be countered by evidence, on a point more tenable than miracles. I would agree, however, with those who saw in the example reason to be open to phenomena beyond our normal experience. Meanwhile, many defenders of miracles employed this story to *weaken* the argument from experience more than Hume did, hence inadvertently working against their argument for miracles (Bitzer, “Prince,” 221).

124. Hume, *Miracles*, 29; idem, “Miracles,” 32. Hume responded to Locke the only way he could without rendering his own position more difficult to defend (Burns, *Debate*, 167).

Yet Hume's attempt to seize this argument from his opponents' arsenal fails. His very analogy (for the necessity of analogy) inadvertently concedes that human experience is not uniform and that sufficient testimony (which many philosophic critics believe already existed in his day to challenge sufficiently his position about miracles) should be allowed to challenge the uniformity of a single person's or even culture's experience.¹²⁵ The prince, who lacks experience of freezing, cannot extrapolate with certainty from his nonexperience of it,¹²⁶ and people in everyday situations cannot extrapolate from their nonexperience of potential situations of special divine significance, such as miracle claims imply.¹²⁷ One cannot inductively prove a negative without examining every possible instance, and this problem becomes increasingly precarious as the sample size grows more limited. (I turn to Hume in more detail in the following chapter and to the historiographic analogy argument, as developed especially by Troeltsch, especially in ch. 6.)

Indeed, the argument that precise analogies are necessary for plausibility might challenge contemporary scientists' affirmation of the big bang, since it is unique in some sense; nevertheless, most scientists believe that evidence is sufficient to overturn such skepticism, as many people believe that evidence is sufficient to overturn skepticism in the case of miracles.¹²⁸ Unless one works from the presupposition that miracles have not otherwise occurred, they also need not be unique events, given other defensible miracle claims; they may be merely unusual. In any case, as I note in the following chapters, the analogy argument today makes miracles more rather than less plausible.¹²⁹ That is, an argument once formulated against miracles would now, with our broader knowledge of human experience, support it. In the following chapter, I shall suggest that thinkers like Hume, alongside his hypothetical Indian prince, ought to be wise enough to accept sufficient testimony.

Conclusion

Ancient historiography includes a tradition of suspicion concerning sensational claims about extranormal phenomena, as well as (often cautious) reports of such phenomena. It was the radical Enlightenment, however, that introduced

125. See the criticism in Larmer, *Water*, 39; Earman, *Failure*, 34–35; earlier Taylor, *Hume*, 8–10. As Geisler, "Miracles," 79, warns, Hume's argument against miracles formally contends "that we should not believe in a miracle even if it happens!" Gaskin, *Philosophy*, 125, observes that Hume plays "the Indian prince" in his own essay, dismissing possible events "solely on the grounds that they do not conform to his rather imperfect grasp of what constitute laws of nature."

126. Burns, *Debate*, 227.

127. No one argues for simply embracing all claims uncritically. Many further argue for the importance of the theological or religious context for genuinely divine miracles (see discussion in the next chapter). That scholars even within the same faiths or movements sometimes vary in understanding that context suggests that the matter is complex.

128. With Geisler, "Miracles," 79; Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 102n39 (citing, e.g., Hawking and Penrose, *Space and Time*, 20, though Hawking's views have changed).

129. See, e.g., Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 310 (on healings and exorcisms).

thoroughgoing suspicion of all supernatural claims. While many scholars continue to operate with this radical Enlightenment paradigm, its dogmatism, perhaps inherited from an earlier era of religious disputes, fares poorly when evaluated from the perspectives and claims of many other cultures or a post-Enlightenment critique. The radical Enlightenment perspective on miracles has its own cultural and historical context that is not even the context of current Western scientific discovery.

In the following two chapters, I explore in somewhat more detail modern philosophic objections to miracles. As I shall note afterward, however, a global context seriously weakens the persuasive force of these traditional objections today.

Hume and the Philosophic Questions

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.
—David Hume¹

And what have we to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses, but the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of the events, which they relate? And this surely, in the eyes of all reasonable people, will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation.
—David Hume²

As I have noted, the central thrust of this book is that eyewitnesses do offer miracle reports, whatever the claims' actual explanation. The secondary and more potentially controversial point, however, is to invite consideration of potentially supranatural explanations as a legitimate explanatory option. I address that question here so that readers can keep it in mind when we begin to listen to the stories in chapters 7–12. Starting from an assumption agnostic about supernatural activity, not all the stories are most easily explained supernaturally, but some are (esp. in ch. 12). What is important to note in this chapter is that the assumption that suprahuman activity is impossible is an interpretive grid, not a demonstrated fact. Contrary to what appeared to be the case to many intellectuals one or two centuries ago, history does not support a linear evolution of all cultures toward this perspective.³ One worldview expects miracles, whereas another doubts them, and each interprets experiences and phenomena accordingly. Both worldviews, however, are equally presuppositions.⁴ Indeed, a stance critically open to the possibility of miracles allows for the most open-minded stance.⁵

1. Hume, *Miracles*, 30–31 (cf. 51); idem, "Miracles," 33.

2. Hume, *Miracles*, 44; idem, "Miracles," 40.

3. See Cladis, "Modernity"; Butler, "Theory"; cf. also Haught, *Atheism*, 58–59.

4. See Swinburne, *Miracle*, 71.

5. Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 89–90, argues that the believer who is open to but is not obligated to accept a given miracle claim has more intellectual freedom than the nonbeliever whose stance compels their rejection.

What This Chapter Will Address

In this chapter and the next one, I argue that the reigning paradigm of antisupernaturalism is only a presupposition, one that need not coercively shape our interpretation of miracle reports in later chapters. Because many readers will find the content of this chapter particularly heavy, I summarize its central thesis here. After noting that eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume's opposition to affirming miracles was not the only Enlightenment empiricist approach, I will argue that to succeed logically his approach must *presuppose* atheism or deism. That is, it is not a neutral argument, and its conclusion does not inevitably follow unless one can establish this unspoken premise.

Further, Hume defines away miracles based on a deterministic reading of natural law; this approach was hardly inevitable, as may be recognized from its contrast with the approach of most early Enlightenment scientists. More problematic, many critics today point out that the metaphysical assumptions informing Hume's argument here do not work in light of modern physics. Most important, contrary to his claim to be reasoning inductively, Hume works in a deductive circle, as scholars often note. He argues, based on "experience," that miracles do not happen, yet dismisses credible eyewitness testimony for miracles (i.e., *others'* experience) on his assumption that miracles do not happen.

The full argument of both Hume and this chapter is a bit more complex, especially since there are competing interpretations of what Hume really intended,⁶ but the above paragraph summarizes the primary points that we must cover in this chapter. I shall also suggest that today the testimonial evidence for miracles is overwhelming compared with what was available to Hume in his day; had he lived in our day, an argument based on the nonexperience of miracles would have proved much more difficult and much less persuasive to his contemporaries (and perhaps even to Hume himself).

In contrast to some elements in this book, this chapter is not a positive argument for miracles or even for the existence of extranormal phenomena. It is, rather, intended to show why scholars are not entitled to simply dismiss the possibility of supernatural causation for some extranormal experiences. Readers who are not persuaded by my argument should at least recognize that this question is currently a live debate in philosophy and that it is academically illegitimate to marginalize voices that affirm miracles simply by citing a nonexistent philosophic consensus against miracles. This warning should also apply to those who, based on antisupernatural assumptions, profess willingness to accept evidence but place the bar of proof so high that they exclude even evidence that would normally be acceptable in law or historiography.

6. As Tucker, "Miracles," 374, points out, "Parts of Hume's essay are ambiguous," weakening the value of critiques or defenses targeted toward only a single line of interpretation. Although many modern interpreters, perhaps out of respect for Hume's intellect, generously absolve him of denying in principle that any testimony could prove sufficient to render a miracle claim believable, Larmer, "Interpreting Hume," defends the traditional reading that Hume tried to argue just that.

The Nature of the Questions

A limited methodological naturalism interprets phenomena on natural terms when possible (with or without possible divine providence at work) and looks for natural causes and effects. Especially when addressing large-scale, typical phenomena in nature, this approach is immensely valuable heuristically.⁷ Many of the early modern scientists who pioneered such an approach did so while affirming Christian beliefs, contending that the Creator designed the universe to act usually in predictable ways. This valuable heuristic tool should not, however, be confused with a thoroughgoing philosophic naturalism that a priori rejects the possibility of activity reflecting suprahuman intelligent activity, including some claims about events that might be empirically verified or falsified.⁸

The issues involved in this discussion are complex and not readily resolved by any appeal to consensus.⁹ Philosophers debate the meaning of “miracle,” and Hume’s many academic critics today assail him from a range of perspectives, some of them conflicting.¹⁰ My point in this chapter is not, however, to provide a survey of contemporary philosophy but to offer challenges and alternatives to the

7. So also, e.g., Evans, *Narrative*, 159; Davies, “Preface,” xi (on Davies, see Frankenberry, *Faith*, 412–36). Thus my *Historical Jesus* largely followed consensus methodology (working from some shared common assumptions within the academy), and I have reserved more methodological questions for the present book. Although some scholars wrongly invoke methodological naturalism to exclude consideration of divine agency as irrational, it can be used to simply designate the limited sphere of inquiry (cf., e.g., O’Connor, “Science,” 17; Plantinga, “Science,” 100–101). Because we humans do not fully compartmentalize, though, continuous application of methodological naturalism does risk making metaphysical naturalism appear more plausible.

8. Earlier, Tennant, *Miracle*, 25, distinguished purely methodological “descriptionism” (excluding explanation from scientific inquiry proper—which science in fact cannot do) from a more problematic, inconsistently prescriptive role of “descriptionism” that might treat explanation as invalid. Nineteenth-century British statesman William Gladstone criticized both the constriction of science methodologically and its often inconsistently consequent universal metaphysical claims (Numbers, “Aggressors,” 35–36). Others depict the distinction in terms of methodological and metaphysical naturalism (Plantinga, “Science,” 100–101; Evans, *Narrative*, 158–61; Geivett and Habermas, “Introduction,” 12, 21; Licona, “Historicity of Resurrection,” 99n28; idem, *Resurrection*, 142n28), mere “methodological strategy” versus “ontological judgment” (Polkinghorne in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 344), or methodological versus ontological reductionism (Davies, “Preface,” xi–xii). Against reductionism, some cite the “emergentist” principle in which the complex whole is greater than the micro-level physical components (e.g., Davies, “Downward Causation,” 35–39, 50–51; Kim, “Realistic,” 189). Some would illustrate this principle, for example, by the toxic elements sodium and chlorine combining to produce table salt (Deacon, “Emergence,” 121); a fuller epistemology must examine the more complex whole and not simply, as in usual scientific data collection, constituent elements. Some other thinkers critique forms of emergentism as nonetheless monistic, employing an unproved premise (Smith, *Thinking*, 90–92).

9. The appeal to consensus tends to be overused in any case (note the warning in Poirier, “Consensus”), sometimes as an almost religious appeal to authority that conflicts with strict rationalist or empiricist epistemologies.

10. These include lengthy works such as Swinburne, *Miracle* (Macmillan, 1970); Beckwith, *Argument* (University Press of America, 1989); more recent works by major university presses such as Houston, *Miracles* (Cambridge, 1994); Johnson, *Hume* (Cornell, 1999; criticized in Fogelin, *Defense*, 32–40); Earman, *Failure* (Oxford, 2000; criticized in Fogelin, *Defense*, 40–53, esp. denying Hume’s use of the “straight rule,” also doubted in Sober, “Proposal,” 493, though he is more appreciative of Earman [ibid.]); and a large number of articles and other works, some of which I have cited below. Perhaps the most spirited attack on Hume’s approach derives from Earman, who, against the ad hominem critiques of some of his detractors,

antisupernaturalist consensus that much of modern academia has inherited from Hume. Rather than focusing on a single objection or position, I will rehearse several contemporary objections to this legacy of antisupernaturalism.¹¹

For the general purposes used here, a “miracle” may be defined as an extraordinary event with an unusual supernatural cause,¹² although this definition is problematic from a number of vantage points. It is problematic from conventional theistic perspectives because all that is natural has an ultimate supernatural cause; indeed, even aside from creation, some dramatic biblical miracles such as the parting of the sea include proximate natural causes (such as the strong east wind, Exod 14:21).¹³ It is also problematic because “extraordinary” and “unusual” (the adjectives by which I seek to adjust for the first problem) are normally a matter of degree. The relevance of these terms’ applicability in a given case may thus prove subject to much contention.¹⁴ Showing an event to be demonstrably supernatural is, as we shall see, also epistemologically problematic, especially given different observers’ varying standards for proof. (For example, at the extreme, some would

does not adhere to Christian theology (*Failure*, viii) and is not really arguing in support of miracles (note the criticism in Tucker, “Miracles,” 389). He views his task as simply exposing Hume’s poor argument.

11. Some combine elements of various conceptions (as in Kellenberger, “Miracles,” noting on 145 that violation miracles, contingency miracles, and natural miracles are coherent and together cover all miracles; Nichols, “Supernatural,” 25, also allows for more than one kind of miracle). I use the expression “antisupernaturalism” since opposition to the supernatural, rather than mere observation of and reflection on natural phenomena, is its defining and objectionable characteristic. Some so define “naturalism,” e.g., Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 5. It is important, however, to distinguish methodological from metaphysical naturalism, and the latter exists as such by negating the possibility of the supernatural, not by simply ignoring the question; thus I find “antisupernaturalism” more precise in much of the context in which I use the term.

12. Tucker, “Miracles,” 378, offers as a summary of biblical miracles “divine feats of strength,” emphasizing the conflict with polytheistic divine claims in early biblical sources. McGrew, “Argument,” 596, helpfully suggests, “a specific event that would not have happened if only the natural order had been operating” (treating “natural order” in terms of entities bound by matter).

13. For the parting of the sea conceptualized as a miracle, despite Hume’s definition, see also, e.g., Clarke, “Definition,” 53. In traditional Christian theism, God may at times suspend some laws, but God also can work through natural processes or speed them up (Nichols, “Supernatural,” e.g., 40). Nevertheless, some biblical miracles appear more as exceptions to nature’s regularity (for a range of biblical approaches, see, e.g., Kasher, “Miracles”).

14. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 50, accepts “extraordinary” (with Swinburne, *Miracle*, 1; earlier, e.g., Trench, *Miracles*, 9; Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 2) but not “intervention” (against Lewis, *Miracles*, 15), arguing that “there is no sharp separation to be made between general providence and special providence and a miracle.” Polkinghorne makes an analogy (50–51) with characteristics of physical laws that become evident only at extremely high temperatures or under other unusual circumstances, while acknowledging limits to the analogy’s utility. The distance between “extraordinary” “miracles” and “providence” might also be said to vary with respect to different miracles—the creation event (on a big bang/creation *ex nihilo* understanding) and resurrection (inaugurating a new creation) being particularly extraordinary. Some distinguish between “ordinary” miracles (natural improbabilities) and “extraordinary” miracles (natural impossibilities; Flach, *Faith*, viii); not addressing the Enlightenment, Scripture does not concern itself with such distinctions. Cf. Aquinas grading miracles according to the greatness of their witness (McInerney, *Miracles*, 146). Because God could alter nature’s usual course as easily as maintain it, theologian Samuel Clarke (1675–1729) defined miracles as unusual in contrast to God’s usual working (Daston, “Facts,” 117). Gwynne, *Action*, 23–38, notes the problems many raise with the distinction between general and special divine action but goes on to support identifying the latter.

rule out *any* evidence supporting the claim that an event is supernaturally caused. By contrast, a position of Christian faith is likely to affirm God's activity in every situation, however ordinary it appears.) Nevertheless, among the range of proposed definitions, this one can function as useful for discussion.¹⁵ I have not deemed all arguments against miracles relevant enough for my intended audience to address them here, but others have treated such objections elsewhere.¹⁶

As *events*, phenomena that people interpret as miracles can be examined scientifically and historically, debates about interpretation notwithstanding.¹⁷ Regardless of causation, a person either did recover from a disease or did not, although we quite often lack access to information that makes the initial diagnosis certain. Historians may treat events without expressing certainty about their causes; for example, though scholars do not agree whether Carloman died of natural causes or murder (on orders of his brother Charlemagne), there is little debate as to whether he died in 771 C.E.¹⁸ Likewise, NT scholars can reasonably write about Jesus as a miracle worker, as we have seen, without venturing into the more controversial questions of the character and source of his miracles.

Nevertheless, it is also customary in most disciplines to hypothesize about possible causes; the disciplines that customarily do so include history and medical science. What do we discover if we ask causal questions regarding the matters under discussion? As I shall note in chapters 13–15, estimates of probabilities vary both because of the observers' perspectives and from one case to another. If persons suffering from a particular illness normally recover particularly after rest and rehydration, we might plausibly attribute a restorative effect to purely natural factors like these. But what if a number of people recovered very quickly after prayer, and the recovery was otherwise unusual? Although supernatural explanations become more attractive, one is still not compelled to offer a supernatural explanation; psychosomatic factors could be at work. Let us say, however, that psychosomatic factors are implausible in a given sort of case (say, the person has been dead for two or three hours, so far as can be discerned from breathing and pulse, and in normal cases the brain starts dying within six minutes of such

15. For debates about the most useful definitions, see, e.g., Larmer, "Laws," 227 (an act caused by God that nature would not have produced without this); Fitzgerald, "Miracles," 48 (clearly superhuman); Mawson, "Miracles," 56 ("a sign of particular supernatural agency," involving divine volition); Mumford, "Miracles," 192–93 (a natural event with a supernatural cause, on 191 demurring from Hume, Swinburne, and others); Clarke, "Response" (emphasizing supernatural intention; cf. Fern, "Critique," 351–54); Luck, "Defense," especially 468–69 (supernatural intent is irrelevant); Clarke, "Luck" (arguing against Mumford and that Luck's answer is beside the point). For one survey of the range of definitions, see Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 94–95, esp. n. 3; idem, *Resurrection*, 134–36n3; for three extensive theistic approaches, see Larmer, *Water*, 5–15; Swinburne, "Introduction," 2–10; Purtill, "Defining Miracles." For one survey of views about miracles in the past century, see Brown, *Miracles*, 171–238 (and, with more focus specifically on Jesus's miracles, 239–77); for one survey of views about biblical miracles, see Blomberg, "Miracles," 427–37.

16. E.g., Evans, *Narrative*, 137–69.

17. With, e.g., Sider, "Methodology," 30, 33; Beckwith, "History and Miracles," 88; Habermas, *Evidence*, 25.

18. Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 123; idem, *Resurrection*, 177; Licona and Van der Watt, "Adjudication of Miracles," 2. Cf. a similar debate in antiquity about a famous general's death in Velleius Paterculus *Compendium* 2.4.6.

conditions). If a number of recoveries in such cases follow prayer for the person to return to life, and such recoveries occur far less frequently in the absence of this factor, might we not be justified in exploring further a possible relationship between the prayer and the restoration?¹⁹ In some sorts of cases, a supernatural explanation might prove the most plausible explanation available.²⁰

To exclude the possibility of some sort of suprahuman and possibly supernatural intelligent causation is to a priori rule out what may be a very plausible explanation of some evidence—yet many Western intellectuals do just this. Some would exclude any miracle claim—even if it were the public raising of a person clinically dead for several days—merely on the presupposed grounds that miracles do not happen. How does the critic know that miracles do not happen? The critic may argue, like David Hume, from the uniformity of human experience against miracles—a circular argument that excludes the evidence of the claim supposedly under consideration and other claims like it.²¹ Or the critic may contend from an atheistic standpoint that one knows that God or other suprahuman intelligences do not exist and hence cannot provide a source of supernatural phenomena. Unfortunately for that assumption, the denial of God's existence is, contrary to what some scholars suppose, not widely accepted as a straightforward premise among current philosophers of religion²² (or even among all scientists)²³ hence will hardly pass as a presupposition without argument.

19. For some kinds of events (specifically in his case Jesus's resurrection, which Hume essentially emphasizes in the guise of a raised "queen" [*Miracles*, 52], as noted in Coleman, "Probability," 219, and widely), Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 402, 414, contends that fanciful and diverse reconstructions of the disciples' psychohistory prove more complicated than the simpler and thus more parsimonious assumption that a miracle occurred. (Regarding Jesus's resurrection in Hume, cf. also discussion in Howard-Snyder, "Case," esp. 398–99, 407–11.) Theologically, Calvinists may regard prayer as a factor, yet one that God predetermined (see comments in Young, "Petitioning," 198; he also treats divine foreknowledge and human freedom as compatible, 201). Although I do not seek to arbitrate among specific theological approaches in this book (a number of scholars now cite quantum indeterminacy to support a randomly "branched" future), I do not find any logical implausibility in this proposal concerning prayer.

20. With Johnson, *Hume*, 73 (regarding Jesus's resurrection). A historian should seek the most plausible among competing hypotheses explaining an event, and God's action, like that of a human actor, should be allowed among them (Young, "Epistemology," 124–25), especially when naturalistic explanations appear inadequate. Inferring an intelligent suprahuman cause does not allow us to make predictions in the way one would in hard physics or mathematics, since persons act on a higher level of complexity than may be adequately described by current physical laws (psychology, for example, cannot predict an individual's behavior with the same measure of precision with which mathematical physics can predict that of projectiles in given conditions). Hume allows causal inferences provided we have natural analogies for them (Fosl, "Hume," 178), but this limitation again requires a nontheistic approach.

21. Precisely what Hume does in arguing against a resurrection claim that such an event "has never been observed in any age or country" (Hume, *Miracles*, 31; idem, "Miracles," 33). Cf. Giere, "Naturalism," 222: naturalism excludes deities by definition. See further the following chapters on such observations.

22. See Smith, "Metaphilosophy," 197 (quantifying publications on the subject and himself writing from a naturalistic perspective). In a 2007 Baylor survey, only 4 percent of people in the United States were atheists (with 6 to 7 percent as agnostics), and another survey suggests a figure of 1 to 6 percent in most other Western countries (Stark, *Believe*, 62, 117, 122, as cited in Licona, *Resurrection*, 159n92).

23. Salam, "Science," 93–94, even opines that *most* scientists recognize a supreme being, a "superior intelligence." Whether or not theistic scientists are a majority statistically (they may not be, although

More reasonably, the critic may argue that since there is no consensus about God's existence, a critic is excused from considering this cause.²⁴ Yet historians offer hypotheses about all sorts of causes on which there is no consensus, especially where political, ethnic, and other biases hinder the likelihood of consensus ever being achieved.²⁵ To argue that claims about divine causation belong exclusively to theologians' specialization and therefore that others need not consider it merely passes the methodological buck, forcing theologians to address the philosophy of historiography, and so forth.

But even if the historian *as* historian reasonably decides not to pronounce judgment on causation, it does not logically follow that one may say that such a historian has *disproved* divine causation or that any historical evidence has ruled out such causation. To make such a claim is entirely circular, constituting nothing more than a restatement of the presuppositions with which one began the discussion. Refusing to arbitrate the possibility of divine causation to avoid controversy merely takes a methodologically agnostic stance; to reject the possibility of divine causation, however, takes an atheistic or deistic one.²⁶ The latter (atheistic or deistic) position is not philosophically neutral.²⁷ Why is it so common in academia? Because academicians, like others, are often unconsciously shaped by the worldviews that we take over from our intellectual heritage, frequently uncritically.

they are a sizable and growing proportion, Weber, "Figure"; see esp. Ecklund, *Science*; idem, "Religion"), they cannot be said to be rare (see, e.g., many respondents in Margenau and Varghese, *Cosmos*, already noted above, and others not mentioned, including Yoshikawa, "Variables," 135; Szentágothai, "Existence," 216–17; also Frankenberry, *Faith*, passim; the observations of Davies, *Mind*, 15–16). Oursler, *Power*, 26, quotes Louis Pasteur as claiming that "a little science estranges men from God; much science leads them back to Him." As a former atheist, I smile at, without concurring with, the hyperbole of Johns Hopkins biology professor C. B. Anfinsen in "Power," 139: "I think only an idiot can be an atheist." The academic question more strictly belongs to the discipline of philosophy of religion rather than to science, but my point here is that popular perceptions of scientists being atheists lends unfair weight to the intellectual status of atheism and privileges the public pronouncements of particular scientists, like the late Carl Sagan (whose actual views appear more nuanced, though lacking an intimate understanding of Christian faith; see material in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 222–48), against the beliefs of many other scientists.

24. It is true that presuppositions will shape a historian's conclusions on the matter (Richardson, *Miracle Stories*, 126–27), but this recognition need not require relinquishing an attempt to dialogue on the issue. Martin, "Historians on Miracles," 417, understands Meier as arguing that historians ought not to decide for or against the possibility of miracles, an approach that would inadvertently close off the possibility of accepting compelling evidence for one.

25. See Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 108 (cf. also 125–26); idem, *Resurrection*, 155–56; cf. Licona and Van der Watt, "Adjudication of Miracles," 3–4. In contrast to science, history requires weighing the meaning and significance of events (Lonergan, *Method*, 179–80, 215). Marsden, *Outrageous Idea*, 6, 51–54, complains that scholars working from Marxist or other ideologies work openly from their perspectives within the academy, yet working from expressly religious convictions is far less fashionable; cf. also McGreevy, "Histories," 65.

26. Cf. the warning of Ronald Sider: regardless of personal views, historians must remain methodologically agnostic, allowing for but not requiring the possibility of miracles (Sider, "Methodology," 28).

27. See, e.g., the critique in Padgett, "Advice," 290–91; cf. also the complaint about the academy's prevailing "methodological deism" ("at best") in Bowald, *Rendering*, 18 (even denying the possibility of neutrality on 22).

Hume's Argument from Nature

As many scholars today note, antisupernaturalism is little more than a presupposition, rarely argued and rarely seeking to marshal evidence.²⁸ Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rational philosophy rather than any specific evidence is largely responsible for the usual summary dismissal of belief in supernatural phenomena in the modern academy.²⁹ As I noted in the last chapter, such an approach had some classical precedents, though these precedents were by no means common enough to persuade most of their contemporaries at that time.

More influentially than most earlier thinkers, seventeenth-century philosopher Benedict de Spinoza argued that miracles are self-contradictory, because, based on his monistic identification of God with the natural order, he viewed "laws of Nature" as identical with God or God's will.³⁰ Spinoza's approach was heavily indebted to Descartes, but whereas theism was part of Descartes' approach, Spinoza seems to have adapted Cartesian methodology in light of pantheistic conceptions of medieval Kabbala.³¹ At the same time, Spinoza's naturalistic determinism was influenced by the prominent Calvinist determinism of his seventeenth-century Dutch setting.³² Thus, on his approach, if any miracle reports are true, they must

28. E.g., Torrance, "Probability," 249–50; Kee, *Miracle*, 3–12; Gregory, "Secular Bias"; deSilva, "Meaning," 13–18; Sabourin, *Miracles*, 14; Stein, *Messiah*, 18–23; Marsden, *Outrageous Idea*, 29, 74; Nash, "Conceptual Systems," 119–23; also Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 109 (cited in Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 93; idem, *Resurrection*, 133); and the other scholars cited below. Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 372–73, note that many scholars skeptical about the Gospel tradition are on record as presupposing that miracles do not happen.

29. Benoit, *Jesus*, 1:39; see also Kee, *Miracle*, 3–12; Dembski, *Design*, 49–69. For one lengthy response to this worldview, see Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 39–90.

30. See Dembski, *Design*, 55; Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 10; Léon-Dufour, "Approches," 15; Loos, *Miracles*, 11; Dunn, *Remembered*, 29; McGrew, "Miracles" (3.1.1); cf. Zachman, "Meaning," 3–5; Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 16; Culpepper, "Problem of Miracles," 212; Keller, *Miracles*, 29–39; Rognon, "Relecture"; earlier, Trench, *Miracles*, 51–53; Bernard, "Miracle," 380; on Spinoza's approach to miracles, see also Walther, "Kritik." Spinoza's approach to the text of Scripture was far more skeptical (Popkin, "Bible Scholar," 105, 110) than biblical scholarship today. Against miracles being self-contradictory (often challenging Hume's or later formulations), see, e.g., Miller, "Miracle"; Landrum, "Miracle," 56–57. Against most, Hunter, "Spinoza," argues that Spinoza did not deny miracles' existence. Spinoza was expelled from his synagogue in 1656 (Keller, *Miracles*, 39; Brown, *Miracles*, 30–31), and certainly differed from earlier Jewish tradition; in medieval Jewish philosophy, see Kreisel, "Miracles." Maimonides (1135–1204) apparently moved from complete determinism to allowing for miracles (Langermann, "Maimonides"; for his possible influence on Newton in some other respects, see Popkin, "Comments"); later, Gersonides (1288–1344) rationalized them to a degree while retaining them as miracles (see Klein-Braslavy, "Use"). Judaism historically has emphasized both nature as a miracle and individual miracles (Birnbau, "Polemic," 441–44; though in HB, cf. Kasher, "Miracles").

31. Brown, *Miracles*, 31–32 (on Descartes, see also 25–26). Later Cartesian thinkers rather than Descartes himself advocated epistemological skepticism, a problem Descartes had intended his egocentric approach to overcome (Burns, *Debate*, 27–28). Descartes employed skepticism heuristically (Landesman, *Epistemology*, 78), not actually suspending all belief and living accordingly (80–81). Hume and logical positivists pressed disbelief further (Loneragan, *Insight*, 411). Even the character of his dualism has been exaggerated (Harrison, "Descartes").

32. Brown, *Miracles*, 32.

have naturalistic explanations not yet discovered,³³ an approach that, as we shall see, has persisted. Spinoza views miracles as self-contradictory because he believes that the divine nature is identical with natural law. Yet this assumption, for all its compatibility with the plausibility structures of some past rationalist systems, is open to critique from theological and philosophic readings of contemporary physics.³⁴

Ironically, much subsequent thought has simply assumed Spinoza's thoroughgoing naturalism while rejecting his pantheism.³⁵ To note this potential inconsistency is not to advocate a return to his pantheism; a monistic interpretation is hardly the only possible approach. For example, one might reject Spinoza's pantheism and allow for a source of information content³⁶ external to the material universe; in this case, the necessity of subordinating that intelligence's activity to natural law disappears.³⁷ Some cosmologists believe such an external source necessary

33. Ibid. Spinoza in fact appealed to biblical reports of miracles, offering naturalistic explanations for the events (ibid., 32–33).

34. Dembski, *Design*, 55, on Spinoza; on modern physics, see Meyer, "Evidence," 53–66, and sources he cites. Some respond reasonably that indeterminism addresses particles, not daily life (cf. Loos, *Miracles*, 77); but human intelligence affects more basic nature in daily life, so by analogy a superintelligent agency could do so still more (see discussion below).

35. Pantheism may have appealed especially to philosophers who came to accept the universe as infinite (cf. Heim, *Transcendent*, 34), but current physics treats it as finite. Both the major infusion of complex information and order into the big bang theory's closed system of a finite universe with a past beginning and some modern theorizing about the cosmic anthropic principle (see influentially the early work of Barrow and Tipler, *Principle*, though they would not support a traditional theistic application, e.g., appearing skeptical of an extranatural intelligence, 107) could now be used to argue against identifying Creator with creation. That is, monism's appeal is now more culturally negotiable than it once was (see, e.g., Barr, *Physics and Faith*; on the anthropic principle, 118–57). Physics' cosmology changes rapidly, though (with, e.g., Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 198), so any theological reflections grounded in it must remain tentative and ready to adapt.

36. Polkinghorne, "Chaos Theory," 251, tentatively recalls the view of "top-down interaction through active information"; cf. idem, *Reality*, 35; Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 51, on "active information" as "a causal principle"; in greater detail, see Gwynne, *Action*, 189–203, 321–22; for a broader, less theological approach, cf. "downward causation" in Davies, "Downward Causation"; Murphy, "Causation," 228–30; Chalmers, "Emergence," 248–50 (without committing to it); top-down complex causality in Ellis, "Nature," 82–92. As the whole influencing the function of the parts approach, "emergence" is not necessarily supernaturalist, but it is amenable to a theistic interpretation (Gregersen, "Emergence," esp. 280). For the analogy of divine information input into the universe, see, e.g., Peacocke, "Incarnation," 328, 330 (citing, e.g., Bowker, *Sense*; but part of Peacocke's argument also rests on a flawed historic understanding of incarnation; see esp. Hurtado, *Become God*; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ*; idem, *One God*); for the analogy of divine information input into the universe and human creative "shaping-information," see Puddefoot, "Information Theory," 312. Cf. also the analogy of a book being "caused" not only by a printing press but also by authors and publishers (invoked by Haight, *Atheism*, 85, 88–89, against monistic naturalistic explanations). Note also the emergence approach above, in which nondeterministic larger principles of complexity structure, without contradicting, the micro-level dynamics to which physics usually attends (Davies, "Preface," xii–xiii); one might compare the sense of a sentence versus that of its isolated constituent grammatical elements. The "weak" form of the emergence approach currently dominates physics, but the "strong" form may be gaining ground (Clayton, "Foundations," 27) and appears highly fruitful for scientific-theological dialogue. Theologians such as Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Barth weakened reliance on natural theology, but it has experienced a more recent resurgence, notably often among theologically oriented scientists (Roberts, "Darwin," 167–68).

37. This is not to deny the consistency of patterns that point to such intelligence, but to deny that such intelligence could act only in accordance with such patterns as if determined by them. For arguments about

to explain the structured results of the big bang.³⁸ Most theists have so far preferred this approach to its primary competitor in current cosmology, namely, the explanation of a vast number of independent universes.³⁹ Many argue that it is not only that multiple universes are not yet empirically supported⁴⁰—hence the hypothesis is not strictly scientific,⁴¹ despite that proposal's occasional pretensions as such. More important, the multiple universe proposal appears less rationally parsimonious than appeal to a single source of information content.⁴² That is, if

intelligent causation, see discussion and especially notes below. Contrast Epicurean atomic monism with the Stoic affirmation of intelligence (*logos*) structuring nature (*physis*); on this *logos*, cf., e.g., Diogenes Laertius 7.1.88, 134; Marcus Aurelius 7.9; Long, *Philosophy*, 120, 148–49. Nevertheless, early Stoics could be described as pantheistic (later, Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.7.19–20; Seneca *Nat.* 1.pref.13; 2.45.1–2; *Dial.* 7.8.4; *Ep. Lucil.* 95.52; Marcus Aurelius 4.40; Diogenes Laertius 7.1.134; 7.1.148; see further Baltzly, “Stoic Pantheism”; Klauck, *Context*, 353–54; cf. Jacqueline, “Divinity”; cf. critiques by an Epicurean in Cicero *Nat. d.* 1.10.24; 1.13.34; a nonphilosopher in Lucian *Hermot.* 81), and held to a form of monism (Gould, *Philosophy of Chrysippus*; Todd, “Monism”). Even in the modern period, viewing the existing universe as too “improbable” by chance, because its present structure is not logically necessary, is a long-standing argument (see, e.g., Sturch, “Probability,” 353–54, on 351 following Tennant); for a design argument from the early twentieth century, see, e.g., discussion in Tennant, *Theology*, 2:121–26 (along with discussion of scientific laws, 1–50; rational structure in nature, 51–77; and cosmic teleology, 78–120; others also affirmed such design, e.g., briefly Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 2). Polkinghorne in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 351, cites “chance” (as “historical contingency”) in evolution as helping with theodicy, while contending that evolution is not in all respects “blind” or without a goal. Kenneth Miller, a leading opponent of the current intelligent design movement (which he frames esp. with respect to evolution), recognizes an intelligent design in terms of “order, meaning, and purpose in existence” (Miller, “Darwin,” 81, 85–86). Some scholars’ current controversial formulations of design against forms of evolution notwithstanding (the dichotomy is not obligatory; cf., e.g., Johnson, “Neurotheology,” 220; Plantinga, “Science,” 107, 114–16; the papal commission cited in Miller, “Darwin,” 90–91; even observations about some opponents in Ruse, “Design,” 210–11), the broader conception of design in the universe remains a live issue of discussion in philosophy (for design of universal constants, see discussion in, e.g., Spitzer, *Proofs*, 45–46, 50, 57–68, 73–74).

38. See discussion in Spitzer, *Proofs*, 13–74. For ancient precedents, this modern approach seems closer to the Stoic *logos* mentioned above than to the Platonic demiurge or ideal forms. Georges Lemaître, both priest and physicist, inferred the big bang from relativity and persuaded others, including Einstein; but he distinguished the scientific theory from metaphysical interpretations of it (Krauss, “Religion,” 147–48). Most theologians envision a unique creation event. Some, like Aquinas, could reconcile an eternal universe to creation (as in Giberson and Artigas, *Oracles*, 105–6); but this approach would not be as demanding of such an explanation.

39. For such universes, cf., e.g., discussion in Barrow and Tipler, *Principle*, 472–509; cf. Leslie, *Universes*. As Spitzer, *Proofs*, 45–46, notes, the alternatives remain fine-tuning or vast numbers of universes.

40. Often noted, e.g., in Murphy, “Apologetics,” 113; Polkinghorne, “Universe,” 114; on lack of empirical support, see also Turner, “Multiverse.” See especially the argument of Gordon, “Cosmology,” emphasizing the speculative metaphysical character of the multiverse approach.

41. See Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 13, decrying it as “not science” and “a metaphysical guess” (also 45: “not a scientific argument”). Of course, any cosmological inferences diverge from strict, positivist empiricism, but there is not yet observational support for even a single other universe. Polkinghorne in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 347, notes that both alternatives (multiple universes and theistic design) are equally metaphysical.

42. Again, cf. Leslie, *Universes*; Davies, “Effectiveness,” 52–53; idem, *Mind*, 220; Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 13, 45 (citing also Stephen Hawking’s earlier critique, though Hawking has more recently used such an approach to deem the need for a Creator superfluous); Polkinghorne in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 347; Collins, “Argument,” 256–72; idem, “Hypothesis”; Folger, “Alternative.” See also Polkinghorne

one does not rule out the existence of a single intelligent source like the God of most theists, theism offers a particularly useful rational explanation. One might argue the same even on hypotheses regarding multiple universes, though theistic philosophic discussion on that subject currently remains preliminary.⁴³

Allowing for the possibility of such intelligence is by no means foreign to the modern philosophy of science. To take just two examples, Arno Penzias, whose 1964 confirmation of the big bang led to a Nobel Prize, has pondered the possibility that, based on scientific observations, a “supernatural” plan appears likelier than some bizarrely improbable coincidence.⁴⁴ Another Nobel Prize winner, John Eccles, has argued that from the big bang to evolution, there seems “a purpose in it all.”⁴⁵ I cite such discussions not to attempt to prove theism, but to suggest that approaches that presuppose the nonexistence of deity work from premises not universally shared, and hence do not genuinely engage public discourse. If with most theists one attributes the origin of the universe to divine causation, one can argue by analogy a fortiori that divine activity on a smaller scale, even in events

and Beale, *Questions*, 46 (and identically 105): “If you are allowed to posit 10^{500} other universes [the minimum necessary] to explain away otherwise inconvenient observations, you can ‘explain away’ anything, and science becomes impossible.” Gordon, “Cosmology,” 98, notes that the 10^{500} estimate could be too small. Spitzer, *Proofs*, 58, 68 (following esp. Penrose, *Mind*, 343), notes that the necessary number of nonobserved universes needed to explain the one observed universe would be represented by ten to the tenth to the one-hundred-twenty-third power; if the Occam’s razor principle of parsimony is applicable to *any* explanation, it should apply to this one (cf. Spitzer, *Proofs*, 69–70). Against the scientific tenability of Dawkins’s cosmological natural selection, see Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 106–11. McGrath, *Universe*, 124, notes problems in the multiverse hypothesis, and that it has been too eagerly adopted by some atheists in seeking to resist the suggestion of the universe’s fine-tuning. Some argue that parameters of the discussion rather than a single set of equations inform the M-theory in Hawking and Mlodinow, “Theory,” for which many solutions remain possible.

43. For the necessity of a beginning for any universe or multiverse, see discussion in Spitzer, *Proofs*, 33–43 (noting developments beyond the Hartle-Hawking model, esp. the Borde-Vilenkin-Guth Theorem); for fine-tuning in any case, cf. Gordon, “Cosmology,” 82. McGrath, *Universe*, 124, suggests that if it is correct, it could still support a theistic explanation. Rather than explaining the design of physics that permits existence, it simply defers the question by another level. Some even treat chance as a divine means of producing desired outcomes. On one side, the vaster the cosmos, the greater the odds some grant for our existence by chance; on the other, our specific location as observers and our own internal role as perceiving identities (a side of reality some worldviews neglect, though their possessors cannot) seems significant, because the odds of *us* existing as *particular* self-conscious observers become closer to infinitesimal (on self-consciousness, see, e.g., Polkinghorne, *Reality*, 41–46, 51–57). At the age of nine, I thought I could explain the universe without recourse to the hypothesis of a god, but soon realized I could not explain my identity; at thirteen, reading Plato, I thought I could formulate an explanation for my identity or significance but failed to explain the rest of the universe. Only in theism did I later find a compelling and coherent explanation for both internal and external reality.

44. Penzias, “Creation,” 78, 83; he was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1978, and at the time of this article was vice president for research at AT&T Bell Laboratories. That this remains his view is clear from Licona, “Historicity of Resurrection,” 110n82 and idem, *Resurrection*, 157n86, citing confirmation through personal correspondence from Arno Penzias (July 24, 2002). On my request for verification, Licona provided me the correspondence. Spitzer, *Proofs*, 49, lists various physicists (including Penzias, Roger Penrose, and Fred Hoyle) in support of “a designing intelligence.”

45. Eccles, “Design,” 161 (Nobel Prize in 1963).

involving the creation of new matter/energy, is *a priori* plausible.⁴⁶ But Spinoza's naturalism helped set the default approach for later naturalistic methodology and the conclusions it was designed to achieve.

Hume and the Philosophy of Science

Despite the roles of Spinoza and others, the most influential voice contributing to the long-standing modern prejudice against miracles was undoubtedly eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume (1711–76). His argument did not, however, achieve this “canonical” role immediately. Whereas the rise of critical historiography vitiated what his contemporaries viewed as his primary academic contributions (as a historian), founders of Anglophone analytic philosophy exalted Hume as one of their philosophic forebears, increasing the influence of his philosophic essays.⁴⁷

Hume's philosophic work generated far less interest in his day than it has posthumously, and even his specific work on miracles was not considered very original, being influenced by Spinoza, deists, and others.⁴⁸ In the late 1720s, perhaps thirty thousand copies of William Woolston's tract against miracles were printed and more than sixty replies by his detractors published.⁴⁹ Moreover, deism was a dominant philosophic challenge in Hume's era,⁵⁰ although not largely influential in the broader society,⁵¹ deists were the first conspicuous movement in the history of Christendom to (often) deny biblical miracles.⁵² Even a number of early deists,

46. See here especially Breggen, “Miracle Reports,” 212–376. After noting “intimations” of design in the universe's fine-tuning (212–304) and concluding that a transcendent intelligent cause is reasonable (302, 304), he defines the universe as “a miracle writ large” (317–23) and shows how this perspective “enhances the plausibility of miracles writ small” (323–74). Where evidence supports particular small-scale miracles, the hypothesis of miracle is rendered more plausible by this analogy (375, 376).

47. Tucker, “Miracles,” 374 (noting the influence of Russell and Ayer). Tucker complains (*ibid.*) that Hume's approach to miracles shares the precritical, “pre-scientific, indeed ahistorical,” approach found in his historiography.

48. Brown, *Miracles*, 79; Beckwith, *Argument*, 23; for his context on miracles, see further Earman, *Failure*, 14–20; Burns, *Debate*, esp. 9–10, 70–95.

49. Burns, *Debate*, 10. Toland's *Christianity Not Mystical* elicited more than 115 replies (Manschreck, *History*, 221).

50. On the god of deism, see Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 36–38; on deism as a new religion, see Spickard and Cragg, *Global History*, 242; for deism on miracles, see Craig, *Faith*, 128–30 (for historic Christian responses, see 132–34); Brown, *Miracles*, 47–77 (including early deism's hostility toward church and Bible, 48); Lawton, *Miracles*, 26–45; Okello, *Case*, 110–17 (critiquing it on 99–127); cf. Grenz and Olson, *Theology*, 23; for a nuanced but brief history of deism, see Brown, *Philosophy*, 74–81 (from positive early deists to the more skeptical forms, and Christian responses to the latter). Deism was incompatible with the biblical worldview, in which “God reveals Himself in history, not merely in nature” (Lawton, *Miracles*, 192). For the struggle between deism and Christianity regarding miracles, see Cragg, *Reason*, 160–67. As a parasitic faith feeding on both skepticism and orthodoxy, while attacking them, deism inevitably faltered (Brown, *Miracles*, 77). In its heyday, however, its influence far outweighed the number of its adherents (Popkin, “Deism,” 27).

51. See Nichols, *History*, 99–101, noting its primary failure was as “a substitute faith” (101).

52. Richardson, *Apologetics*, 158; on their rational religion tending to distance God apart from creation and providence, note also Smart, *Experience*, 471.

however, argued not against miracles but against their use in Christian apologetic defending special revelation, which assaulted deist premises.⁵³ Although Hume was apparently not a deist himself,⁵⁴ deism provides part of the context of thought he had to address; many of Hume's specific arguments were developed first in deism's polemic against Christian miracles.⁵⁵ Whatever his personal opinions at some points in his life, some of his arguments in this essay reflect the worldview promulgated by deism.⁵⁶

Although his style was much superior to that of his predecessors, Hume often recycled old arguments of earlier deists without modifying them to anticipate the many critiques that had already been leveled against them by their opponents.⁵⁷ Hume was thus a latecomer to the discussion, and in his day the notoriety achieved by Conyers Middleton's work, published at almost the same time as Hume's, thoroughly overshadowed that of his own essay.⁵⁸ (Some scholars believe that the polemical tone of his *Enquiry* essay was precisely an attempt to provoke attention, without which it would be as neglected as his *Treatise*.⁵⁹) Nevertheless, partly as a result of his fame in other areas, Hume is generally regarded today as the starting point for modern discussion of miracles.⁶⁰ Hume provided the basis for most Enlightenment arguments against

53. Burns, *Debate*, 70. Eighteenth-century deists, including Toland and Tindal, differed, however, from later philosophic deism (Tennant, *Miracle*, 7, 96–97; cf. Nichols, *History*, 100), and some (again including Tindal and Toland) affirmed miracles (Burns, *Debate*, 14); thus, for example, John Toland (1670–1722) found NT miracles more plausible than OT ones (Loos, *Miracles*, 13).

54. Hume disclaimed the title of deist (from a testimonial anecdote about Hume cited in Fosl, "Hume," 171, 188n23), and some of his arguments undermined not only monotheistic orthodoxies but also deism (Fosl, "Hume," 174; González, *Story*, 2:190; Heimann, "Enlightenment," 476; Manschreck, *History*, 221–22).

55. See Brown, *Miracles*, 52–53, noting that Hume was simply more reserved than deists about targeting the Gospel miracles specifically.

56. Some associate him with "attenuated deism" or a modern Epicureanism (see Brown, *Thought*, 256). In section 11 of his *Enquiry*, many argue that Hume grudgingly accepts a Creator, based on design in nature, without knowledge of such entities' personal attributes (see Weintraub, "Credibility," 373). Others suggest that Hume echoes Epicurean arguments against design, with the possibility of design being a concession (Smith, "Introduction," 51–53, 57–59, 64). While Epicureans' view of nature was more random (Lucretius *Nat.* 1.958–1115; rejecting the intelligent design that many others construed as obvious, e.g., Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 12.37; Cicero *Nat. d.* 1.9.21–22), their view of deities unknowable apart from nature (Lucretius *Nat.* 2.646–51) and unconcerned with nature (*Nat.* 2.646–51, 1090–1104; also Lucian *Indictment* 2; Sextus Empiricus *Pyr.* 3.218; cf. Furley, "Epicurus," 533; Long, *Philosophy*, 41) would be familiar.

57. Burns, *Debate*, 141. For the deists' arguments so similar to Hume's, see *ibid.*, 70–95; for the responses of their detractors, see 96–130.

58. *Ibid.*, 10 (noting Hume's embittered complaints).

59. Hume sought to achieve greater notoriety through this essay, and some (Taylor, *Hume*, 2–4, 19–20; some writers noted positively in Burns, *Debate*, 10, 140) suggest that he wrote it even to provoke attention. Many features of his essay, technically irrelevant to the logic, make sense only as polemic (Taylor, *Hume*, 22–23, emphasizing the attention-getting value on 23).

60. Williams, *Miraculous*, 19, 24; Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 39–40; Collins, *God of Miracles*, 148; cf. Keller, *Miracles*, 48–66.

apologetic use of miracle reports,⁶¹ and many modern arguments simply restate Hume's earlier claims.⁶²

"Enlightenment" thinkers did not all follow Hume, however, and his Enlightenment predecessors found nothing in empiricism that entailed his conclusions.⁶³ In contrast to Hume, his predecessor John Locke (1632–1704), "the founder of eighteenth-century empiricism," affirmed the possibility of God-wrought miracles and viewed them as compatible with reason.⁶⁴ Hume's echoes of Locke even suggest that he was dialoguing with Locke's position;⁶⁵ like some of his contemporaries, Locke appealed to biblical miracles to authenticate Christianity,⁶⁶ the very position that Hume wished to challenge. (Although their arguments are articulated in a more nuanced way today, many theistic scholars continue to appeal to miracles as evidence of divine activity.⁶⁷)

It was reaction against this increased Christian apologetic from miracles, rather than a natural development from scientists' empiricism, that led to a counteroffensive against miracle claims.⁶⁸ In fact, this movement of apologetic theology that Hume opposed was closely tied with the very movement that spawned England's

61. Houston, *Miracles*, 3; cf. Harrison, "Miracles," 508–9 (for natural philosophers' use of miracles in apologetics, see 504–8). Today Hume's view is sometimes simply taken for granted. Thus, e.g., Lüdemann, *Two Thousand Years*, 4: "those actions are unhistorical which presuppose that the laws of nature are broken"; cf. similarly Hans Küng's position in Grenz and Olson, *Theology*, 270. Theological arguments against miracles usually depend ultimately on Hume and his successors (Houston, *Miracles*, 102). Houston (210–20) cites Pannenberg's arguments for the resurrection against philosophic premises to the contrary, but notes that (220–23) because Pannenberg does not address some of Hume's arguments, Houston does so for him.

62. As pointed out by Johnson, *Hume*, 76–78, in addressing one modern restatement of Hume's case.

63. His view was eccentric among major Enlightenment thinkers of his day (Dembski, *Design*, 59).

64. Melinsky, *Miracles*, 45–47 (quote from 47; noting Locke's contrast to Spinoza on 45); Zachman, "Meaning," 5–6; Houston, *Miracles*, 33–48; Brown, *Philosophy*, 63–64; Okello, *Case*, 91–95. Locke used a cosmological argument for God's existence (Wolterstorff, "Theology and Science," 98) and even thought a good case could be made for the NT's infallibility (ibid.). Some challenge Locke's miracles argument (Mooney and Imbrosiano, "Case").

65. Houston, *Miracles*, 50; Earman, *Failure*, 14–15.

66. Burns, *Debate*, 57–69; McKenzie, "Miracles," 79; Mullin, "Bushnell," 462; Brown, *Miracles*, 42–46 (qualifying the particulars on 55). Although not supporting postbiblical miracles (Mullin, "Bushnell," 462), Locke, with some other Enlightenment thinkers, also offered strong arguments for the value of testimony (Kennedy, "Miracles," 11–14), a point from which Hume demurs (with respect to miracle claims).

67. For contemporary defenses of an appropriate use of miracles in Christian apologetics (usually as supportive, not coercively decisive, proofs), cf., e.g., Cramer, "Miracles," 137; Craig, "Review," 479–85 (i.e., they do function as evidence); Purtill, "Proofs," 50; McKenzie, "Miracles," 78–80; Jensen, "Logic," 145; Jantzen, "Miracles," 355 (miracles can make faith more rational than non-faith); Larmer, "Evidence," 55; Dennison, "Signs"; earlier, Trench, *Miracles*, 68–74. Although they are "signs" more than "proofs" (e.g., McKenzie, "Signs," 14–16), the latter element need not be excluded (cf. O'Connell, "Miracles," 53–54, citing Vatican I and II). Miracles can support theism for those who are open to the possibility (Ward, "Believing," 746), at least raising its credibility (Schlesinger, "Miracles," 232) or providing part of a theistic case within a larger theistic framework (Reppert, "Miracles"; see esp. 48–49). For how religious decision can rest on historical probability without historical certainty, see Sider, "Methodology," 34–35 (addressing Jesus's resurrection); historical epistemology by its nature involves probabilities, not mathematical certitude (O'Connell, "Miracles," 57).

68. See Burns, *Debate*, 12, 69.

scientific revolution.⁶⁹ The moderate empiricists who led that revolution were often even the evidentialist apologists against whose sort of reasoning Hume contended.⁷⁰ Thus, for example, Robert Boyle (1627–91), often known as the father of chemistry, advanced miracles as one of the major arguments for Christianity.⁷¹ Hume worked from premises that the scientific movement had repudiated; despite his ambivalence toward Pyrrhonian skepticism, for example, he “was the only major British thinker to have been deeply and directly influenced by it.”⁷²

Dartmouth professor Nancy Frankenberry points out “how seamlessly the historical titans of the scientific revolution—Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Pascal, and Newton—all devout believers to a man—could interrelate their Christian faith and their scientific discoveries.”⁷³ Skepticism arose not from empirical data or science per se but from particular philosophers. The naturalism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not deterministic and did not exclude all divine causes; the tendencies that led to an emphasis on pure mechanism “were as much political and theological as philosophical,”⁷⁴ reflecting especially the polemic between Protestant and Catholic theologians with their respective political constituencies.⁷⁵ Empiricism itself is neutral regarding God’s existence and activity, and had been used by those who supported traditional belief in miracles as well as by those who opposed it. It is thus not the basic empirical approach per se but Hume’s a priori exclusion of God as a plausible cause that drives his argument.

Early Enlightenment scientific thinkers drew from natural law very different and no less logically arguable conclusions. Thus, for example, Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, and others envisioned laws in nature “only because there had been a

69. *Ibid.*, 12, 19. Both grew in the liberal Latitudinarian movement dominant in early eighteenth-century Anglicanism (*ibid.*, 14). Burns (37–43) even argues that the Latitudinarians provided the theological and philosophic basis for the Royal Society’s scientific endeavors (against the fideism of some other contemporary Christian movements).

70. See *ibid.*, 47–69.

71. *Ibid.*, 18, 53 (cf. 51–57); MacIntosh and Anstey, “Boyle.”

72. Burns, *Debate*, 28–29 (quotation from 28; cf. 238–39, 242). This is not to question Hume’s respect for scientific thinkers like Newton; it was a respect, however, that also characterized most of Hume’s contemporaries (see Burns, *Debate*, 181).

73. Frankenberry, *Faith*, ix. The devoutness of the founders of English science is also noted by Gould, *Rocks* (as cited in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 256).

74. Daston, “Facts,” 113. Deists of this period did not so much emphasize the mechanistic worldview, which was neutral with regard to divine miracles (Burns, *Debate*, 83; cf. 247).

75. See Daston, “Facts,” 114–23. Hume sought to appeal to Protestant antipathy toward Catholic miracles and even to Protestant sentiments against transubstantiation. Scarre, “Tillotson,” 53, suggests that Hume adapted John Tillotson’s argument against transubstantiation (Hume, *Miracles*, 24), though Tillotson did not say what Hume does (Fogelin, *Defense*, 67, 89n2) and himself accepted miracle testimony (Mullin, “Bushnell,” 462, in fact, notes that Tillotson used miracles apologetically). Levine, “Belief” (esp. 154–57; cf. *idem*, *Problem*, 103–22) shows the similarity of Hume’s argument to Tillotson (despite Hume’s misrepresentation of Tillotson, to whose argument he presents his argument as similar, e.g., 126, 133; perhaps he intends only a general similarity [cf. Fogelin, *Defense*, 67]) and the failure of Hume’s argument. Some think his mention of Tillotson sarcastic (Burns, *Debate*, 138, 144); Tillotson belonged to the Latitudinarian movement (*ibid.*, 14, 40–43) that supported miracles.

Legislator,” and expressly insisted “that God was free to change them.”⁷⁶ He⁷⁷ could control natural events more readily than humans control their limbs.⁷⁸ Newton’s strictest disciples resisted deism⁷⁹ for two centuries, never doubting miracles; Newton held that “laws of nature” were “sustained by—rather than autonomous from—the continuous active power of God.”⁸⁰ Because, in contrast to deists, Newton and his followers believed that God was still active,⁸¹ their commitment to special providence in history alongside general providence in nature allowed for miracles.⁸² Miracles were excluded only when God worked through his “ordinary ‘laws,’” and among Hume’s contemporaries only deists insisted that God *always* worked through such laws.⁸³ In contrast to most of his contemporaries, Hume

76. Brooke, “Science,” 9; cf. idem, *Science*, 118. Most theists today likewise see such laws as subject to God’s will and thus adapted by him when needed (Purtill, “Defining,” 38). Boyle even resisted the language of “laws of nature” because it seemed to allow nature’s autonomy from the Creator (Sharp, “Miracles,” 11). By contrast, some nontheists dislike the conception of “laws” of nature because they believe it connotes a legislator (e.g., Harré, *Introduction*, 107, as cited in Sharp, “Miracles,” 6).

77. As with many other authors (e.g., Davies, *Mind*, 17), my use of the masculine pronoun defers to the literary convention of historic monotheistic traditions, including those in which the scientists cited above stood, rather than entering a theological debate regarding divine gender. With most theologians today, I do not regard biological gender as a category applicable to the Supreme Being.

78. Brooke, “Science,” 9. It was partly for theological reasons that Newton argued that matter was inert, in order to underline the distinction between creature and Creator (Murphy, “Apologetics,” 116). For Boyle’s views on God’s active relation to the mechanical world (though partly to keep it from collapsing, and his cosmos resembles that of the deism he rejected), see Burt, *Foundations*, 194–202; cf. also Daston, “Facts,” 122; Burns, *Debate*, 16–17, 21–24; Osler, “Revolution,” 94. It was primarily theologians seeking to undermine rival churches’ claims rather than early scientists who pioneered challenges to miracle claims (Brown, *Miracles*, 23–24).

79. A key point at which theists demur from deists is that theists insist on God’s conservation or sustenance of what God created (Quinn, “Conservation,” 50; cf. earlier Trench, *Miracles*, 7). This perspective has been articulated in various forms (e.g., Freddoso, “Aristotelianism”), including a range of involvement from a sort of continuous creation (in a moderate form, see Kvanvig and McCann, “Conservation”; disagreeing, e.g., Quinn, “Conservation,” 71) to God having established the norms of nature and merely redirecting events when needed (perhaps more common among those theologians focused on science). While philosophical theists at different points on this range would understand miracles in various ways, the entire range in principle allows for the sort of events that believers call miracles.

80. Wykstra, “Problem,” 156. For the universe’s necessary dependence on God’s will in Newton’s thought, see, e.g., Force, “Dominion,” 89, 91; idem, “Breakdown,” 146; Frankenberg, *Faith*, 105. While focusing on efficient causes, Newton explicitly embraced deity as a final cause (Osler, “Revolution,” 95). Even Spencer felt that nature’s mechanistic function required Deity to sustain it (Daston, “Facts,” 112). Others, like Descartes and Leibniz, retorted that the Creator established the principles already in nature for its continuance (Frankenberg, *Faith*, 105–6). The synthesis between science and religion effected by Newton and others (note the Royal Society from 1662 to 1741, Force, “Breakdown,” 144–51) came under increasing challenge from radical deists ca. 1720 to 1741 (Force, “Breakdown,” 143). Deists’ rationalistic approach to “law” as “an all-pervading, unconditional, immutable necessity” has long been discredited (Tennant, *Miracle*, 13).

81. Force, “Breakdown,” 146. Newton’s approach was the antithesis of deism; he rejected both the lifeless mechanical universe and the clockwork image (Davis, “Cosmology,” 115, 121). The opposite modern popular conception of Newton originated as propaganda by later, eighteenth-century French *philosophes* (121).

82. Force, “Breakdown,” 147–50; see also Frankenberg, *Faith*, ix.

83. Wykstra, “Problem,” 156.

critiqued the Newtonian synthesis of general and special providence.⁸⁴ I will give further attention below to Hume's approach to natural law and his antitheistic starting point. Excluding God or other supernatural forces from consideration leaves only nature, but this exclusion rises from a fiat of definition and is not a neutral premise.

Much of the antisupernatural empiricist case against earlier supernaturalist worldviews rested on philosophic premises that have since been abandoned in light of subsequent scientific and philosophic developments.⁸⁵ Thus, as physics professor Stephen Barr observes, a century ago physics was entirely materialistic and deterministic⁸⁶ and faulted religion for suggesting that the physical universe was not "causally closed." Unexpectedly, however, "that determinism did in fact give way in the face of new discoveries," and it was traditional religion rather than the physics of the era that made the successful prediction about the nature of the universe.⁸⁷ Science normally validates theories based on successful predictions. Not surprisingly, then, theism has become a more respected explanation among many physicists and cosmologists.⁸⁸ This observation is not intended to imply that there is or can be absolute or permanent consensus on all details of cosmology,

84. Force, "Breakdown," 151–56. Hume attacked both general (152–53) and special (153–56) providence.

85. Williams, *Miraculous*, 137–57, 205. He offers a philosophic challenge to antisupernaturalism (158–202). Williams himself uses "magnetism" and spiritist phenomena to insist on the inadequacy of materialist explanations, arguing that the evidence is cumulatively compelling (54–131, esp. 82–83, 131); I find such positive arguments less compelling, however, than his challenge to antisupernaturalism as a mere a priori.

86. Meanwhile, those who affirmed determinism rarely considered their views determined (Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 42–43). Against deterministic approaches, see, e.g., Barrow and Tipler, *Principle*, 138–39. At most, fundamental laws might be determined (Loewer, "Determinism," 335–36).

87. Barr, *Physics and Faith*, 253. The claims that the universe is finite and had a beginning fall into the same category (against earlier naturalism's predictions); cf., e.g., Collins, *Language of God*, 66–84 (note that Collins's synthesis of science and faith is widely respected in the scientific community; Ecklund, *Science*, 46–47); Ramm, *View*, 104–7. The success or failure of predictions is important in scientific testing and revision of hypotheses. On an uncritical bias toward materialism in many traditional circles, see, e.g., Beauregard and O'Leary, *Brain*, 93–94 (though there appear to be problems with their approach as well); Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 78–82; cf. Peat, "Science"; a "moderate" "physicalism" in McDermid, "Miracles" (rejecting complete causal closure in the physical realm). On an approach other than pure naturalism and blind chance in origin-of-life issues, though with different views of life formation after the first functioning organism, see, e.g., careful discussions in Behe, *Box* (e.g., 26–48, 168–69, 185–231); Templeton, "Introduction," 12–20; Rana and Ross, *Origins* (though cf. the caution for these approaches in Collins, *Language of God*, 92–93); more modestly, McGrath, *Universe*, 127–42; briefly, Roth, "Piling," 199; for cosmic design arguments' role in converting a leading philosophic atheist to deism, see Flew, *God*, 95–154 (concerns about the challenges of the new cosmological consensus to conventional atheism already seem evident in, e.g., Flew, "Response," 241). Many scientists concur (e.g., Becker, "Laws"). Rothschild, "Emergence in Biology," 161–64, suggests that many unresolved biological questions, such as the origin of self-replication or of the cell, might be explained by emergence. But note further discussion below.

88. See, e.g., the shift in thinking of Fred Hoyle in Gingerich, "Scientist," 24–25; Davies, "Effectiveness," 48–49 (for his unusual advocacy of panspermia, see Herrick, *Mythologies*, 226–29). Some were already arguing for such a shift, perhaps overoptimistically, more than a century ago (e.g., Wright, "Miracles," 186–87, envisioning the "spiritual" as a ground for the physical).

but to argue that one should not simply presuppose atheism and a priori rule out theistic readings of the evidence, such as appear later in this book.⁸⁹

Natural philosophers working from the perspectives of contemporary physics, unbound from determinism, typically emphasize freedom over strict causality.⁹⁰ What this should mean, however, is that the traditional deist compromise with a mechanistic universe is no longer necessary, if it ever was;⁹¹ if a Creator exists, there is no reason to argue against divine intervention, or, in less problematic language, activity as an agent. One's starting premises about atheism, deism, or theism will therefore shape one's conclusions.

Does Science Pronounce on Theology?

Those today who claim that science or historiography denies the possibility of miracles are repeating not scientific observations but philosophic premises stemming from Hume.⁹² Many repeat his eighteenth-century arguments without recognizing how weak they sound if one rereads them from the standpoint of what we know today.⁹³ Examining the philosophic underpinnings of these modern assumptions is important, since those who reject the possibility of miracles often assume that they are working on the basis of scientific discovery, when in fact the issue is one of the *philosophy* of science rather than empirical data per se.⁹⁴ While

89. Thus new theories and arguments regularly arise; while the mere existence of a counterargument does not necessarily make it plausible, I must concede that this is not my discipline, and it is much easier to appeal to respect for specifically theistic or deistic explanations in physical cosmology than in biological sciences. Problems in the latter case may arise partly because some (albeit not all) theists have unnecessarily framed their biological arguments as against evolution as broadly defined, when only an inflexibly and always purposeless evolution is necessarily problematic for conventional theism (cf. e.g., Plantinga, "Science," 107, 114–16, 121). Problems may also arise partly because many interpreters want a theistic explanation to organize all details (e.g., "junk DNA" and harmful mutations) rather than simply particular extraordinary outcomes (e.g., human mathematical reasoning); yet many interpreters find God even in Scripture managing or arranging for particular outcomes rather than directly scripting all details of even human existence (e.g., few would argue that God directly scripts sin). In any case, a minimal conclusion is all that is necessary: while definitions of consensus change, this observation no more demands atheism than theism. Even a philosophic stalemate should be sufficient to invite hearers to consider specific *evidence* offered in particular historical cases (some of which appears later in this book and elsewhere).

90. E.g., Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 31–34, 42–43; cf. Davies, "Downward Causation," 46–47. It should be noted, however, that many theological uses of quantum physics (from supporting free will to supporting Buddhism) read too much into the theory (see Thurs, "Quantum Physics").

91. On the implications for theology of strict determinism's demise, see Gwynne, *Action*, 205–21, 322. Even for Newton and the Newtonians, a mechanistic universe in general was compatible with the Creator's altering that mechanism where useful, allowing for past and (rarely) present miracles (Force, "Breakdown," 146).

92. Houston, *Miracles*, 4.

93. For some of Hume's own admissions of weakness in the logic of his philosophy, see Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 19–21; for one harsh attack on Hume's logic today, see Earman, *Failure*. For Hume's argument in its historical context, see, e.g., Schulz, "Ende" (critiquing Hume).

94. On the heavy reliance on interpretive structures as well as data in the common practice of science, see, e.g., Kuhn, *Structure*; Popper, *Myth of Framework*. For example, questions like the meaning and purpose of the universe are often seen as philosophic questions rather than simply matters of data (a view noted in Russell, "T = 0," 209; cf. *ibid.*, 221); "meaning" (in the sense of organized, complex information) "is

the scientific method accumulates information, its approach is ideally supposed to involve experimenting with new conjectures rather than defending old ones. Science per se is not closed to exploring different explanatory models,⁹⁵ and the possibility of supernatural causation is a question of interpretation as well as of data.

Scientists are experts about the *normal* happenings of nature, but when asking whether something outside the norm happens, they no longer speak as scientists per se, because how to address anomalies or metanormal phenomena is a philosophic question.⁹⁶ Thus, for example, one scientist who rejects miracles acknowledges that his reasons are essentially theological rather than scientific: he concedes that a God *could* “break his own laws,” but this scientist is “repelled by the idea” that God would do so as special revelation in history.⁹⁷ (Apart from his subjective or perhaps culturally formed sense, he offers no reasons why this idea should seem repulsive.) To state the matter somewhat differently, the question of whether there can be exceptions to natural law “is,” as Houston puts it, “a philosophical rather than a narrowly scientific issue.”⁹⁸ Some suggest that the belief of a number of scientists (the proportion varying from one field to another) in an active deity illustrates well enough that the question need not be viewed as strictly one of science per se.⁹⁹

Science as science involves repeatable events, so it normally cannot as science pronounce judgment on specific, unique¹⁰⁰ events in history, such as many

distributed over systems,” so that no element is “self-interpreting” (Puddefoot, “Information Theory,” 301; on “meaning-information,” see further 304–5, 309–11). Though human intellect and moral theory might appear irreconcilable with amoral physical reality, interface may be possible at a more complex level of exploration (cf. Graham, “Materialism”).

95. See Popper, *Myth of Framework*, 201–2; cf. idem, *Conjectures*, 33–65.

96. Cf. idem, *Myth of Framework*, 71–72, who complains about scientific specialists trained only at the technical level rather than to think about larger questions (cf. earlier Wright, *Miracle*, 124, on the limits of science’s descriptive role). At the same time, I suspect that scientists themselves can hardly be faulted for this situation: I suspect that in science even more than in my own discipline, the multiplication of knowledge makes adequate mastery even of one’s “specialization” difficult. Cf. Kuhn, *Structure*, 64: “professionalization leads . . . to an immense restriction of the scientist’s vision and to a considerable resistance to paradigm change.” Specialization allows for immense accumulation of particular knowledge, but its restricted vision allows forms of (and arguments for) knowledge to fall between the cracks of specialties (cf. Taylor, *Hume*, 52–53).

97. Mott, “Science,” 66, acknowledging that science itself does not directly inform his preference.

98. Houston, *Miracles*, 123. On the respective domains of science and philosophy here, cf. also Flew, *God*, 89–90. William Paley rightly responded to Hume that “any argument of miracles being ‘contrary to general experience’ is but a begging of the question” (summarized in Melinsky, *Miracles*, 50, though Melinsky himself is skeptical of most of Paley’s position on 52). Wolterstorff, “Theology and Science,” 99, suggests that most serious conflicts between “science” and “religion” arise from “control beliefs,” the convictions determining “*the sorts of theories that we will find acceptable*” (cf. also Murphy, “Apologetics,” 115–17).

99. Cf. Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 15. I do not mean that the proportion or presence of a view’s adherents functions as a criterion of truth (diverse perspectives also exist among philosophers of science, where the question of a deity’s activity is more at home than in science per se); nor do I deny that scientists on average hold theistic views less often than the general population. My point here is that application of the scientific method is not impaired by belief that there are exceptions to the expectations of pure naturalism.

100. Cf. Polkinghorne in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 344. Technically miracles are not unique in kind if other miracles occur; they are unique, however, in the sense in which given actions of a human person

define miracles to be.¹⁰¹ Among past events, the big bang¹⁰² and current observations of past events in the history of the universe are exceptions, but these are large-scale events rather than the less predictable details of history and human life.¹⁰³ Thus the questions that students of nature ask differ from those asked by historians investigating particular events involving intelligent (usually human) causation,¹⁰⁴ and those of philosophers who address logical possibilities. Since science works inductively from details to larger patterns, it looks for larger patterns and cannot address single anomalies like miracles.¹⁰⁵ In principle, examination of enough miracles could produce some discernible patterns as well.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, such patterns could not be scientifically formulated if the supernatural actor is a personal being;¹⁰⁷ personal agents operate on a higher and less predictable¹⁰⁸ level of complexity than mathematical predictability in the basic principles of physics.

Few scholars are more qualified to articulate this distinction between scientific and theological approaches to the discussion of miracles than Sir John Polkinghorne. An Anglican priest, he is also former professor of mathematical

are unique: potentially recurrent, but not repeatable in the sense of predictable. That is the stuff of history and psychology; it is not the stuff of physics or biology.

101. Charlesworth, "Resurrection," 170; Ward, "Believing," 746–47; Polkinghorne, *Physics*, 34–35; Gorsuch, "Limits," 284; cf. Ramsey, "Miracles," 8.

102. See Tucker, *Knowledge*, 244.

103. Some question whether cosmological questions like the big bang are strictly scientific (Segre, "Origin," 109); technically they involve significant interpretation, but whether one regards them as scientific depends on how one defines science (an observation relevant to our discussion). Like history, paleontology addresses nonrepeatable events based on other kinds of evidence and analogy (cf. Polkinghorne, *Physics*, 9).

104. Human agents' options are constrained by physics and biology, but within their constraints operate on a higher and less predictable level of complexity than the general patterns of physics and biology. If one avers the existence of an ultimate Creator and/or infinite being, that being would not be subject to natural "law," and could constitute a far more "free" agent of intelligent causation than humans are. Even if the mind is wholly dependent on the brain, its states cannot be predicted as more than probabilities (Margenau, "Laws," 59–60); still less ought we suppose an intelligence not dependent on nature to be determined by it.

105. Wills, "Miracles," 144; cf. Gorsuch, "Limits," 284. Pure science is inductive and thus does not rule on metaphysical possibilities (Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 69; cf. Ellens, "God and Science," 5); it may extrapolate from known cases or work deductively from mathematical principles, but neither excludes the possibility of specific divine action.

106. So Wills, "Miracles," 144. Patterns might be discerned at least in the sense that one notes miracles more in some circumstances than others.

107. Note this observation in Ward, "Believing," 747.

108. Thus historiography, focused on persons, treats specific events more than laws that are universally applicable under particular conditions (Popper, *Historicism*, 143). Among empiricists, the greater difficulty of establishing "laws" regarding human behavior predicting individuals' behavior (vis-à-vis "nature") was already recognized by Locke (Burns, *Debate*, 63). Wigner, "Relativity," 277–78, suggests that "life," unlike the rest of the universe, has not yet been readily explained in terms of basic principles of physics (for the advanced, organized complexity in biological systems, see, e.g., Davies, *Mind*, 138). Human intelligence would be even less predictable, a feature common in biblical claims of God's extranatural activity is God's self-revelation (hence a particular kind a theological context), e.g., attesting Christ or his message in contexts lacking sufficient insight about him. See earlier Mozley, *Lectures*, 129–30: various orders of existence (matter, vegetation, animals, and humans) operate with increasing laws of complexity, and there is no reason to exclude a still higher, divine sphere beyond our own level of direct cognizance.

physics at Cambridge, president of Queens' College at Cambridge, and 2002 recipient of the Templeton Prize. Because the Christian notion of miracle by definition involves divine causation, it is, he argues, a theological rather than "primarily scientific" issue. "Science simply tells us that these events are against normal expectation. We knew this at the start. Science cannot exclude the possibility that, on particular occasions, God does particular, unprecedented things. After all, God is the ordainer of the laws of nature, not someone who is subject to them." God is consistent with the patterns that God established in nature, but "consistency is not the same as dreary uniformity. In unprecedented circumstances, God can do unexpected things."¹⁰⁹ The "unexpected things" are not the predictable stuff of science, but neither are they inimical to the normal, predictable stuff of science.¹¹⁰

As Polkinghorne and others also note, theistic religion and science do overlap in interests, but they often ask different questions.¹¹¹ As suggested earlier, this difference does not mean that questions of causation become illegitimate when the causes might be intelligent ones, whether in history (e.g., conquests or inven-

109. Polkinghorne, *Quarks*, 100 (I am grateful to Michael Licona for bringing this reference to my attention); similarly, Polkinghorne, *Way*, 56; idem, *Physics*, 34; the quotation in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 363. On God's freedom from laws he created, see, e.g., Helm, "Miraculous," 93 (against Leibniz). There is no inconsistency in arguing that God both works through the ordinary course of nature and sometimes alters it for special reasons, or works through it in specially communicative ways (cf. Alston, "Action," 60–61, on miracles), any more than it is inconsistent for other intelligent agents to intervene selectively. In Scripture itself, God is active not only in "ordinary" ways (cf. discussion in Collins, *God of Miracles*, 107–19) but also in extraordinary ones (cf. 87–106, on "special divine action"). Nearly a century ago, F. R. Tennant of Cambridge noted that even human individuality can appear like "uniformity" because "statistical averages have constancy," and that "uniformity" may thus be "approximate and non-mechanical" (*Miracle*, 103).

110. See the interpretation of a 1989 statement of Stephen Hawking in Giberson and Artigas, *Oracles*, 103–4: Hawking acknowledges the possibility of God acting in ways beyond scientific laws, but his own work as a scientist can address only those ways that can be "described by scientific laws" (this seems to differ from the perspective in the 1986 interview summarized on 104–5; more recently, he has deemed a Creator superfluous). More generally, note the observations in Giberson and Artigas, *Oracles*, 229–32 (distinguishing philosophic naturalism from science per se), and the analogy on 233–34: an ichthyologist might insist that sea creatures are always at least two inches long, because that is what he always catches. When a critic points out that the ichthyologist's "net is not adapted to catch" any smaller creatures, the ichthyologist might insist that anything smaller is outside consensus methodology as defined by the net, hence is unverifiable metaphysics. The problem is not lack of evidence but insistence on a methodology not suited to recover the relevant evidence. Giberson and Artigas, *Oracles*, primarily address renowned scientists who pronounce on metaphysical questions, generally without the requisite specifically philosophic competence to make such pronouncements.

111. See further, e.g., Polkinghorne, *Belief*; idem, *Faith*; idem, *Quarks*; also cf. Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 8 (science dealing with how, theology dealing with why; cf. Phillips, "Science"; Schawlow, "Why"; Bernasek, "Mechanism," 149–50). Science proper addresses one restricted area of knowledge, whereas theology as an "integrating discipline . . . sets the results of other human enquiry within the most profound and comprehensive matrix of understanding" (Polkinghorne, "Origin," 87), at least ideally (many generalists have weaknesses too, since they may lack the specialists' understanding of relevant disciplines). The biblical tradition and science both affirm the natural order, but whereas science analyzes its data, theistic perspectives explore what can be inferred from the data about nature's creator (McGrath, *Dialogue*, 208–9; idem, *Science and Religion*, 53–54). On the dialogue between and integration of faith and science, cf. also Padgett, "Advice," 300–307.

tions) or medical science (e.g., stab wounds or a child's bruises). It does mean that competence in handling empirical data does not automatically translate into logical competence in applying the data to questions to which one is unaccustomed to asking. Because science's competence addresses physical rather than supernatural causes does not mean that it must declare the latter nonexistent,¹¹² unless one simply assumes that the specifically methodological exclusion of supernatural causes reflects certain knowledge that there are no such causes. Many well-known scientists, in fact, have treated science and religion as complementary, both being valuable. Among them are Albert Einstein, Max Planck, and Werner Heisenberg, although their specific approaches vary.¹¹³

Hume, Violations of Natural Law, and Theism

Many philosophers today, though writing from various perspectives, challenge Hume's argument regarding natural law. For example, J. Houston, in a recent Cambridge monograph, challenges at length Hume's claim "that the evidence for the relevant law(s) of nature is . . . undeniably relevant to an assessment of the probability" of alleged miracles.¹¹⁴ Oxford philosopher Richard Swinburne also argues against Hume:

If there is no God, then the laws of nature are the ultimate determinants of what happens. But if there is a God, then whether and for how long and under what circumstances laws of nature operate depend on God. Any evidence that there is a God, and, in particular, evidence that there is a God of a kind who might be expected to intervene occasionally in the natural order will be evidence supporting historical evidence that he has done so.¹¹⁵

112. Ward, "Believing," 744.

113. Varghese, "Introduction," 1 (citing each; he also lists Stephen Hawking, but Hawking has now deemed the idea of a Creator superfluous). See also other science and mathematics professors in the same work, e.g., Margenau, "Laws," 57 (Emeritus Eugene Higgins Professor of Physics and Natural Philosophy, Yale); Becker, "Laws" (MIT); Favre, "Action" (Université d'Aix-Marseill); Josephson, "Conflict" (Nobel Prize in physics, 1973); Salam, "Science" (Nobel Prize in physics, 1979); Naumann, "Religion," 71 (Princeton); Russell, "Difficulty," 89–90 (University of Southern California); Schawlow, "Why" (Stanford); Smith, "Universe," 111–12 (University of Oregon); Thirring, "Guidance" (University of Vienna); Townes, "Question" (Berkeley); Uhlig, "Origin" (MIT); Bernasek, "Mechanism" (Princeton); Emmel, "Process" (University of Florida, Gainesville); Gautheret, "Spirit," 174–75 (president of the Academy of Sciences, Paris, 1979–80); see the extensive survey in Frankenberry, *Faith* (e.g., Einstein in 157–59, 164–68). Many view this deity as an "intelligence," sometimes demurring from a view they attribute to "the clergy," of "God as an old man with a white beard" (Little, "Planned," 55; cf. more modestly Bernasek, "Mechanism," 151; Watt, "Evidence," 224), a view not to my knowledge promoted in any of our seminaries.

114. Houston, *Miracles*, 133 (developed on 133–50). Hume's claim here by definition excludes miracles (or at least the probability of them) held to contravene such laws; he thus uses a definition to fix the argument so that miracles cannot happen (or at least cannot be probably believed to happen).

115. Swinburne, "Evidence," 198 (adding that even human creatures of habit break their regularity under some circumstances). It is beyond my purview at this point to argue for a benevolent deity, but some could utilize arguments from physicists for the "anthropic" principle (see data in Barrow and Tipler, *Principle*, 288–575 passim; Barr, *Physics and Faith*, 118–57) to suggest this. (More basically, the

Most natural laws by definition assume a closed system; they make normal predictions but do not claim to account for influences outside the system in question.¹¹⁶

No one who believes in historic monotheistic understandings of God would deny the possibility of God influencing the system of nature;¹¹⁷ such a denial must be predicated on a prior denial of this sort of God. Yet as one philosopher observes, Hume appears to have tried to persuade readers to stop believing in miracles without the courtesy of first seeking to dissuade them of their theism.¹¹⁸ His rhetoric thus works better than his logic.¹¹⁹ No less a critic than John Stuart Mill regarded the fruit of Hume's essay as trivial: all that Hume accomplished was to show that "if we do not already believe in supernatural agencies, no miracles can prove to us their existence."¹²⁰ Some dispute whether Hume accomplished even this much.

Natural law is a classical concept (see appendix D), but Enlightenment thinkers developed it in some distinctive ways.¹²¹ Hume regarded miracles as a violation of

universe appears as "biocentric"; see, e.g., Davies, *Mind*, 198–200 [though he gives humans a special place, 232].) Barrow and Tipler present the data from an anthropocentric teleological perspective, which can be and has long been used theistically (see Tennant, *Theology*, 2:113–15). Though not the approach of Barrow and Tipler, many would argue that a design perspective's infinite designer before and outside the time-space universe better explains design than an explanation predicated solely on natural entities' currently finite and evolving intelligence. A monotheistic reading of the evidence is now one among several accepted readings (see, e.g., Rolston, "Science," 63), and many support a contemporary "design" argument (see, e.g., Murphy, "Evidence of Design"; summary in Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 204–6; from an earlier twentieth-century theologian, e.g., Ramm, *View*, 99–104). For physics' "fine-tuning," see, e.g., Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 13, 44–45, 99–116; McGrath, *Universe*, especially 111–26 (for the fine-tuning of chemistry necessary for biology to function, 127–42). Some treat the laws of physics as something like Plato's ideal forms (Davies, *Mind*, 73–92). For affirmations of the relevance of the anthropic principle to the question of God or suggestions of divine design in physics, see also, e.g., Margenau, "Laws," 59; Varghese, "Introduction," 20–23; Kistiakowsky, "Order"; Penzias, "Creation," 82–83; Mott, "Science," 65; Eccles, "Design," 161–62; cf. Freeman Dyson's 2000 Templeton Speech (in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 381); for physics and discussion of creation *ex nihilo*, see, e.g., Stoeger, "Origin."

116. Alston, "Action," 56. Thus knowledge of how nature normally works tells us nothing about how events might occur if a supernatural entity were to intervene (Otte, "Treatment," 155–56; Collins, *God of Miracles*, 148).

117. If "miracles" by definition have deity as their "proximate cause," they involve no causal chain incompatible with nature's normal pattern (Gilman, "Miracles," 480–81). For Hume's false logic here, see also Gaskin, *Philosophy*, 121.

118. The conclusion of Burns, *Debate*, 246 (noting Hume's avoidance of the issue in the first part of his essay, 245). People of his status, unlike some others, had little to fear in his day for making such a prior argument, but it may not have persuaded as many, and it is not clear that Hume himself would have wished to claim so much.

119. Despite Hume's complaint about believers in miracles preferring eloquence to reason; *Miracles*, 36.

120. Mill, *Logic*, book 3, ch. 25 (as cited in Burns, *Debate*, 244; Kelly, "Miracle," 50).

121. Sharp, "Miracles," 4, notes that pre-Enlightenment "natural law" addressed mostly justice and morality. While this summary is somewhat too narrow, it correctly reflects the serious difference when the concept was transferred to Newton's mechanistic principles.

natural law,¹²² in contrast to how some earlier thinkers like Augustine,¹²³ Aquinas,¹²⁴ and other theorists traditionally conceptualized them. Miracles might *appear* contrary to nature, Augustine concedes, but they do not appear so for God; “for him ‘nature’ is what he does.”¹²⁵ Aquinas recognized that some miracles performed what was impossible in nature but that others accomplished what nature could yet in supernatural ways; he treated the result of awe as an essential criterion for miracles.¹²⁶ In historic Christian theology, miracles need not contradict natural law, and even when they do, such contradiction is peripheral to their primary character as signs of divine grace.¹²⁷ For Hume to define earlier miracle claims in terms of natural law imposed anachronistic categories on them, since the idea of immutable natural laws was a recent innovation.¹²⁸ Until the sixteenth century or later, miracles were not defined with regard to natural law.¹²⁹ Indeed, Isaac

122. Houston, *Miracles*, 103. Hume shared much of this definition with some of his contemporaries, like deist Ethan Allen (Fosl, “Hume,” 177); cf. John Locke, who accepted miracles but treated them as “contrary to the established course of nature” (Daston, “Facts,” 117). Technically, sometimes his argument involves generalized claims *entailed* by laws of nature rather than such laws themselves (Fosl, “Hume,” 180). While “violation” is the issue at hand, Hume’s essay in fact plays on inconsistent definitions of “miracle” (Taylor, *Hume*, 7, complaining on 11 that he advances his argument only “by the illegitimate device of changing a fundamental definition” in the course of it).

123. Houston, *Miracles*, 104, notes that Augustine and many others spoke of miracles as *above* rather than *against* nature; Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 47, views Augustine treating some miracles “as a kind of accelerated version of the natural”; see also and in some detail Lacey, *Nature*, 71–91 (esp. 84–85); Pannenberg, “Concept”; Ward, “Believing,” 742; Okello, *Case*, 48–52; Gousmett, “Miracle”; Slupic, “Interpretation,” 519; Hardon, “Concept,” 230–31 (God acting according to nature as he established it, with miracles not contradicting his way of working); Richardson, *Apologetics*, 154; Culpepper, “Problem of Miracles,” 215–16; Clark, “Miracles and Law,” 25; Gounelle, “Théologien”; Smith, *Thinking*, 104–5. Nature was miraculous, so the main difference between God’s universal work and his activity in creation was the effect on the observer (Harrison, “Miracles,” 495–96; cf. Lacey, *Nature*, 80–81). But Augustine defined “nature” more broadly than Hume, not simply in its observable regularity (Gwynne, *Action*, 67–68; Collins, *God of Miracles*, 40).

124. Hardon, “Concept,” 231–34 (noting that Aquinas insisted that true miracles must transcend created nature, including angels, see 231–34); Nichols, “Miracles,” 708 (“beyond nature” rather than “against” it); on Aquinas’s view of miracles, see further Brown, *Miracles*, 11–12; Harrison, “Miracles,” 497–99; Okello, *Case*, 53–56; Saler, “Supernatural,” 37, 47; at greater length, Boublik, “Finalita”; Cirillo, “Valore”; Berceville, “Létonnante.” Aquinas did occasionally employ “contra naturam,” but this was not his usual approach (Gwynne, *Action*, 183). Augustine, Aquinas, and Locke could view miracles as violations of the usual course of nature (Tennant, *Miracle*, 33–34), but not in the sense of something impossible for God or of God illegally breaking a law to which he is subject.

125. Brown, *Miracles*, 9 (citing Augustine *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 6.13.24).

126. Daston, “Facts,” 96. Aquinas graded miracles according to the greatness of their witness (McInerney, *Miracles*, 146). Cf. the distinctions noted in King-Farlow, “Insights,” 209. For Aquinas, preternatural marvels (those arising from inanimate nature, angels, or demons) were distinct from divine, creative miracles (Daston, “Facts,” 97).

127. Laurentin, *Miracles*, 91. Indeed, for some, like Heim, *Transformation*, 173–99 (esp. 186–87), God always effects miracles through nature; what makes them miraculous is that they involve God’s particularly clear self-revelation (189–90).

128. Tucker, “Miracles,” 373. Indeed, rabbinic sources and Catholic theology do not connect miracles with scientific laws before the twentieth century (Tucker, “Miracles,” 377).

129. See Ward, *Miracles*, 214; Meier, “Signs,” 758; Nichols, “Supernatural,” 28–29; Tucker, “Miracles,” 373 (Tucker places this concept in the seventeenth century). Medieval authors envisioned God’s activity

Newton, some of whose approach influenced Hume,¹³⁰ did not define miracles as violations of natural law.¹³¹

Those whom Hume opposed in his essay did not view miracles as violations of natural law, and nearly all his critics protested this characterization.¹³² Why did Hume challenge a position that the objects of his criticism were not asserting? One historian of philosophy whose dissertation focused on miracles suggests that Hume intended his expressions “transgression,” “violation,” and the like as “deliberately provocative, since terms such as these are strikingly absent in the literature of the writers Hume was opposing.”¹³³ One violates a law only to which one is subject, so the language would not be consistent with theistic premises, at least until it became conventional and lost its provocative force. Some scholars suggest that he and some of his contemporaries constructed the artificial contradiction between a cosmos ruled by laws or by deity in a way that reflected “the Enlightenment political conflict between religion and science,”¹³⁴ though this conflict is more consistent with the French Enlightenment than its English cousins.¹³⁵

Even apart from the legal language, though, the image of a putative deity’s subordination to natural law is inconsistent with traditional monotheistic conceptions, excluding theists from the conversation at the outset. Thus even the language

in both nature and “miraculous deviations from or coincidences within the usual course of nature” (McFadden, “Elements,” 442). Scholastic philosophers treated “nature’s habitual custom rather than . . . nature’s inviolable law, what usually rather than what infallibly happened,” and the mediating category of the preternatural grew in the sixteenth century (Daston, “Facts,” 99). Though some were beginning to define miracles over against nature, theologian Samuel Clarke (1675–1729) recognized God’s ability to alter or maintain nature’s course at will and therefore defined miracles as unusual in contrast to God’s usual working (Daston, “Facts,” 117). John Donne (1571/2–1631) understood nature itself as God’s continuing providence (Brown, *Miracles*, 28). For alternative conceptualizations of miracles with regard to natural law, see also the concise discussion in Craig, *Faith*, 143–44.

130. Hume was very interested in Newton’s works (Force, “Interest,” 183–87) and echoed his logical principles (*ibid.*, 187–91).

131. For him all of nature was miraculous, and one distinguished special miracles by the awe they generated (though they could involve God temporarily suspending the natural laws he normally sustained; Force, “Breakdown,” 148; cf. discussion in Okello, *Case*, 88–91).

132. Burns, *Debate*, 234–37 (cited also in Gwynne, *Action*, 183–84); cf. Burns, “Hume.” The conception of natural law in that era may reflect partly a political conception of the era by means of analogy with a new emphasis on statute law (Sharp, “Miracles,” 3–4), which in turn may have influenced Calvin’s idea of God ruling the universe based on laws (Sharp, “Miracles,” 4, following science historian Mason, *History*, 173–74); the concept of miracles as violation, however, is not attributed to Calvin. Natural laws began to achieve more autonomous status through Descartes and ultimately in the deists (Sharp, “Miracles,” 4).

133. Burns, *Debate*, 236; for “transgression,” see Hume, *Miracles*, 32. Hume’s language resembles deists’ moral objections to God interrupting the natural order, but Hume rejected the metaphysical significance that rationalists typically attributed to nature’s laws (Burns, *Debate*, 236). “Contrary to” nature, by contrast, had been often used (*ibid.*, 237), though not in the sense of “violation” as if God were bound to natural “law.” Spinoza had also rejected miracles as “interruptions” of nature (cf., e.g., Brockingham, “Miracles,” 493); Hume’s “violation,” however, is more provocative.

134. Tucker, “Miracles,” 378.

135. The myth of intrinsic conflict between religion and science is especially an eighteenth-century French Enlightenment construct (Lindberg, *Beginnings*); most English scientists of the time were theists, and some were the very apologists against whom Hume reacted (Burns, *Debate*, 12, 19).

of intervention, which I sometimes adopt here for convenience's sake,¹³⁶ can be construed as presupposing mechanistic nature's independence, describing better "what the deist says God *doesn't* do than . . . what the theist says God *does* do."¹³⁷ If one wishes to be technical, then, Hume's definition here is problematic and may bias the case.¹³⁸ Some thus wonder why Hume's critics have allowed him to dictate so much of the terms of the debate.¹³⁹ Many no longer use the definition of miracle as a violation of natural law,¹⁴⁰ and others have tried to provide less problematic definitions of miracles with respect to nature.¹⁴¹

Hume's language appears to set a default expectation that allows him to claim rhetorical victory without justifying his premise. He appears to define natural law in such a way as to exclude exceptions, and "miracle" as an exception to such exceptionless law. He thus may exclude miracles *a priori* by a sleight-of-hand fiat accomplished by simply offering these two definitions!¹⁴² Yet his definitions need not be accepted, and they do not correspond with some concepts they purport to

136. One can use "intervene" for an intelligent agent adjusting a process that the agent earlier started, thereby guaranteeing the outcome; in this sense (the sense in which I use it), it need not imply lack of involvement in the process as in pure deism. Rather than specifying a particular theistic approach here I am emphasizing that miracles make sense along the entire range of theistic approaches.

137. Inwagen, "Chance," 215.

138. See, e.g., Johnson, *Hume*, 5–8 (though on 9 he grants Hume's assumption for the sake of argument, intending to refute Hume from a different angle); Larmer, *Water*, 17–30 (arguing against the conflict between miracles and the laws of nature; on 30 he suggests that God at most simply creates or annihilates that to which natural laws apply; cf. idem, "Physicalism"); Sharp, "Miracles," 1; Pannenberg, "Concept"; Fitzgerald, "Miracles," 48; Griffith, "Miracles," 35–36; Mawson, "Miracles," 33–34; Jensen, "Logic," 151–52; Ward, "Believing"; Gwynne, *Action*, 321; Collins, *God of Miracles*, 148; McGrew, "Miracles" (1.2); likewise, McGrath, "Mill" (against John Stuart Mill); Walker, "Miracles," 108 (emphasizing that supernatural causation, not violation, must be the essence of a miracle, and treating violation as incoherent); Kreeft and Tacelli, *Handbook*, 111–12; Langtry, "Miracles"; cf. perhaps Malina, "Thinking," 1203–4. Hume's approach of counting evidence favoring laws of nature against evidence favoring a miracle, as if these are mutually exclusive, is problematic (Larmer, *Water*, 41).

139. Sharp, "Miracles," 1.

140. Cf. comments in Basinger and Basinger, "Concept," 165; in theology, see, e.g., Van den Berghe, "Wonderv verhalen"; in exegesis, Neil, "Nature Miracles," 369. For one nineteenth-century protest, see Archbishop Trench in *Miracles*, 11 (Trench's criticism is also noted in Burns, *Debate*, 235).

141. Cf. Slenczka, "Schopfung," on miracles restoring rather than contravening nature; Purtill, "Proofs," 40, prefers "exception" to "violation" (and in "Defining" 37, prefers "exception" or "suspending"); B. B. Warfield preferred "extra-natural" or "super-natural" (Brown, *Miracles*, 199); John Henry Newman speaks of miracles as "inconsistent with the constitution of nature" (as cited in Brown, *Miracles*, 138); perhaps most helpfully, some call it "contrary to the *regular* course of nature" (Beckwith, "Epistemology," 87; idem, *Argument*, 7).

142. See Johnson, *Hume*, 19; Kellenberger, "Miracles," 149; Nichols, "Miracles," 704 (noting on 703 that Hume's purpose in the definition appears to have been to rule them out *a priori*); Brown, *Thought*, 243. Cf. Larmer, *Water*, 37: "Hume seems guilty of trying to decide a factual matter by definitional gymnastics." Astonishingly, modern writers occasionally take over his syllogism (e.g., Everitt, "Impossibility," even more astonishingly claiming on 349 that modern writers ignore Hume's case; cf. Wei, "Young," 337). Ahern, "Physical Impossibility," 77, doubts (against Flew) that Hume should be so construed (see more fully Ahern, "Evidential Impossibility"; also Fogelin, *Defense*, 17–19; from the perspective of Hume's historical context, cf. Burns, *Debate*, 142–75) but recognizes that eliminating miracles by definition (as many followers of Hume have done) is not a legitimate argument.

refute. Indeed, not only postbiblical historical formulations of miracles but also many biblical accounts of miracles portray God working through nature, merely in extraordinary ways. For example, the formulation of “miracle” against which Hume directs his case fails to cover many of Jesus’s works treated as “signs” or “miracles” in the Gospels.¹⁴³ Likewise, most Muslims claim that the Qur’an is a miracle but not that it violates a law of nature.¹⁴⁴

As Aviezer Tucker notes in *History and Theory*, “Hume’s definition of miracles does not encompass the most paradigmatic cases of miracles”;¹⁴⁵ most miracles in the Bible can sometimes be duplicated or imitated by human design without any violation of nature.¹⁴⁶ Likewise, science fiction is replete with violations of what we otherwise treat as natural laws, such as displacing of the speed of light as a constant, yet we do not attribute miracle tales or even magical realism to its authors.¹⁴⁷ By arguing against a conception of “miracle” that does not encompass most of the paradigmatic examples, Hume fails to offer an argument genuinely relevant to most of those examples.¹⁴⁸ At best, his critique might warn against reading *Star Trek* episodes as factual narratives, something that no mature viewer is tempted to do.¹⁴⁹

Even when it appears that God works otherwise, one would speak of violation technically only if one viewed God as subject to such laws, or “interfering” as if nature were autonomous and God did not normally act there.¹⁵⁰ If one defines miracles as involving the supernatural, this aspect of the definition must be taken

143. Boobyer, “Miracles,” 31–32; Eve, *Healer*, xvi–xvii. Hume’s definition thus disengages from real conversation partners; even modern charismatic experience expects a divinely led world primed for special divine action, not one naturally opposed to it (Smith, *Thinking*, 93, 98, 103–5). Astonishingly, Pullum, “Believe,” 137, adopts the Humean definition as the biblical one (though some of his biblical examples on 138–39 fit this definition better than most biblical miracles do).

144. Clarke, “Definition,” 51. The frequent Muslim claim that the Qur’an by itself is a sufficient attesting miracle might parallel (as a sort of historical analogy) early cessationist Protestants’ dependence on Scripture without contemporary attesting miracles in their debates with Catholics (though Muslims, unlike these Protestants, were not cessationist).

145. Tucker, “Miracles,” 375.

146. *Ibid.*, 375–76, comparing with even rocks from the sky (Josh 10:11, which also calls them “hailstones,” using a term found in Exod 9:18–34 and elsewhere) greater weapons of mass destruction available today.

147. *Ibid.*, 376 (instancing *Star Trek* and Isaac Asimov).

148. *Ibid.*, 379. Some would demur regarding some examples such as Jesus’s resurrection. Even there, however, the empty tomb and Jewish language of “resurrection” imply transformation rather than mere replacement (cf. Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 337–42); some interpreters so view the eschatological new creation more generally (e.g., Stephens, “Destroyers”; I am inclined to agree). For the connection between Jesus’s resurrection and a new creation, see, e.g., Moltmann, “Resurrection”; Wright, “Resurrection.”

149. Tucker, “Miracles,” 379.

150. Evans, *Narrative*, 144–46; Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 46; Ward, “Believing,” 746; cf. Witmer, “Doctrine”; for miracles as merely “unusual” divine activity, on a popular level, Little, *Believe*, 60, 62; *idem*, *Faith*, 119; Hawthorne, *Windows*, 103–10; Lutzer, *Miracles*, 17. Little offers a useful quote from Hawthorne, *Questions*, 55 (which is also found in Hawthorne, *Windows*, 104): “Miracles are unusual events caused by God. The laws of nature are generalizations about usual events caused by God.”

into account when defining what is naturally “impossible,”¹⁵¹ since on theistic grounds it could remain *supernaturally* possible (cf. Mark 10:27; Luke 1:37; 18:27). One could allow (with deists) that God established natural activity as a norm. Yet one could without any inconsistency also allow (against deists) that God can also act in nature in ways that differ from the norm without articulating this discretion as if it must be subject to the norm. One could view God as an agent modifying causal conditions (as agents by definition can) without “violating” natural law.¹⁵²

Natural law is, after all, merely our construct of how nature functions. If one chooses to define natural law in such a way as to make variation from it impossible, one has simply redefined words about reality rather than made an argument, and someone else could counter by redefining “miracle” as part of that reality. As one philosopher of religion puts it, “This argument commits the same sin that critics of the ontological argument for God’s existence allege infects Anselm’s attempted proof, namely, trying to decide what is true in the real world by the manner in which we define our terms.”¹⁵³

Thus, on the usual reading of Hume, he manages to define away any possibility of a miracle occurring, by defining “miracle” as a violation of natural law, yet defining “natural law” as principles that cannot be violated.¹⁵⁴ As one philosopher complains, once a miracle could be proved to occur, natural law would be redefined to accommodate this occurrence, which would thus no longer be accepted as miraculous. “The miracle seems for ever frustrated in its attempts to violate; for as soon as it imagines that it has succeeded, it finds that there was nothing there after all to violate!”¹⁵⁵ That is, Hume’s definitions assume what he claims to prove, a standard fallacy recognized in logic.

Nature versus Hume

Even if one were to grant Hume’s definition of miracle (a “violation” of natural law), not all will concede his definition of, or at least his approach to, natural law.

151. Cf. Ahern, “Physical Impossibility,” 78. Odegard, “Miracles,” 46, notes that if we define a miracle as a violation of nature, it is not incoherent if we understand it as “an instance of a kind of event which is impossible unless a god produces an instance,” a proposition one can allow hypothetically. (In practice, many miracle claims are simply extraordinarily improbable, rather than absolutely impossible, without a deity’s activity, instances that may prove mutually supportive cumulatively.) Cf. also comments on “boundary conditions,” below.

152. Young, “Petitioning,” 196; idem, “Miracles,” 465; idem, “Impossibility,” 33; Nichols, “Miracles,” 709.

153. Evans, *Narrative*, 148. A challenge to the ontological argument is that one cannot get more from a deductive argument than is inherent in its premise, and the conclusion cannot succeed without the premise (Davies, *Mind*, 188). For a summary of Anselm’s argument, see, e.g., Brown, *Philosophy*, 20–24; for Anselm’s own argument more fully, see Bush, *Readings*, 237–70. By contrast, Scarre, “Tillotson,” 63–64, treats miracles as “epistemically destabilizing,” bringing into question “the reliability of one’s perceptual processes.”

154. This, although he has supposedly arrived at the “laws” inductively, a matter I discuss further below.

155. Smart, *Philosophers*, 33.

A substantial part of Hume's argument depends on his conception of natural law,¹⁵⁶ and his perspective on natural law is now recognized as outmoded in view of more recent developments in physics.¹⁵⁷ Contemporary physics views causation in less strict terms than Newtonian physics, and its worldview involves "much more change and open potentiality."¹⁵⁸ For most thinkers, natural "laws" are merely systematized descriptions of normal activity, but under other conditions these patterns may prove subject to more complex principles.¹⁵⁹ Scientific method today normally understands laws as *describing* evidence rather than as prescriptive or comprehensive, since the latter approach would exclude the regularly discovered

156. Williams, *Miraculous*, 20. Thus Swinburne, "Violation," 78–81, is prepared to use Hume's description and then to show that such "violations" are logically possible. Clark, "Miracles and Law," 33, complains that detractors against miracles usually do not provide a clear enough definition of natural law to explain how it renders miracles impossible (though Hume on some readings simply reckons infrequency against its probability).

157. See, e.g., Pannenberg, "History," 65; Williams, *Miraculous*, 204–5; Gilman, "Miracles," 478; Griffith, "Miracles," 35 (who avers that natural law in the Humean sense might not even exist); Hunter, *Work*, 88; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:519–20; Charlesworth, "Resurrection," 170–71; idem, "Origin," 227; Blomberg, *Gospels*, 105–6 (and sources he cites); cf. Carlston, "Question," 99 (no single worldview prevails today). Cf. also the argument in Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 51 (following Larmer, *Water*, 52–56, and others). Although not framed directly against Hume but more generally against thoroughgoing naturalism, see especially Barr, *Physics and Faith*. Philosophers of science may still formulate theoretical frameworks that are "law-like" (cf., e.g., Salmon, "Explanation," 225, though emphasizing statistical explanations), but external frameworks must remain provisional. Against using modern physics to provide naturalistic explanations of miracles, see Keller, *Miracles*, 173–74.

158. Peacocke, *Creation*, 135; see also Gilman, "Miracles," 479; Davies, *Mind*, 29–30; much earlier, cf. Spurr, "Miracles," 325.

159. For laws as simply describing patterns, see, e.g., Wills, "Miracles," 139; Phillips, "Miracles," 34; Mumford, "Laws," 265–66 (differing appreciatively from Lowe, "Miracles," on this point); Lonergan, *Method*, 226; Kelly, "Miracle," 49, 55–56. Mumford, "Laws," 276–77, argues for dispositional description rather than actualist description: that is, the norm based on probability of occurrence, not a universal claim about what must always occur, regardless of other conditions. Some argue that *naturally* impossible events remain logically possible (Lowe, "Miracles," 271) provided one understands laws as descriptions of normal reality and not inviolable (Lowe, "Miracles," 273–77; cf. earlier Tennant, *Miracle*, 22–24). Such laws are not logical or mathematical necessities (deductive a prioris) but are generalizations from a finite body of observations under limited conditions (cf. Helm, "Miraculous," 91), hence their periodic revision in the face of new evidence or more complete paradigms (Sharp, "Miracles," 6). We must speak only of "laws of physics," inexact conclusions from induction needing revision (Clark, "Miracles and Law," 29–30), especially when faced with new circumstances. Quantum theory has moved much scientific description of basic natural laws from physical determinism to treating these laws as "statistical" (Swinburne, "Introduction," 3; on laws' "statistical" force, cf. also Wills, "Miracles," 141; Ward, "Believing," 746), although this description particularly involves small-scale events. Others suggest that rare violations (or exceptions) do not destroy general norms (Ward, "Believing," 743); laws apply to sorts of things without invalidating exceptions for individual cases (Mumford, "Laws," 272–73, 278, qualifying Lowe's "sortal logic"); or laws carry their own implied boundary conditions (Hoffman, "Comments," 349–50; cf. Howard-Snyder, "Case," 405–6), such as, "except for divine intervention." On the analogy of human laws, see Mavrodes, "Miracles," especially 345, though see the criticism in Hoffman, "Comments," 350–51; Mumford, "Laws," 275–76 (qualifying Lowe); before Hume, natural law for some entailed this comparison (see Daston, "Facts," 112, on Spencer). Today process theology (for one example) takes natural laws to be simply descriptions "of the average behavior" of entities, which have a range of deviation that God can employ working even "within" nature (Keller, "Power," 121–22). See Mozley's earlier criticism of Hume, below.

abundance of evidence that does not easily fit old paradigms.¹⁶⁰ Some even treat the idea of “laws of nature” as language merely left over from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁶¹

At different levels or on different conditions, the laws may be subject to higher or more complex principles. Thus these laws “behave in extreme ways in unusual contexts (for example, superconductivity or black holes).”¹⁶² Principles applicable to some kinds of matter under some conditions may need to be adjusted under significantly higher temperatures, density, and so forth, so that even voluminous observations limited to one setting need not predict phenomena for all conditions; by the same token, we should not expect norms of nature to predict conditions if an active intelligence beyond the universe would choose to act in distinctive ways in it. One therefore need not speak of apparent anomalies in terms of violations of a rigid, deterministic system. In fact, the violation concept of miracle is not feasible on any of the three major theories of natural law prevailing today, rendering Hume’s primary philosophic argument untenable.¹⁶³ In a different cosmological framework plausible today, Hume’s very argument works against him.¹⁶⁴

Some contend, however, that Hume’s appeals to these laws of nature violates not only modern physics but even his own epistemological system. Scholars today sometimes thus challenge Hume’s approach in this essay as inconsistent with his normal epistemology (which may have its own inadequacies).¹⁶⁵ Hume implies that he uses the inductive approach characteristic of empiricism, yet I shall observe below that his approach to miracles is hardly inductive. For example, Hume accepted Baconian induction while arguing that one could not justify induction rationally.¹⁶⁶ Hume’s usual empiricism was so radical that it allowed only disconnected experiences, not determinations of causation, which are interpretive. The past sequence of events arouses expectation of their continuation, but cannot

160. Nichols, “Miracles,” 705; Cramer, “Miracles,” 136–37; Gwynne, *Action*, 172; Byrne, “Miracles,” 165–66. Wills, “Miracles,” 138–39, articulates the distinction (offered since Newton) between “natural law” (in the sense of fundamental principles) and “scientific law” (patterns recognized and formulated by scientists; cf. also Sharp, “Miracles,” 7, 13). Instrumentalists even see laws as merely hypothetical constructs for useful application (Toulmin, *Philosophy*, 70, as cited in Sharp, “Miracles,” 6); the conception of law is also problematic for modern philosophy (esp. for nontheists who find in it reference to a Lawmaker; see *ibid.*).

161. Van Fraassen, *Laws and Symmetry*, from a summary in Kelly, “Miracle,” 55.

162. Nichols, “Miracles,” 705, suggesting that the same can be true of laws in the context of divine action.

163. Breggen, “Miracle Reports,” 58–77, summarizing the approaches (61–69) and concluding (69) that on any of them “the violation concept of miracle is logically contradictory and so should be abandoned.” He defends a “non-violation concept of miracle” on 71–77. For approaches, see Lange, “Laws,” 208–11.

164. See *ibid.*, 376–77.

165. Varghese, “Introduction,” 16, charges that critiques by Hume and Kant against arguments for God’s existence stem “from their eccentric theories of knowledge” and “fly in the face of the key assumptions underlying the scientific model.”

166. Popper, *Conjectures*, 200. Strict Baconian emphasis on observation, followed by Hume and the positivists, neglected the role of theory (Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 11). Many note Hume’s reasonable caution about drawing inferences from induction (Landesman, *Epistemology*, 136–37; Davies, *Mind*, 27; here see Hume, *Miracles*, 26).

justify our expectations.¹⁶⁷ For example, far from endorsing nature's uniformity, Hume argued that one might presume that the sun would rise the next day out of habit, but one could not be certain about it.¹⁶⁸ He critiqued conventional notions of causality, treating laws as "merely observed uniformities" and, against earlier rationalists, denying them any metaphysical role.¹⁶⁹ Thus some argue that Hume himself could not support the notion of inviolable laws (as opposed to mere habits of interpretation); if taken to its logical conclusion, the epistemological rigor in his miracles essay would have undercut even Newton's physics.¹⁷⁰

Hume's actual wording need not contradict his skeptical epistemology: he grants the argument from laws of nature to be as "entire as any argument from experience" can be,¹⁷¹ which technically need not imply that he regards such arguments as very reliable. In this case Hume himself does not subscribe to such an argument from experience, and offers the argument only against those who do, or to the *degree* that cumulative experience could be trustworthy. If this is how Hume means his argument, though, it means that he is offering an argument that must prove far less than certain even on his own assumptions and therefore limited in what it proves. Granted, such an argument could support epistemic probability, if it were otherwise sound. I have argued, however, that it is not sound, given its view of nature and its circularly presupposing that claimed supernatural agencies may be excluded from consideration.

Others think that Hume was consistent with his usual epistemology, and that this is precisely the problem.¹⁷² On some readings, Hume's epistemology attacked induction itself, insofar as induction involved *reasoning* from events rather than merely reciting them.¹⁷³ Naturally, one cannot expect Hume to have accepted an

167. Taylor, *Hume*, 27–29; Beckwith, *Argument*, 22. In Hume's own philosophy, miracles might be against past experience and hence expectation, but such experience could not be comprehensive enough to guarantee that they would not occur (see Gaskin, *Philosophy*, 122). For Hume such an event might be two persons conversing while one was in Europe and the other in North America; yet such events are not logically impossible, and they now happen regularly (124).

168. Beckwith, *Argument*, 22; cf. Jones, *Hobbes to Hume*, 322. Nevertheless, he, like most of us, would have regarded the degree of probability as high enough to be taken for granted in ordinary life.

169. Gwynne, *Action*, 171; see discussion in Jones, *Hobbes to Hume*, 315–20; Taylor, *Hume*, 25–27. Already nearly a century ago Tennant, *Miracle*, 81, noted that despite this essay's notoriety, in general "it is the least characteristic of its author"; moreover (82), compared with his more reasoned works, "it is flimsy and even doubtfully sincere," violating his own theory of causality.

170. Brown, *Miracles*, 93; D'Souza, *Christianity*, 183–88, esp. 187–88; cf. Taylor, *Hume*, 37–42 (on 42 preferring Leibniz to Hume for scientific method). Metaphysics explores deeper levels of causation; denying questions of causation allows merely observation of isolated phenomena (cf. Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 42–43). Discussion of even immediate forms of causation has expanded significantly since Hume's day (see e.g., Spitzer, *Proofs*, 222–24).

171. Hume, *Miracles*, 31; idem, "Miracles," 33.

172. Levine, *Problem*, 186; Burns, *Debate*, 176.

173. Taylor, *Hume*, 39 (noting that Hume denied any external structure for experience), 43. Probably Hume attacked only affirmations of certainty from induction (see Landesman, *Epistemology*, 137), a reasonable concern. Even so, his theory of knowledge does not account for his own method (Lonergan, *Understanding*, 38, 231).

argument for divine causation when he was skeptical about knowledge of causation to begin with.¹⁷⁴ Yet not only with respect to miracles but more generally Hume's epistemology is not, as I have noted, very plausible in today's context.¹⁷⁵

Most likely, Hume is only partially consistent. On his premises, the more unusual an event, the less believable it is; but in his epistemology, this matter of believability does not stem from inviolable laws but from habits of mental thought formed by previous experience, and this past experience forms but does not justify beliefs.¹⁷⁶ To prove that some people find some events incredible would not, however, have generated much interest, so Hume argues for what people *ought* to find credible, an argument that runs counter to his own stated epistemology.¹⁷⁷ In his treatment of epistemology, Hume regarded all beliefs as unjustifiable opinions, though Hume also claimed to live by that perspective, itself no more than a belief, only when doing his philosophic work.¹⁷⁸ That is, Hume appears to have adopted for strategic polemical purposes a position for the argument of this essay that he did not maintain elsewhere.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, whereas Hume was ready to assume nature's uniformity a priori for his miracles essay, even there he "was too shrewd to try to prove its universality."¹⁸⁰

Philosopher Hendrik van der Breggen notes that Hume's approach is frequently viewed as problematic today: "Much critical examination of Hume's argument by philosophers has made it abundantly clear that Hume seriously overestimates the negative evidential weight the law-of-nature side of the scale bears on the credibility of miracle testimony."¹⁸¹

Hume's Antitheistic Starting Assumptions

Hume's argument is not neutral as to the possibility of supernatural or divine activity but a priori excludes that possibility, hence prejudges the conclusion of the investigation.¹⁸² In a truly neutral starting point, one need not presuppose the

174. Cf. Brown, *Thought*, 250.

175. Levine, *Problem*, 186 (noting that the epistemology is problematic for most modern philosophers, including himself); cf. Burns, *Debate*, 176; Varghese, "Introduction," 16

176. Taylor, *Hume*, 29–30.

177. *Ibid.*, 31–36 (on Hume's exclusion of logical and moral obligation to belief, see 28).

178. *Ibid.*, 24–25 (on belief's irrationality in Hume, see further 33; on the problems this offers for Hume's own belief in his miracles essay, 40). Hume allowed observations about events and their sequence, but questioned beliefs about their relationship or causation. In practice, of course, the latter may be accepted to degrees of probability based on our less than fully certain knowledge. Cf. ancient Stoics' emphasis on certain knowledge versus mere opinion (for the *ideal* sage), in Arius Didymus 2.7.11m, p. 94.5, 13–16, 19–24; 96.9–14 (cf. 2.7.10b, p. 58.18–23, 27, 30); in matters of piety, cf. other thinkers like Porphyry *Marc.* 17.284–85; 19.310–11; Philostratus *Ep. Apoll.* 52.

179. Cf. Brown, *Miracles*, 168; Gwynne, *Action*, 171.

180. Tennant, *Miracle*, 15 (critiquing his disciple John Stuart Mill for proving "less cautious").

181. Breggen, "Scale," 443.

182. Houston, *Miracles*, 133–34; Smart, *Philosophers*, 32; Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 41 (cf. also 44, against the argument of Alastair McKinnon; for McKinnon's argument, see McKinnon, "Miracle"); cf. Baxter, "Historical Judgment," 30.

existence of a deity to allow the hypothesis of a deity's action; one need only not rule it out.¹⁸³ Yet this is precisely what Hume's argument must effectively do; as one philosopher points out, "it is only by presupposing a conclusively justified *atheism*, or presupposing belief in a non-miracle-working god . . . that you are entitled to adduce with any cogency" natural laws against the possibility of miracles.¹⁸⁴ An atheist has reason to presuppose miracles impossible on the premise of atheism, but they are not *logically* impossible; the degree of probability assigned to miracles depends on one's prior assumptions.¹⁸⁵

Others in fact point out that if on other grounds one has reason to affirm theism,¹⁸⁶ with a self-revealing, active God, then what we call miracles might even be expected;¹⁸⁷ miracles are against the *ordinary* observed course of nature, but that is their *point*.¹⁸⁸ We might expect such unusual acts at times (though not at all times—otherwise we might presumably view them as natural law), especially in particular settings that involve the message that this God seeks to communicate.¹⁸⁹ Thus many scholars consider the religious and theological context when

183. Houston, *Miracles*, 148, 160; Swinburne, "Introduction," 14; cf. Lawton, *Miracles*, 56; Larmer, *Water*, x. See my brief discussion of divine action in ch. 6.

184. Houston, *Miracles*, 162; cf. likewise Sider, "Methodology," 27; Ward, "Believing," 742; Evans, *Narrative*, 156; McInerny, *Miracles*, 135–38; Breggen, "Seeds." Houston notes that if one presupposes atheism methodologically so that one's conclusions must be atheistic, no argument could satisfy the position's demands (Houston, *Miracles*, 168). Backhaus, "Falsehood," 307, argues that Hume recognized "the atheist's belief" as involving faith no less than "the theist's."

185. Ward, "Miracles and Testimony," 137–38. Ward (*ibid.*, 144) contends that even for an atheist, they are logically possible; for a theist, they are probable.

186. Some would argue that one might start with a premise of theism if other grounds warranted (cf. Evans, "Naturalism," esp. 205). Some seek to establish theism before invoking God as a causal factor (Young, "Epistemology"; cf. writers cited in Tennant, *Miracle*, 63–64), or note that miracles are comprehensible as such only on theistic premises (Taylor, *Hume*, 46–51); provided that one brackets this explanation as one explanatory hypothesis, however, the questions may be approached in tandem (cf. Weintraub, "Credibility," 373, though lamenting the absence of a sufficiently coherent theistic theory). As McGrew, "Argument," 639–40, notes, "not knowing that there is a God" differs from "knowing that there is not a God" (quotation from 640).

187. See Swinburne, "Evidence," 204–6 (regarding the hypothesis of Jesus's resurrection); *idem*, "Introduction," 14–15; *idem*, "Historical Evidence," 151; Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 58; Taylor, *Hume*, 51; Hambourger, "Belief," 601; Evans, *Narrative*, 155; Ward, "Miracles and Testimony," 144; Purtill, "Proofs," 43; Otte, "Treatment," 155–57; Langtry, "Probability," 70; Kelly, "Miracle," 50; cf. John Henry Newman (in Brown, *Miracles*, 137–38); Mozley, *Lectures*, 74–92; Akhtar, "Miracles" (noting the necessity of miracles in traditional Christian belief); Keene, "Possibility of Miracles," 214 (because of God's concern for humanity). Smart, *Philosophy of Religion*, 113, contends that miracles are accepted because of the authority behind them, rather than the reverse, though this dichotomy reflects modern Western assumptions. One may contrast here Hume, who denied the credibility of miracle stories recounted in religious contexts, because he deemed the latter irrational (e.g., Hume, *Miracles*, 36, 50).

188. Cf. Swinburne, "Evidence," 201–2 (regarding Jesus's resurrection); cf. this answer against Hume historically in Ellin, "Again," 209; cf. also the kingdom "sign" (significance) value of miracles in Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 51. Biblical miracle stories often focus on what is naturally impossible (cf. Wire, "Story," 36–37).

189. See, e.g., Evans, *Narrative*, 159, noting that "the amount of evidence" needed to surmount appropriate epistemological caution would presumably vary "depending on the intrinsic plausibility and apparent religious significance of the miracle." On the premise of an active, revealing God, one would

evaluating miracle claims,¹⁹⁰ a position that has a long history.¹⁹¹ If one starts with agnostic or (especially) theistic assumptions rather than atheistic or deistic ones, one will be more open to evidence for miracles. If one allows for a deity who acts purposefully, then, as another scholar puts it, “it will be unreasonable not to accept reliable testimony” for miracles.¹⁹²

I have noted that many miracle claims involve events that are conceivable within nature, though barely believable without specific divine action, such as a wind parting the sea. Some kinds of events, such as resurrection to an eschatological order of existence, may not occur naturally, but if one does not a priori exclude the possibility of supranatural activity, one need not exclude such events.¹⁹³ That is, we may be right to exclude such events as improbable among natural phenomena, but we need not exclude their possibility as if they belong to a context otherwise suggesting an extraordinary supranatural origin.

Hume claimed that his own results were agnostic rather than atheistic,¹⁹⁴ but the argument he uses to evaluate the possibility of miracles is not neutral. A genuinely agnostic approach would not circularly reject all evidence for divine activity in principle. An agnostic position affirms neither theism nor atheism, but must allow the possibility for either. Presupposing without argument that there can be no intelligent agency elevates “ontological economy to a supremacy,” Houston notes, that “not even Occam accords it.”¹⁹⁵ Moreover, Hume pretends no neutral-

be more apt to expect miracles in narratives that claimed to recount this deity’s activity. On a genuinely *divine* miracle’s significance (i.e., expression of the purpose of a consistent and benevolent deity), see also Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 45 (following Swinburne, *Miracle*, 1), 51; Smart, *Philosophers*, 43, 46.

190. Many argue that miracle claims are more probable if they fit a larger theological scheme (Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 52; Ward, “Miracles and Testimony,” 142; Jantzen, “Miracles,” 356; Licona and Van der Watt, “Historians and Miracles,” 4–5; for the theological context of Gospel miracles in the larger gospel story, see, e.g., Helm, “Miraculous,” 86–88; as part of the larger divine reality, McKenzie, “Signs,” 17); they should have religious significance (Nicolls, “Laws”; Jensen, “Logic,” 148; Beckwith, *Argument*, 11–12; Licona and Van der Watt, “Historians and Miracles,” 1–2; cf. Fitzgerald, “Miracles,” 60–61; Phillips, “Miracles,” 38–39). Fern, “Critique,” 351–54, insists that for a miracle to be meaningful, it must be not only inexplicable but also showing purposefulness. On purpose in miracles, see, e.g., Burhenn, “Miracles,” 488; cf. also debates about supernatural intention (e.g., Clarke, “Definition,” 53–55; idem, “Response”).

191. Miracles’ religious purpose dominated much discussion until the reaction against the Enlightenment (so McNamara, “Nature,” suggesting that balance is now returning to the discussion); in the seventeenth century, note Joseph Glanvill (Burns, *Debate*, 49–50), Robert Boyle (ibid., 55–56), and the majority of orthodox apologists (e.g., ibid., 114–15). Hume resists this position, thereby oversimplifying his argument (see ibid., 169–70, 178; but cf. Hume’s mention of “a particular volition of the Deity” in *Miracles*, 32).

192. Ward, “Miracles and Testimony,” 144–45 (quote from 145). A logical possibility, miracles become a real possibility if theism is true (Sider, “Historian,” 312).

193. Licona, “Historicity of Resurrection,” 99, 111 (citing here also Polkinghorne, *Quarks*, 100–101; Pannenberg; and others); Craig, *Faith*, 151.

194. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 44.

195. Houston, *Miracles*, 195 (referring to metaphysical naturalism’s monism). Some have appealed to Occam’s razor against miracles; see, e.g., Goulder’s claim and a response in Licona, “Historicity of Resurrection,” 414; idem, *Resurrection*, 494–95. The simplest solution is normally the most testable (Popper, *Conjectures*, 61). I have briefly suggested above (with many others) that pantheism and ontological materialism (i.e., no deity distinct from nature) are inadequate. I also noted that most theists regard some form of single designer hypothesis as explaining the universe’s order more simply than its leading

ity; he explicitly frames his polemic against miracles in opposition to affirmations of “Christian religion,” though titling the latter (for an eighteenth-century resident of the British Isles, naturally enough) “our religion.”¹⁹⁶ Both Hume’s supporters and his detractors usually recognize that he harbored prejudice against contemporary religion¹⁹⁷ and nearly always recognize that he constructed his approach in antithesis to Christian apologetic.¹⁹⁸

Hume poses as the only alternative to his naturalistic approach the exclusion of a basic regularity in the universe, hence abandoning the value of analogy and experience.¹⁹⁹ This alternative is, however, a straw man based on forced-choice logic; a theist can counter by simply postulating a normal order in the universe, while allowing for the hypothesis of “a characteristically order-giving yet occasionally miracle-working god” or other supernatural agent.²⁰⁰ That is, one need not postulate a forced choice between either a deistic/atheistic orderly universe or a universe without order.²⁰¹ Indeed, to do so would be to ignore alternative views held even by the majority of the founders of modern science, who most often believed in the Christian God, though in some cases the deistic one.²⁰² As I

philosophic competitor, the multiple universe hypothesis. Pure deism’s explanatory power is limited, since it does not answer why a personal deity would have created initially a world in which it would then have little personal involvement (less in physical terms than humans could have).

196. Hume, *Miracles*, 24; idem, “Miracles,” 29, contending that “our evidence . . . for the truth of the Christian religion is less than the evidence for the truth of our senses.” Many see mockery in his language (noted in Taylor, *Hume*, 19; Brown, *Thought*, 245); they may be correct (cf. Hume, *Miracles*, 54).

197. Fogelin, *Defense*, 61, concedes Hume’s “loathing for religious enthusiasm,” while emphasizing that he excludes not only miracles but also “spontaneous free acts” as inimical to his naturalistic worldview; for Hume’s attacks on religious knowledge, see also Force, “Breakdown,” 156–57. Backhaus, “Falsehood,” 303, notes Hume’s personal prejudice against religion and how it could be addressed positively from within his own philosophic framework (citing as an example a nineteenth-century Humean’s faith, 308–9).

198. Flew, “Arguments,” 46; Brown, *Miracles*, 80; idem, *Thought*, 242–45; Slupic, “Interpretation,” 518, 520–23; Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 21–22; Larmer, *Water*, 103–4; note some examples of the sort of apologetics he protested in Helm, “Miraculous,” 83–85. For the recent historical construction of that apologetic, see, e.g., Daston, “Facts,” 95.

199. As in a worldview where capricious spirits dominate causation. But we must also reckon with the limitations of reported experience—and Hume’s a priori exclusion of the experience of irregular events, at least when they might involve God (cf. also, on a popular level, Lewis, *Miracles*, ch. 13). Belief in overarching purpose (hence implicitly God) need have no limiting effect on the investigation of efficient causes (see Wilcox, “Blind,” 169, 175).

200. Houston, *Miracles*, 141; cf. Collins, *Language of God*, 50–53; Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 11; for belief in exceptions being compatible with belief in many kinds of events being normal, see, e.g., Geisler, *Miracles*, 81.

201. Larmer, *Water*, 123, argues that other philosophic options are pantheism and panentheism (with polytheism and “animism” sliding into either theism or pantheism, though this does not always appear to happen).

202. Note Christians such as Blaise Pascal; Galileo (whose daughter, Sister Celeste, a nun, was his spiritual advisor); Johannes Kepler; Antony van Leeuwenhook (in microbiology); Robert Boyle (in chemistry, whose will funded theistic lectures); Andreas Vesalius (in anatomy); William Harvey (in physiology); or Gregor Mendel, a monk (in genetics). Isaac Newton was theologically Arian (see Popkin, “Deism,” 30–31; Force, “Gentleman,” 122–28; Frankenberg, *Faith*, 103; he maintained Arianism partly by claiming that Athanasius forged the NT trinitarian texts [Popkin, “Bible Scholar,” 107; idem, “Fundamentalism,” 165], a textually untenable position), but he argued for design in the universe; against him being a deist, see Force, “Deism,” 53–62; idem, “Gentleman,” 134–36; Frankenberg, *Faith*, 106. (On

have noted, it was not new scientific data but shifting philosophic paradigms that altered that perception.

Notwithstanding recent detractors above (with whom I agree), a large proportion of proponents of miracles since Hume have appealed to the essential regularity of the universe to define miracles as something that differs from that.²⁰³ That is, even many who define miracles as contrary to nature find no logic in the forced alternatives posed by Hume; order in the universe does not exclude the special action of a deity distinct from and not dependent on the universe. In practice, because most proponents of miracles view them as exceptional signs rather than as nature's norm, they support use of medical and other natural means of providing for human need where they are available. They do not feel obligated to draw from their view of natural law the same conclusions that Hume did, because they understand that theistic premises differ from atheistic and deistic premises. If there is a deity on whom the universe depends rather than the reverse, there is no logical necessity of this deity being subordinate to the patterns of the deity's usual working.

Against many interpreters, some read Hume as arguing against not the possibility of miracles but the plausibility of accepting any particular miracle claims given the norms of human experience,²⁰⁴ and against using them as sufficient proofs for the foundation of any religious system.²⁰⁵ On the most charitable reading, Hume merely viewed the lack of demonstrable prior miracles (in his circle's experience) as making miracle claims much less probable²⁰⁶ (though the less thoroughgoing the claim of improbability, the easier it is to be surmounted by contrary evidence). It

some of these thinkers, see concisely the articles in *ChH* 76 [4, 2002].) "Most eighteenth-century thinkers thought that an argument from design could be given for God's existence" (Wolterstorff, "Theology and Science," 98). This may apply even to Hume (the latter quotation in Backhaus, "Falsehood," 293, sounds like this, though this is from 1745 rather than later).

203. Cf. this summary in Lawton, *Miracles*, 55; Sharp, "Miracles," 1–2 (on the common view, not his own); for examples, see, e.g., Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 13, 21; Sabourin, *Miracles*, 15; Dhanis, "Miracle"; Miller, "Miracle," 36 (contending that this approach demonstrates the opposite of what Hume expected, 35–36); Pearl, "Miracles," 489–90; the ordinary miracle proponent in Ellin, "Again," 207–8. Ashe, *Miracles*, 13 (cf. 26), thinks "miracle" an advanced concept because it depends on natural law; but this approach involves only a modern Western concept of miracle and not necessarily the most current form. For the value of signs being extraordinary, see, e.g., Bernard, "Miracle," 395.

204. Geisler, "Miracles," 75–76. Evans, *Narrative*, 153, suggests that though the matter is debated, Hume probably means "epistemic probability, the probability of an event's occurrence given what is known about the event and the situation"; cf. also Mackie, "Miracles and Testimony," 86 (despite his own conclusions on 95–96); Evans and Manis, *Philosophy of Religion*, 128–29; Hamburger, "Belief," 587; Brown, *Miracles*, 81; Ellin, "Again," 203; Beckwith, *Argument*, 23–24; Wallace, "Hume," 231; earlier, Trench, *Miracles*, 54. (Deist Ethan Allen likewise argued not against miracles but against having reason to believe in them; Fosl, "Hume," 176.) For problems with construing Hume so narrowly, in view of his essay as a whole, see Larmer, *Water*, 31–34; Fogelin, "Hume" (though he grants that this is a common construal, 81). Kant, radically separating natural and supernatural worlds, allowed in principle for miracles (i.e., supernaturally caused events) but not for recognizing them (Nuyen, "Kant on Miracles," 314). Thus at best Kant did not see need to appeal to miracles; they belonged to the nonphysical realm, which could not be tested by reason (Brown, *Miracles*, 103–7). Against Kant on science, see, e.g., Tennant, *Miracle*, 12–13.

205. Johnson, *Hume*, 1–4. This is at least one of his interests; see Hume, *Miracles*, 51.

206. E.g., Sober, "Proposal," 490.

is possible that this was Hume's primary intention, yet if so, some of his comments indicate that at points he lapsed into claiming more than this.²⁰⁷

More important for our purposes, if it is true, many of his successors have distorted his original argument. The popular understanding of Hume's line of thought remains influential and requires rebuttal, which I have undertaken here. It is possible that some of Hume's defenders adjust or nuance his argument to protect him from the charge of circularity—though many of us would affirm that a charge of circularity still applies, in view of the quantity and quality of many miracle claims. In any case, Hume's rejection of any eyewitness evidence for particular miracles would still remain open to question, requiring much of the same response that is offered here.²⁰⁸ As I shall note further below, Hume is not completely agnostic about events when they are merely unusual. It is only when they are most readily construed as supernatural acts that he rejects evidence for them *a priori*.

Hume's Epistemology regarding Miracles

Despite claiming to argue inductively, Hume's argument against miracles is deductive. He argues from nature's uniformity against miracles, which is the point in question. He generalizes from the alleged lack of good testimony for miracles to exclude what may in fact be good testimony for miracles. If Hume intends such arguments to make miracles impossible, his case is circular. If Hume intends such arguments merely to predict the weight of finite probabilities rather than to render miracles impossible, his case falters against considerable evidence for miracles. If Hume argues that no evidence in principle can be sufficient to compel belief in miracles, his claim might succeed to the extent that the evaluator of the evidence held tenaciously to antimiraculous presuppositions, but is not logically necessary if the evaluator is genuinely open-minded on the question.²⁰⁹ None of the various interpretations of Hume offer a successful argument against the possibility of miracles or even of finding his argument more persuasive than not.

Hume on Testimony

Hume's intellectual context forced him to challenge the reliability of testimony, because it was the primary basis on which the early empiricists argued for miracles;²¹⁰ he followed here one line of argument against NT miracles emphasized by the

207. Holder, "Hume," 57–58. It appears to me that Hume claims more in his first section involving laws of nature, but perhaps only epistemic probability in most of his treatment of witnesses.

208. For problems with Hume's construction of epistemic probability, see Mackie, "Miracles and Testimony," 91.

209. Cf. Perry, "Miracles," 66, complaining about the closed-mindedness of scholars who deny that any amount of evidence can substantiate extranormal claims, and comparing Hume's own insistence that "no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle."

210. Cf. Burns, *Debate*, 51.

deists.²¹¹ Thus Hume, seeking to make his case, quickly denies that sufficient credible witnesses exist to substantiate miracles.²¹² By contrast, my subsequent chapters on miracle claims will emphasize that we have an overwhelmingly greater number of witnesses today than were available to Hume, an observation that should make his case far more tenuous for interpreters today than it appeared in his day. But let us consider his argument in more detail: Are the witnesses and their miraculous interpretations potentially reliable?

According to a common reading of Hume (which I think most probable), he rejects in practice the possibility of any witnesses reliable enough to challenge the unlikelihood of miracles. He circularly bases this denial on the assumed uniformity of human experience against such miracles,²¹³ a uniformity that would deconstruct if there were any adequately clear instances of such miracles. Claiming uniform experience against miracles is not really an argument, scholars often note, because it “begs the question at issue, which is whether anyone has experienced a miracle.”²¹⁴ Or as one critic puts it, “Hume used the unproved conclusion (that miracles are not possible) and made it a datum of his argument (miracles do not happen).”²¹⁵ Some supporters of miracles articulate this logical problem even more bluntly: “It amounts to saying ‘miracles violate the principle that miracles never happen.’”²¹⁶ (Some doubt, however, that Hume is fully consistent on this circular exclusion of miracles’ possibility even within the essay.²¹⁷) Claims about nature and miracles both rest on experience, so claimed experience of the former cannot cancel out

211. *Ibid.*, 77 (noting also the English deists’ influence on German biblical criticism).

212. Hume, *Miracles*, 27–54, esp. 32–37.

213. E.g., Hume, *Miracles*, 31; cf. the argument in *ibid.*, 38; idem, “Miracles,” 36, noting that prodigies mentioned in ancient historians do not currently occur. Others also complain about this circularity (e.g., Craig, *Faith*, 151; cf. perhaps even T. H. Huxley in Boobyer, “Miracles,” 41). He excludes any evidence for miracles because they are conceptually impossible—because of his a priori assumption of what is conceptually possible (Brown, *Miracles*, 94). This answer to Hume assumes that he has denied the possibility of miracles at the outset, a frequent interpretation that admittedly some scholars deny. Thus, for example Fogelin, *Defense*, 16–31, argues that Hume’s *real* argument is only the testimonial argument (the second part of his essay); if so (and I do not find this construal persuasive), his argument on testimony must stand largely by itself, which I believe it is hard-pressed to do (for reasons I supply in the main text). I believe the second part of the essay may be supplemental, in case readers are not completely persuaded by the first (with, e.g., Tucker, “Miracles,” 388–89).

214. Evans, *Narrative*, 154; Evans and Manis, *Philosophy of Religion*, 130; see also Beckwith, *Argument*, 28–32; Larmer, *Water*, 36; Taliaferro and Hendrickson, “Racism,” 427–28; Holder, “Hume,” 57; Kelly, “Miracle,” 49; cf. similarly Levine, “Belief,” 135.

215. Larson, “Centuries,” 87. Hume’s attempted “dismissal of testimony without examination” fails even in his own essay (see Taylor, *Hume*, 13).

216. Kreeft and Tacelli, *Handbook*, 111. Cf. Cooper, “Ventriloquism,” 27: Hume believed it impossible to trust witnesses to miracles, “since the reporting of a miracle as truth could essentially be taken as proof of a source’s weakness.”

217. Even though Hume assumes that there is uniform experience against any miraculous event, at one point he does appear to admit that an event that he treats as a miracle could be accepted as possible in principle. Depending on how various elements in his argument are construed, this concession could be understood as constituting an inconsistency in his argument (Johnson, *Hume*, 6, 19). The burden of proof of course rests (at least lightly) on claims of inconsistency, and concessions may be merely tactical.

claimed experience of the latter. If experience is reliable in knowing that water is normally not turned to wine, why would it not be reliable in recognizing when water is turned to wine?²¹⁸

Hume avers “that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle,”²¹⁹ unless the authentic miracle would be less extraordinary than the inaccuracy or deceptiveness of its reporter.²²⁰ Far from maintaining openness to this possibility that a reporter could be sufficiently reliable to establish such a claim, however, Hume essentially excludes it in practice. He grants in principle that one might accept witnesses who were unquestionably reliable, claiming public events, and would have much to lose by lying; yet scholars note that in practice he rejects individual testimonies that, so far as anyone can discern by normal means of inquiry, would meet this very criterion.²²¹ Hume’s denial of any historical eyewitnesses qualified to testify about miracles is no more than a bare assertion offered on his own authority; by contrast, one of his early detractors offered more than one hundred pages of argument in response to such claims, which one might hope could count for more than bare assertions.²²²

Further, some of Hume’s criteria for witnesses’ acceptability are too vague to quantifiably support his case: he insists that witnesses be highly reputable, with much to lose by lying. One may assent to these demands in principle, but Hume appears to implement them in a tendentious way. How highly reputable is highly reputable? How much to lose is too much to lose? If one adopts his criteria for witnesses to the maximal possible extent, one might choose to rule out *any* historical testimony to any event.²²³ As I shall observe, Hume does in fact rule out highly reputable witnesses with much to lose, as defined by normal standards used in

218. Levine, *Problem*, 126 (agreeing with Kellenberger, “Miracles,” 148n).

219. Hume, *Miracles*, 32; idem, “Miracles,” 33. Probably due to criticisms, Hume more charitably later revised this claim in his 1767 edition to “no testimony . . . has ever amounted to,” recognizing that his argument could not actually rule out the *possibility* of sufficient evidence for miracles (Sober, “Proposal,” 492).

220. Granted that some claims are surprising, it might be equally surprising for such claims to be invented (Hambourger, “Belief,” 597, illustrating on 598 with uncommon names being uncommon in fabrication as well as in reality), at least among multiple independent witnesses. One might think of disciples claiming that the eschatological resurrection had been inaugurated in their teacher—an astonishing claim to report, whether true or false.

221. Noted, e.g., in Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 54–55; Swinburne, “Introduction,” 13; Licona, “Historicity of Resurrection,” 97. Besides Christian claims, Hume, *Miracles*, 42; idem, “Miracles,” 38–39, employs the very strength of Tacitus’s report about Vespasian to show that even the strongest testimony must be rejected (as a “gross” and “palpable falsehood”); Brown, *Miracles*, 88, notes how Hume’s language is designed to parallel that of Christian apologists for the Gospels. Some of the testimonies Hume rejected are plausible, however, even on strictly naturalistic terms (see Flew, “Arguments,” 50–51, and regarding Vespasian, 52–53; cf. Keller, *Miracles*, 64–65). Tacitus himself has the physicians give a naturalistic interpretation (noted in Johnson, *Hume*, 85–86, though I am less convinced and suspect that Tacitus may have been also). See discussion below of the particular case of Jansenists.

222. See McGrew, “Argument,” 651–52 (citing Samuel Chandler’s response to Annet, regarding Jesus’s resurrection). For Hume’s critics, see further Okello, *Case*, 129–39.

223. Colwell, “Miracles and History,” 10.

court, suggesting that he applies these criteria tendentiously. Moreover, Hume requires witnesses to be of “unquestioned good sense,” but this standard proves impossible to meet, since Hume appears to question the good sense of anyone who claims to have witnessed miracles.²²⁴ By contrast, if we employ such criteria in the ordinary sense of their everyday usage, we end up with plenty of witnesses that we might consider reputable and sensible, but whom he dismisses as unsatisfactory. If he simply will not deem anyone’s testimony satisfactory, it seems somewhat disingenuous to expect his critics to go to the trouble of evaluating witnesses before he informs them of this caveat.²²⁵

Again, he seems to employ an a priori definition to exclude the need for examination: defining a miracle as the sort of event “that has never been observed,” he simply dismisses or ignores the perspective of all those who claim to have seen, or believe the claims of others to have seen, such events.²²⁶ Analogously, as noted above, he excludes from being a miracle anything that can be observed to occur in the ordinary course of nature, yet he excludes the possibility of anything that does *not* occur in the ordinary course of nature.²²⁷ This sort of reasoning simply restates his presupposition rather than offers an argument. This mere reformulation of his own presuppositions is not, as one scientist and theologian points out, the open-minded posture normally appreciated in scientific endeavor.²²⁸

Hume must assume the error or lack of integrity of many eyewitnesses to maintain his theory, yet he lacks grounds independent of his theory to accuse eyewitnesses of deception.²²⁹ (This concern is important in view of the significant number of testimonies collected later in this book and elsewhere.) Hume essentially dismisses all witnesses as “fools or liars,” as one scholar puts it.²³⁰ Yet this suspicion of witnesses is arbitrary, dependent entirely on Hume’s theory and increasingly

224. *Ibid.*

225. *Ibid.*; cf. Taylor, *Hume*, 23, 44–45. Colwell, “Miracles and History,” 11, suggests Saul of Tarsus had much to lose, an opinion difficult to doubt (cf. Paul the persecutor in 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13–14; Phil 3:6–7; 1 Tim 1:13; Paul suffering for Christ in Rom 16:7; 1 Cor 4:11–12; 15:31–32; 2 Cor 1:8–9; 4:8–11; 6:4–10; 11:23–33; Phil 1:7, 13; 1 Thess 1:6; 2:2, 15–16; Phlm 1, 9, 10, 13, 23). Some question the (perhaps socially elitist) criterion of witnesses having high reputation (cf. McGrew, “Miracles,” 3.2.1).

226. Cf. Johnson, *Hume*, 19.

227. Thus a Humean could grant, under compulsion of sufficient evidence, that a claimed miracle occurred, but then redefine laws of nature so as to except the event from being genuinely miraculous and counter to nature (cf. the summary in Martin, “Historians on Miracles,” 413).

228. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 55. Many of Hume’s views (e.g., the earth possibly having grown from a comet [Force, “Interest,” 195]) are incompatible with modern science but reflect the science of their era.

229. While arguing that miracles in themselves do not convey meaning, Phillips, “Miracles,” 35, also notes that skeptics lack grounds to accuse witnesses of deception. Ward, “Believing,” 745, notes that, contrary to Hume, “the probability that one is deluded or deceived in observation is sometimes extremely low” when one has sufficient reporters.

230. Cramer, “Miracles,” 136–37. On the potential falsehood of witnesses, see Hume, *Miracles*, 27; even of normally respectable witnesses, 29; on miracle witnesses as deceived or deceivers (more than other kinds of witnesses), 32, 34, 36–37, 52–55 (cf. 38: “nothing strange” that people “lie in all ages”; 39: “fools”; 43: “knavery and credulity”; 52: “knavery and folly”).

implausible as the number of normally reliable witnesses increases.²³¹ His warning that people are prone to credulity and deception does not apply equally to all individuals, so one cannot dismiss all claims without evaluating them on a case-by-case basis.²³² Using this standard, and a priori suspicion of any antecedently improbable information, would undermine ordinary communication.²³³ If Hume counts the unlikelihood of an occurrence against a witness telling the truth (too simplistic an approach), some counter that a witness's "lie" could take many forms, making any particular form improbable.²³⁴ While this argument would not prove much in the case of a single witness, it becomes quite substantive once multiple independent witnesses are involved (see my discussion of multiple independent witnesses below).

Moreover, Hume essentially counts the unusual character of miracles against their probability twice, since by requiring witnesses of "unquestioned good sense" he narrows the pool of potential witnesses to those who, *recognizing* that miracles are unusual, would have surely demanded more than usual evidence (at least with respect to those sorts of miracle claims involving what does not happen naturally).²³⁵ What would happen if we were to apply Hume's logic consistently to other areas of inquiry?

Consequences of Such Epistemic Demands for Other Disciplines

For this sort of case (eyewitness testimony for miracle claims), Hume thinks it unreasonable for people to depend on testimonial evidence, requiring instead direct experience.²³⁶ The fairness of this criterion should be questioned, however; those with such direct experience are in this case (but not in most others) considered unable to be trusted by others. Presumably Hume himself lacked this personal experience, but his uniformity argument generalizes from this lack in his immediate circle to that of all humanity.²³⁷ On Hume's epistemology, "uniform

231. Cf. here Weintraub, "Credibility," 371.

232. Breggen, "Miracle Reports," 6, complaining that Hume's argument here is "much too general" to carry weight. Idem, "Seeds," provides a significant list of Hume's overgeneralizations that a case-by-case approach would have refuted: thus he should have recognized that "*not all* people are required to be highly educated to be considered credible witnesses, *not all* people are equally prone to credulity," and so forth.

233. One would trust only the information of which one did not need to be informed; see Schlesinger, "Credibility," 121, as followed by Weintraub, "Credibility," 360.

234. Cf. the argument in Holder, "Hume," 52; Schlesinger, "Credibility," 121; Weintraub, "Credibility," 361.

235. See Breggen, "Scale," 451–52, developing the idea of Ward, "Miracles and Testimony," 134.

236. Hambourger, "Belief," 588. Is a miracle then true for one who experiences it directly but false for one who has only the testimony of one who has experienced it? Hume depended on Archbishop Tillotson's view that direct sensation is more dependable than others' testimony; some object that testimony from trained or specially qualified observers may in fact be more reliable than one's own observations (Taylor, *Hume*, 6).

237. Mavrodes, "Hume," 175–76. Cf. Sider, "Methodology," 24, criticizing judging past witnesses based on one's own range of experience; cf. Sanday, "Miracles," 65. Cranston, *Miracle*, 172, notes that some skeptical doctors criticize other doctors for recognizing a cure at Lourdes, but when they see one themselves, their attitude changes completely.

experience" involved passive recollection of a sequence of events known to oneself and possibly one's colleagues, and no more.²³⁸ Such a generalization rests on too small a sample size to be legitimate (as his own epistemology warned);²³⁹ while he may speak authoritatively about his own experience, how can he speak in this way for the entire human race?²⁴⁰ His own "uniform experience" can hardly be used to exclude the experience about which another person testifies.²⁴¹ Hume's insistence on rejecting others' testimony without personal knowledge, following the egocentric approach of Cartesian rationalists and Pyrrhonian skeptics, stood in bold opposition to contemporary English science, which stressed communal research and knowledge.²⁴² Not surprisingly, moderate empiricists generally viewed Hume's rejection of testimony as irrational.²⁴³ Few today follow Hume's fairly thoroughgoing epistemological skepticism on other fronts; its survival with respect to the question of miracles may suggest the readiness of many to treat claims offered in religious contexts as a special category of lesser value than other sorts of claims.

Further, one critic rightly objects, "If Hume's criteria for accepting testimony as true were employed outside of miracle claims, we would probably have to dismiss the vast majority of what we believe we presently know about the past," since much of it depends on a single, untested source.²⁴⁴ This observation seems damaging to Hume's argument; he advances the argument in terms of "general principles about evidence, reasonable credibility, and the like," yet we clearly do not employ his approach outside of religion.²⁴⁵ Where events are not explained spiritually, even

238. Taylor, *Hume*, 26. Hume's historiographic approach here is inseparable from the premises assumed right in his intellectual era (Lonergan, *Method*, 222); his own mind, moreover, was more than what he conceived mind to involve, namely the linking of impressions by custom (*ibid.*, 21). Smith, "Introduction," 27, however, views Hume's fragmented approach as merely a reaction against Descartes's one-sided approach.

239. Mavrodes, "Hume," 176; Kelly, "Miracle," 49. Mavrodes takes the example of Jesus's resurrection; because this was a unique historical event, he argues, the odds of Hume having "caught that one anomalous event" are small ("Hume," 176). Hume's own epistemology allowed observation but limited the value of inductive inferences based on limited samples (Landesman, *Epistemology*, 136–37), though random, representative samples increase probability (*ibid.*, 138–41).

240. Mavrodes, "Hume," 180.

241. Taylor, *Hume*, 10–11.

242. Burns, *Debate*, 16. Scientists pooled data, although science by its character works with larger patterns, not eccentric or exceptional cases. On this scientific movement and its opposition to some philosophic alternatives dominant on the Continent at the time, see 19–46.

243. *Ibid.*, 179 (cf. also 215).

244. Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 97. Against those who argue that we must have direct personal knowledge rather than the secondary evidence of witnesses, Licona (117) follows William Lane Craig in citing physicists' appeal to quarks and strings based on evidence without direct observation.

245. Mavrodes, "Hume," 168. Mavrodes also argues that nothing in his argument is specific to miracles or religious phenomena. Hume undoubtedly would reply (on the most common reading of Hume) that he treats miracles distinctively because they are violations of nature, but as I have noted, the definition begs the question. Defending Hume, Coleman, "Probability," 214, nevertheless concedes that he treats testimony for "religious miracles" more skeptically "than testimony to marvels." The difference between the two was precisely the claim of divine authorship for the former (Fosl, "Hume," 177). Defending Hume by suggesting that he would accept direct communication from God to all humanity throughout the world, but regarded miracle testimonies as notoriously fallible (Fogelin, *Defense*, 29), sets the bar of

when they are otherwise unbelievable, historians normally accept or check them if witnesses are credible, rather than simply rejecting the testimony.²⁴⁶ Granted, this might not be the case for an isolated testimony if the events in question were particularly unusual, but it would certainly apply to multiple, independent ones.²⁴⁷ One might counter that Hume intends not to rule out all miracle testimony a priori but only to conclude that all miracle testimony in history so far had been untrustworthy.²⁴⁸ This would be, however, a judgment for which the evidence does not provide such a verdict without the support of his theory, and one that would be even more difficult to sustain, I believe, today.

As a more general methodological consideration, Hume's unduly strict form of empiricism values experience above testimony, yet the vast majority of our general knowledge depends on testimony (the report of others' experiences) rather than our own more limited personal experience.²⁴⁹ Granted that all eyewitness testimony is conditioned by observers' interpretations, jurors are expected to be able to infer significant aspects of events behind such testimony; without this assumption, the modern court system would collapse.²⁵⁰ Virtually all historical claims depend on interpreted testimony and other interpretations of evidence;²⁵¹ most of us would not for that reason discard any possibility of inferring information about some past events based on our extant sources.

While this observation about testimony's value is most obviously true and relevant regarding history,²⁵² it applies even to most of our knowledge of science.²⁵³ (It is *less* relevant to science, though, because scientific experiments, unlike more complex historical events, are repeatable in controlled settings.) The approach Hume applies to miracles would, if applied equally strictly elsewhere, rule out

acceptable evidence unreasonably high. (Certainly Christian theists would not agree to it; the promise of such a revelation in Christian teaching is eschatological and belated for such purposes; Mark 13:26.)

246. Kennedy, "Miracles," 20–21; note also here Ward, "Believing," 745. Kennedy, "Miracles," 11–14, notes the strong arguments of Locke and other Enlightenment thinkers for the value of testimony.

247. Criticizing Hume's epistemic failure to consider multiple sources, see Tucker, *Knowledge*, 51–52 (addressing historiography generally). Provided testimony to an anomaly could be shown to be genuinely independent (not a result of deliberate, deceptive collusion) it would become much more credible. Assuming the basic reliability of the Gospel traditions (see the argument and other sources in, e.g., Hengel, *Mark*; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*; Keener, *Historical Jesus*), one could rule out the sort of anomalies reported there only on the premise that they cannot occur, whether as natural anomalies or, more often, as supernatural events. Rejection of the latter form usually presupposes doubt that a deity or force exists that could or would produce such phenomena.

248. Cf. Fogelin, *Defense*, 62.

249. Lawton, *Miracles*, 56 (citing George Campbell's 1762 critique of Hume's essay, which Hume acknowledged as "a fair treatment of his essay"); Helm, "Miraculous," 94–95 (comparing also Augustine *Confessions* 6.5); Larson, "Centuries," 88.

250. Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 129.

251. For the dependence of history on witnesses' observations, see, e.g., Popper, *Conjectures*, 21.

252. As just noted, historiography depends on witnesses' observations (see, e.g., Popper, *Conjectures*, 21).

253. See discussion in Jaki, "Miracles and Physics"; Licona, *Resurrection*, 103. Even our expectation of events' probability based on nature's regularity tends to be founded on testimony from others (Ward, "Miracles and Testimony," 133).

any newly observed event incompatible with or challenging current scientific understanding of nature.²⁵⁴ Hume's skeptical approach would thus make scientific progress impossible.²⁵⁵ As one scholar points out, particle physicists have never verified a proton's decay, but this deficiency does not stultify investigation to detect proton decay.²⁵⁶ A physicist suggests that, even in its merely epistemic form, Hume's "argument can be used to prevent a scientist from believing another scientist who announces a major discovery" that violates earlier understandings. Physicists do not follow Hume's approach; they were surprised by the announcement of "high temperature superconductivity," impossible as it appeared by current understandings, but they did not reject the claims.²⁵⁷ They investigated the claims to confirm or disconfirm them; although anomalies face stricter interrogation, they are frequently recognized "even before the advent of rival theories which can accommodate them."²⁵⁸ (Even outside this essay, Hume's epistemology effectively limits science to empirical generalization about past observations; though he does allow for probable inferences, he was not keen on scientific predictions.²⁵⁹)

Moreover, whatever may be said of Hume's relationship to physics, his epistemological arguments privileging norms over testimony do not allow the normal practice of historiography and legal testimony in their own spheres (as I shall note below). Yet these are the sorts of disciplines most often relevant to evaluating testimony, and are therefore more experienced in evaluating testimony than Hume is. For example, even when we mistrust ancient historical sources on other points, we normally accept eyewitness testimony in them (though not always their interpretation),²⁶⁰ unless we have compelling reason not to do so. Is the existence of some fictitious information, usually outside eyewitness material, compelling reason to exclude all claims that do not fit our worldview? Historical events may be evaluated by analogy with *kinds* of historical events, but one can use this analogy to deny the miraculous only by presupposing that all historical testimony to miracles is invalid.

254. Jantzen, "Hume," 319–20; cf. Brooke, *Science*, 187.

255. Cf. Kuhn, *Structure*, 98–108, 154–55; on resistance to paradigm shifts in science, see Polanyi, *Knowledge*, 138; Kuhn, *Structure*, 64–65, 107, 133, 169. Some of Hume's contemporaries already offered this critique of his approach (see Burns, *Debate*, 224), and one of his mid-twentieth-century defenders conceded that following Hume's approach here would unfortunately prevent scientific advances (Robinson, "Causation," suggesting that scientists must thus sometimes ignore philosophy; as cited in Burns, *Debate*, 225). Taylor, *Hume, S*, suggests that Hume was mocking the irrationality of Newtonian science as well as irrational religion.

256. Earman, *Failure*, 31.

257. Cramer, "Miracles," 136–37, condemning what he regards as the hidden religious "agendas of Hume and Flew, a willingness to call others [witnesses] fools or liars"; on science often being open to new observations correcting old ones, see also, e.g., Sober, "Proposal," 489; Weintraub, "Credibility," 369, 372. More than a century ago, Wilson, "Miracles," 10–11, observed that while we normally assimilate new data "through a process of analogy," often rejecting or ignoring what is not analogous, physical science does accommodate new discoveries.

258. Weintraub, "Credibility," 372; see discussion on paradigms in ch. 14.

259. Jones, *Hobbes to Hume*, 320–22.

260. E.g., Brown, *Historians*, 142, 146, on Megasthenes.

Indeed, Hume does not follow this stringent approach to testimony in his own historiography.²⁶¹ (It was Hume's historiography that made him famous in his own day,²⁶² though the rise of critical historiography ultimately made his approach to historiography obsolete.²⁶³) Hume's epistemological approach, if followed to its logical conclusion, undercuts normal reasoning, including his own.²⁶⁴ One scholar explains that Hume's epistemology excludes all *beliefs* as irrational and unjustifiable, but notes that Hume explained that he himself lived by that perspective, itself no more than a belief, only when doing his philosophic work.²⁶⁵ Hume may have helpfully pinpointed the question of what factors could tip scales to allow belief in events that would normally not be believed,²⁶⁶ but in his polemic against uncritical credulity he uncritically rejected the sufficiency of any evidence. The evidence of testimony must be given ways to surmount prior improbabilities; otherwise "there is no way to underwrite the sorts of inferences made in everyday life and science," such as a newspaper report of a winning lottery ticket (an illustration developed at greater length below).²⁶⁷

Hume versus Normal Logic regarding Witnesses

While claiming logic, Hume's approach to testimony contravenes the form of logic normally applied to the value of witnesses. Just as one may appeal to the "regularity of nature" (revising our understanding of that regularity periodically to accommodate new discoveries), one may appeal to regularities involved in how we otherwise evaluate legal testimony or historical evidence. Hume's argument against miracles privileges the regularity of nature against the regularity of human evidence, while presupposing against allowing for divine causation.²⁶⁸

When Hume cites the regularity of nature against the possibility of witnesses erring, he is weighing apples against oranges. Scientific induction does indeed work from a much greater pool of data than historical evidence does,

261. Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 97 (following Habermas, *Risen Jesus*, 7–8).

262. Tucker, "Miracles," 373.

263. *Ibid.*, 374.

264. Note the harsh critique by Bertrand Russell, in *History of Western Philosophy*, 698, cited in Brown, *Philosophy*, 70–71; on a more popular current level, see D'Souza, *Christianity*, 183.

265. Taylor, *Hume*, 24–25. Lonergan, *Understanding*, 38, 231, points out that Hume's view of knowledge involved sensory impressions connected by habit, yet limiting knowledge to this approach cannot explain Hume's own epistemology. Kant endeavored to transcend "Hume's experiential atomism" (*idem*, *Insight*, 340). To follow such atomism rigorously (something Hume himself would not have done) would make normal human life impossible; whereas infantile experience consists of unconnected sensory impressions, fuller human development involves connections and constructions concerning causation (for this developmental approach, see, e.g., Zaphiropoulos, "Sullivan," 428–29). The imperfection of our knowledge concerning connections should not lead to the abandonment of attempts to refine this knowledge.

266. Cf. Keller, *Miracles*, 63.

267. Earman, *Failure*, 33.

268. See Beckwith, "History and Miracles," 95–96 (following Swinburne, *Miracle*, 41–48, and others), 98; cf. Mozley, *Lectures*, 98.

but it addresses different sorts of questions.²⁶⁹ Science is meant to address nature's regularities, not anomalies, which scientific theories usually seek to accommodate within some higher regularities; history must deal with particulars, including the idiosyncrasies of human personalities whose behavior is not always predictable. If miracles are divine actions and not pure anomalies, they must be investigated on a case-by-case basis or in tandem with analogous cases (other miracles),²⁷⁰ rather than weighed against the ordinary patterns of nature. Historiographic concern for testimony is thus far more relevant for investigating miracles than statements about norms, to which miracles are by most definitions not bound.

Perhaps the sphere that weighs testimony most deliberately is that of the courts. Because of the stakes involved, legal approaches to testimony tend to reflect rigorous discipline, and are applicable to the matters at hand.²⁷¹ Thus some statisticians cite against Hume the work of mathematician Charles Babbage (1792–1871), originator of the modern computer, regarding witnesses: where a significant number of witnesses agree without prior collusion, an event's probability increases sufficiently to overturn any biases against it.²⁷² (Babbage formulated his mathematical critique against Hume.²⁷³) Too many variables (not least in interpreting Hume) skew the precision of mathematical probability approaches to Hume,²⁷⁴ but they do illustrate that Hume's view of witnesses is inadequate.

Already in Hume's day, it was clear to some that he failed to take into adequate account that the confluence of multiple, independent, and reliable witnesses

269. Cf. Lonergan, *Method*, 179–80, 219–20, 228–30 (including observations about the different forms of verification in each); history and literature emphasize particularity rather than physics' universals (cf. Meyer, *Realism*, xi). Flew, "Evidence," justifies the rejection of historical claims that contravene scientific claims, but this approach again appeals to immutable natural law in a way that presupposes nontheism (for two critiques of Flew's overall approach, see Larmer, *Water*, 100–102; Larson, "Centuries," 98–100; cf. also Wallace, "Hume" [e.g., 230, 237]); challenging Flew's privileging of scientific over historical knowledge, rather than reckoning with their objectives and subjects addressed, cf. Wallace, "Hume," 233–34.

270. Cf. Sanday, "Miracles," 65: most of the samples gathered for induction involve ordinary cases, but our lack of "experience of His extraordinary action" allows for "no induction to preclude His use of exceptional means." I will suggest later in the book that we do not lack comparable experiences; I agree here with Sanday, though, that one cannot rule out exceptional cases based on averages or means.

271. See Beckwith, *Argument*, 122–33.

272. Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 104–5, citing Bartholomew, *Belief*, 92–98 (and Zabell, "Probabilistic Analysis," 344–45), and Babbage, *Treatise* (see esp. Babbage, "Argument"); see also Licona, *Resurrection*, 149–50. Swinburne, "Introduction," 13–14, advances this corroboration of independent witnesses against the probability calculations of Owen, "Probabilities," who considers only a single witness; for the value in principle of multiple witnesses, see also Mackie, "Miracles and Testimony," 93. Babbage also invented the speedometer and locomotive cowcatcher.

273. King-Farlow, "Insights," 209, 212–14. In the same article King-Farlow uses Aquinas's nuanced approach to miracles to challenge the approach of both Hume and (against Hume) Babbage, who do not distinguish levels of probability for various witness claims with respect to various miracles.

274. Others also challenge the adequacy of mathematical tests, even Bayesian probabilities, concerning miracle claims, for other reasons (e.g., Tucker, "Miracles," 382, though noting that nonmathematical tests remain).

increases the probability of testimony's accuracy.²⁷⁵ In the case of multiple, independent witnesses, one no longer requires extraordinary proof to secure a probability against prior improbabilities.²⁷⁶ If Hume's challenge against individual testimony was in some respects questionable, he did not even address the force of multiple testimony, which seriously changes the probability calculus.²⁷⁷

Although debates about probability were central to debates about testimony and miracles in Hume's day,²⁷⁸ one of Hume's modern critics charges that his approach to miracle reflects "a crude view of induction and probability." He notes that Hume's approach could have been corrected by the more sophisticated inductive reasoning approach of Rev. Thomas Bayes, but because Bayes's work was not published until 1763, Hume lacked access to it in his essay.²⁷⁹ Indeed, Bayes's essay was first published by Richard Price, who employed it against Hume's own doubts concerning induction.²⁸⁰ Price, largely forgotten today, was in their day nearly as famous as Hume in Britain, and more so in the American colonies.²⁸¹

Hume acknowledged that Price's challenge was "plausible and ingenious" and might require him to rethink his position, but he never revised his essay in light of it.²⁸² In more recent times, Bayesian probability calculations have been offered both in support of and against Hume,²⁸³ but on the whole it seems likelier that

275. Earman, "Bayes," 305. Hume's failure may be deliberate, since he would have known that Locke appealed to the cumulative force of multiple witnesses about miracles being performed by one person (for this argument in Locke, see Burns, *Debate*, 68–69). The exponentially cumulative value of multiple, independent witnesses was already recognized, though not mathematically formalized, in ancient Roman law (Tucker, "Miracles," 381); cf. the need for multiple witnesses in Jewish and Christian circles in Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15; 11 QTemple LXI, 6–7; LXIV, 8–9; CD IX, 17–19; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19; Matt 18:16; Josephus *Life* 256; *Ant.* 4.219; *m. R.H.* 1:7; 2:6; *b. Sanh.* 37b, bar.; *p. Git.* 4:1, §2; Smith, *Parallels*, 169; Daube, "Witnesses"; most extensively, Van Vliet, *No Single Testimony*; though some may have found ways to circumvent this (different solutions in Rabinovitch, "Parallels"; Neusner, "Testimony"). Four witnesses are mandatory in Qur'an 24.4, 13.

276. A point often noted (cf., e.g., the summary in Sober, "Proposal," 491).

277. Holder, "Hume," 53.

278. Sober, "Proposal," 487.

279. Earman, "Bayes," 305. Some argue that, Hume's work being published before Bayes's work, Hume's work cannot readily be understood in such terms (Gower, "Probability," 17; cf. Coleman, "Probability"). But since Hume complained that Locke and others failed to address probability in sufficient detail, and since Hume was offering a probability argument, Earman, *Failure*, 25, contends that it is fair to hold Hume to a standard of logic that is legitimate even if not his own (cf. Holder, "Hume," 50). Some of Hume's early critics already argued that mathematical probability calculations applied better to some life situations than others (Burns, *Debate*, 181). For Bayesianism in science today, see Howson, "Bayesianism."

280. Dawid and Gillies, "Analysis," 58; Sober, "Proposal," 487. Gower, "Probability," 17, dates the publication to 1764 and doubts that Hume would have known of it before Price published on the subject in 1767. For the 1768 second edition of Price's essay, see Price, "Dissertation." Price was clearly more Bayesian than Hume, who probably would not have even understood the dense calculations involved or their relevance (Gower, "Probability," 18; Earman, *Failure*, 25).

281. Earman, *Failure*, 24.

282. Coleman, "Probability," 196; Earman, *Failure*, 25 (though Earman thinks that Hume made one revision). Hume did manage to avoid being pulled into responses to his critics ("Life," 235).

283. Some have used Bayesian statistics to support Hume (e.g., Gillies, "Proof," 255, claiming that Hume's case "can be rigorously proved"; Millican, "Theorem"; Sobel, "Theorem," especially the proof on

Hume, who lacked access to this statistical method, constructed an argument that fails to satisfy it.²⁸⁴ As suggested above, the variety of factors that must be taken into account (not least the precise interpretation of what Hume meant) mitigate somewhat the force of such mathematical argumentation,²⁸⁵ but they do illustrate that Hume's claims of probability are fairly vague and conjectural.²⁸⁶ They also illustrate, with this approach's supporters, that the probability of reliability is very high in multiple, independent testimony from persons normally deemed reliable.

While witnesses might not always interpret events in the soundest manner, they may often prove better positioned to evaluate the events than academicians who merely dismiss eyewitnesses' claims based on our inherited assumptions. Hume cites laws of nature against testimony, but apart from questions noted above concerning whether "laws" of nature limit divine action, we have not merely one testimony or several testimonies but in many cases "a 'convergence of independent probabilities.'"²⁸⁷ Detailed probability calculations show that even a very low a priori against miracles can be overcome by the sort of evidence available in multiple independent testimony.²⁸⁸

Moreover, even the reasoning behind Hume's treatment of probability appears to offer the wrong sort of probability equation. One cannot decide the probability

236–37). Millican, "Theorem," 495, offers the analogy of a rare disease afflicting only one in a million people, and a person who tests positive for it in a test that is 99.9 percent accurate, arguing that only 0.1 percent of those tested positive will have the disease. Others, however, note that Bayesian method can argue against Hume (Mavrodes, "Theorem"; Earman, "Bayes," 305–6; DePoe, "Bayesian Approach," 230–31; Otte, "Treatment," 156–57; Tucker, "Miracles," 374; cf. Earman, "Hume"); Earman, *Failure*, 30, even argues "that the Bayes rule for assigning prior probabilities makes the existence of Hume miracles a certainty." On a common reading, Hume apparently gave miracles a zero probability, possible only because of his a priori assumption about nature's uniformity (Levine, *Problem*, 34; cf. Taylor, *Hume*, 9). Sobel, *Logic*, 338, suggests that Hume rated the prior probability of miracles as infinitesimal, thus ruling out any evidential testimony; DePoe, "Bayesian Approach," 233, replies that even drawing an atom randomly from the universe yields a finite probability (roughly 1 in 10^{80}) and (on 234) doubts that reasons exist to ascribe "infinitesimal probabilities to any event" (as perhaps opposed to impossibilities or low but finite probabilities). The "infinitesimal probability" of miracles would simply restate presuppositions like affirming their impossibility would. In any case, Licona, *Resurrection*, 119, observes that statistical probability arguments cannot address unique events.

284. Gower, "Probability," 29, observes that "many of Hume's claims about probabilities and their assessment are not consistent with Bayesianism." Bayesianism certainly works against his "minimalist claim that no actual testimony for a religious miracle has ever amounted to a probability" (Earman, "Bayes," 302).

285. Coleman, "Probability," 195–96, sidesteps Bayesian calculations on the ground that they rest on Pascal's calculus of chance, whereas Hume was using Baconian probability (using eliminative induction) independent of such calculus. Advocates of Baconian probability remain a minority (*ibid.*, 197–98, while nevertheless appealing to this method to defend Hume). Even if we subtract those who do not meet Hume's qualifications, however, we have plenty of examples of miracle claims remaining, so Hume's argument would fail on these grounds. Others insist that Bayesian rather than Baconian probabilities are the relevant ones (Langtry, "Probability," 70), particularly when evaluating the larger success of Hume's argument. Gower, "Probability," 24–25, 29, thinks a Bernoullian approach is closer to Hume's intention.

286. Despite invoking "probability," Hume makes little use of probability (even in the form already known in his day) in his argument (Gower, "Probability," 28).

287. Beckwith, "Epistemology," 99 (quoting Cardinal Newman).

288. McGrew, "Argument," 641–42.

of a proposed supernatural event by simply dividing the number of known miracles in history by the number of estimated events in history, yielding an apparently infinitesimal number. One would rather need to establish the probability of a *particular* claimed event by taking into account evidence for the event and the probability of a deity interested in people producing such an event.²⁸⁹ Our ability to quantify factors such as the probability of divine action might be extremely limited, but simply excluding it by presupposition is circular reasoning. Hume's argument on intrinsic probability largely echoes the earlier case of English deist William Wollaston (also spelled Woolston),²⁹⁰ which is unfortunately not well conceived.²⁹¹ His dependence on earlier arguments may help account for the work's oft-noted inconsistency from his approach elsewhere.²⁹²

For miracles, as I note below, Hume presupposes a standard of proof so high that any evidence is effectively ruled out in advance. That is, Hume so frames his position that he renders it unfalsifiable²⁹³—and therefore not tenable for public discourse by traditional standards of logic. Unfortunately, this heads-I-win, tails-you-lose form of argument remains popular even today, even with respect to miracles. For example, roughly two decades ago I asked one professor, who was dismissing evidence for miracles, if he would believe in supernatural activity if someone were raised from the dead in front of him. He responded, consistent to his approach, that he would not. Interestingly, some doubt that even Hume, being an empiricist, would have insisted that the person was not raised from the dead if he himself witnessed it.²⁹⁴ (Science also recognizes a range of random, unpredictable outcomes even on the impersonal level of physics. In the case of credible miracle reports, some might explain them as random anomalies simply because these interpreters arbitrarily exclude a pattern of divine causation as a legitimate explanation.)

289. Collins, *God of Miracles*, 149–50. A number of scholars contend that God's freedom makes it impossible to calculate whether God will act in a situation (Licona and Van der Watt, "Historians and Miracles," 5).

290. See Burns, *Debate*, 89–92. On Wollaston, see also Deconinck-Brossard, "Acts of God," 372.

291. See Burns, *Debate*, 92–93.

292. For the inconsistency, cf., e.g., Brown, *Miracles*, 168; Gwynne, *Action*, 171; Smith, "Introduction," 46–47.

293. Cf. Geisler, "Miracles," 83; Corduan, "Miracle," 110. Larmer, *Water*, 83–87, contends that world-views are difficult to falsify but that they can be falsified selectively at points without discarding more accurate elements; he suggests that pure naturalism (in its traditional form) can be falsified regarding its claim that energy cannot be created.

294. Smart, *Philosophers*, 32. But Brümmer, *Pray*, 84, suggests that Hume may have simply taken it as "an extraordinary or inexplicable anomaly," refusing to factor the possibility of divine causation into the equation. (Given human nature, which should also be "Humean" nature, Brümmer might be right in theory, and Smart in practice.) That the relevance of prayer in the name of Jesus could be excluded from consideration while human interventions are not again reflects starting assumptions. A Humean would be more apt to trust direct sensory experience of a miracle than testimony to it (cf. Levine, *Problem*, 131), but many would still distinguish the truth of an event from the interpretation of supernatural causation (ibid., 159, on foundationalists).

Rejecting Unusual and Rare Events?

Hume cites the “uniform” experience of modern people against miracles.²⁹⁵ As I have noted, Hume implies that he uses the inductive approach characteristic of empiricism; yet ruling out new evidence on the basis of supposed uniform experience is hardly inductive. Scholars identify various problems with his approach; I will address the first of these at some length before turning to others. First, as I shall show later in the book, there is no such uniform experience against miracles; whether or not one trusts the claims of tens of millions of people that they have experienced miracles, so many claims, at least some of them substantive, offer a rather vigorous challenge to simply *assuming* a “uniform experience” against miracles.²⁹⁶ The uniformity argument essentially rejects all miracle reports, which are inconvenient to the uniformity premise; yet such reports are very widely claimed, an observation that I shall document at greater length in subsequent chapters. Far from the spirit we normally associate with intellectual inquiry, a priori rejection of all these claims declares victory by fiat rather than by fair exploration.

An argument that a miracle is never probable enough to allow any evidence to be cited in support of it must circularly presuppose that miracles have never been known to happen. Should testimony that would otherwise be accepted as reliable be rejected for an event because it is extremely unusual by the standards of one’s or one’s control group’s experience?²⁹⁷ Should we grade the probability of testimony according to the frequency of an event, so that an otherwise reliable witness who claims to have gone fishing is to be believed, but not the same witness claiming that she won an Olympic medal (at the risk of eliminating some Olympic medalists)?²⁹⁸ Again, one cannot simply rule out miracles based on all of human experience, contrary to Hume’s suggestion, because human experience claims many examples of miracles, the point Hume wishes to challenge.

295. E.g., Hume, *Miracles*, 31. One could argue less controversially but also less persuasively for excluding all kinds of extraordinary events based on the experience of ordinary ones, but this argument both fails to reckon with the existence of some extraordinary events and the fact that it is an argument designed to keep evidence for miracles from being heard, since they are by definition extraordinary (cf. Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 13).

296. Some scholars suggest that even if one were to rule out miracles today, an argument that the past must conform to the present uniformity of human experience might rule out dinosaurs (fossils support them, but testimony supports miracles) or, in matters of kind, the big bang. If one allows evidence to challenge the assumption of uniformity in such cases, one should also allow it in the matter now in question; if one limits uniformity only to what is naturally possible (not to particular human experiences), one again returns to the question of whether one can rule out divine action a priori. For this argument, see Beckwith, “History and Miracles,” 96–97; Geisler, “Miracles,” 79 (regarding the big bang; also in idem, *Miracles*, 80); Licona, “Historicity of Resurrection,” 98–99; idem, *Resurrection*, 140–41; Craig, *Faith*, 153 (esp. against Troeltsch). Explaining and defending Hume’s use of analogic probability, as well as adapting it in light of questions Hume failed to explore, see Coleman, “Probability,” 203–7. For the current creation of miracles from the quantum flux differing from a unique creation *ex nihilo* in the big bang model, see Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 40–41.

297. See the criticisms of Larson, “Centuries,” 89; Ward, “Believing,” 745.

298. Or one who claims to have gone waterskiing over one who claims that she did her PhD dissertation on African-American women’s history at the University of Paris (my wife did the latter, but not the former)?

Granted, reports of unusual events must be more carefully examined than reports of ordinary ones,²⁹⁹ but it is methodologically fallacious to correlate the unusualness of an event with “the unreliability of a report” concerning it.³⁰⁰ Should one appeal to the general regularity of current events to judge *special* events in the past, while ignoring special events (at least what are regarded as anomalies) that are exceptions to that observed regularity today?³⁰¹ To argue against miracles on the supposition that they never happen, no matter who claims them, is circular. Yet to argue against miracles based on their mere rareness would, as one critic observes, exclude rare events that are attested as having happened. This critic offers the example of someone “being dealt a perfect bridge hand,” against which he calculates the odds as “1,635,013,559,600 to 1,” noting that someone in his circle was dealt this hand.³⁰²

Likewise, *Life* reported an extremely improbable event, this one conceivably in a religious context (for those who regard such contexts as particularly problematic): on March 1, 1950, all fifteen members of a church choir arrived late for choir rehearsal scheduled at 7:15 p.m., all for distinct reasons (e.g., one’s car failed to start). That church building exploded at 7:25 p.m., and their lateness prevented any lives from being lost. With the probability of these separate events coinciding being as low as about one in a million, one scholar argues, Hume’s argument might force him to reject the magazine’s testimony.³⁰³

One could well quibble over some of these precise estimates, but the point is that rare events do happen, and excluding them based on probability would require the exclusion of concrete evidence supporting them. One might aver that a rare sort of event, if it were a possible event, might not be expected as likely at a single, randomly selected time, yet would expect that given sufficient selections over time the improbable event would surface (say, the drawing of one black marble among 9,999 white ones).³⁰⁴ By definition, the extranormal is rarer than usual human experience, but that constitutes no argument that it is never plausible, given

299. With, e.g., Evans, *Narrative*, 159 (suggesting epistemic caution without rejection); earlier, Bernard, “Miracle,” 395 (noting that sufficient attestation can overcome this reservation); cf. Hume, *Miracles*, 26.

300. Ward, “Believing,” 745.

301. Geisler, *Miracles*, 81, on the fallacy of “appealing to the general to rule out a particular event,” arguing against an argument of Flew. I note claims to such special events in chs. 7–12, 15, and part of ch. 14. Assumptions of uniformity generally uncritically reflect the interpreter’s experience or that of her own milieu (Lonergan, *Method*, 226).

302. Geisler, “Miracles,” 79; against using a phenomenon’s rareness to dispute its attestation, see also Craig, *Faith*, 151. Beckwith, “History and Miracles,” 92–93 (also idem, “Epistemology,” 96; *Argument*, 33), notes that “the odds of being dealt a royal flush are 0.15×10^{-5} ; in front of witnesses, Beckwith’s friend was dealt this hand playing poker. Should one reject the testimonies based on the occurrence’s improbability?”

303. Beckwith, “History and Miracles,” 92, offering the calculation. Such calculations of probability cannot easily account for all possible factors, which at this remove from 1950 can no longer be readily reconstructed (one assumes that the choir members were not all habitually late to rehearsals, since the story would not then have appeared newsworthy), but such illustrations, of which other examples might be adduced, emphasize that extraordinarily improbable specific events do occur.

304. Evans, *Narrative*, 154; idem, “Judgment,” 197.

sufficient evidence of it occurring (such as witnesses attesting the drawing of the black marble).³⁰⁵ The probability of numbers coming up in a particular way in a series of hurls of the dice might be one in a thousand, but we do not therefore aver that there is only a 0.1 percent chance that a witness who claims these numbers is telling the truth.³⁰⁶ (Still, divine context is what makes miracles *probable*.)

One of Hume's earliest critics on miracles, Richard Price, argued that the odds of a particular winning number in a lottery may be 10^{-6} , yet we still believe the report that someone has won.³⁰⁷ One scholar, originally persuaded by Hume but finally convinced that his argument fails,³⁰⁸ retells this argument in modern terms. If the *New York Times* announced that a particular Mr. Smith won the lottery, the odds that this individual won the lottery (say, one in a million) are less than the odds that the *Times* made a mistake (say, one in ten thousand). On Hume's apparent reasoning, the probability that the *Times* is correct would thus be only one in a thousand.³⁰⁹ The genuinely *relevant* question is not whether the *Times*'s fallibility exceeds the odds of this particular person winning, but just the reliability of the *Times* in reporting winners—hence (on this estimate) ten thousand times likelier correct than not.³¹⁰

Similarly, the odds that a stranger lies about his or her name are higher than the odds of a given stranger having a particularly unusual name.³¹¹ For example, there is a significant probability that my wife is currently the only person, among the world's more than six billion people, who bears the name Médine Moussounga Keener. Should a Humean upon learning her name conclude that she is lying about her name? Conjoining even a few statements about oneself, such as birth date and address, provide extreme improbabilities;³¹² the existence of any one of us with our specific genetic combination is far more improbable still. Hume's "principle of relative likelihood," if it were applied in such a mechanistic way, would have to be deemed absurd.

Against such objections, Hume's real argument may involve not the improbability of a particular event, but of a particular *kind* of event.³¹³ Thus some people

305. See similarly Johnson, *Hume*, 72. Tucker, "Miracles," 373, notes the difference between the probability of a *particular* miracle occurring and that of "some miracle" occurring. Fitzgerald, "Miracles," 61, argues that rareness is not necessary in the definition of miracle, provided that an event clearly communicates personal intelligent design.

306. Burns, *Debate*, 93. If the numbers were predicted in advance rather than random and reported later, the probability would decline, unless the roll of the dice was fixed; prediction miracles would fall into this latter category of probability, which can be dismissed *a priori* only on the belief that prediction miracles could not happen (i.e., based on atheism, deism, or some but not most versions of theism).

307. Dawid and Gillies, "Analysis," 59.

308. Hambourger, "Belief," 587.

309. *Ibid.*, 591–92.

310. *Ibid.*, 598. See also Licona, *Resurrection*, 144–45, against Hume's antecedent probability argument.

311. Hambourger, "Belief," 592 (noting on 598 that some combinations of names appear only once in one hundred million times, making the odds thus one in 10^8).

312. *Ibid.*, 598.

313. This distinction played heavily in even supporters' critiques of Bishop Joseph Butler's apologetic (Brown, *Miracles*, 62, specifying Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone's concern; though, as elsewhere noted [e.g., Baxter, *Healing*, 23], Gladstone was skeptical of Hume's approach to miracles). Butler's approach was

reasonably counter the analogy of the lottery by pointing out that an event of this kind (someone winning) is assured, whereas events like miracles are improbable.³¹⁴ Unfortunately, while the issue may in fact be kinds of events rather than specific events, this counterargument against miracles presupposes what it claims to prove, since miracles are improbable only on nontheistic premises.³¹⁵ One objection to the lottery analogy is that whereas a particular individual winning the lottery is merely improbable, it is not incredible, since *someone* may win the lottery. By contrast, it is argued, “That an elephant flew over London yesterday is incredible.”³¹⁶ Granted that the latter is incredible, it would not be incredible if a deity were known to make elephants fly in other cases or to be the kind of deity we would have good reason to believe might make them fly.³¹⁷ No such deity is reported, but reports of other naturally incredible events (as well as merely unusual ones) are often attributed to deities.

Thus the question of kinds of events should be framed thus: “How frequently are reports of similar miracles, given in similar situations, true?”³¹⁸ Clearly many miracle claims are not true, but many other claims would be deemed true by normal means of inquiry if the possibility is not *a priori* excluded (I defer this discussion for chs. 13–15). I will survey some such reports later in the book (chs. 8–12); re-

normally fairly reasoned, however; see Burns, *Debate*, 111–14, 117–20, 125–30, and *passim*. For the validity of the lottery example and the like for relevant probability assessments, see Langtry, “Probability,” 69–70.

314. Dawid and Gillies, “Analysis,” 59; cf. Schlesinger, “Miracles,” 222 (some events are “bound to happen anyhow”). They take the probability of a miracle, for the sake of argument, as 10^{-6} (62), and the probability of reliable witnesses falsely reporting miracles (because of deception, hallucination, or other factors), as higher than that (63). This generalization, however, fails to reckon with the vast number of concrete examples with multiple witnesses, where the probability of reliable witnesses reporting miracles falsely is much lower.

315. With, e.g., Beckwith, *Argument*, 35. Dawid and Gillies, “Analysis,” 64–65, also recognize that for theists miracles are probable rather than improbable; hence, miracles become more likely than the deception of all witnesses to them. Smart, Swinburne, and others (Kellenberger, “Miracles,” 149) would treat “violation” miracles as “non-repeatable” exceptions to laws of nature, that is, events that cannot be replicated, presumably because they involve personal agency. Replication is likewise impossible in the case of paranormal anthropological experiences, as in Grindal, “Heart,” 76, though he explains this experience subjectively. One cannot use the “principle of relative likelihood” to argue that testimony for a miracle is false, since “this is,” as Hambourger, “Belief,” 597, notes, “just what we wanted to use the principle of relative likelihood to discover” (cf. Gower, “Probability,” 27–28). One can no more calculate the natural probability for a unique supernatural event (such as Jesus’s resurrection) than for an absolutely unique natural event (Cramer, “Miracles,” 134–35; cf. Kelly, “Miracle,” 55).

316. Weintraub, “Credibility,” 368.

317. Elephants are not built to fly, but they could be made to fly whether by human transport in a jumbo jet (assuming an adult elephant, one would have to provide a means of ingress) or by a superhuman entity; in such cases, laws of physics would not be violated. Weintraub, “Credibility,” 369, affirms that “the elephant flying is an instance of a kind of event that is very probable: the improbable.” But while the improbable does happen, an elephant flying is not merely improbable but physically impossible—without external factors to sustain them, such as transport by intelligent design (e.g., a humanly constructed plane) or a tornado (as tornadoes are known to relocate objects, and a tornado striking a zoo could cause an elephant to “fly,” though probably not without killing it).

318. Hambourger, “Belief,” 599; cf. Schlesinger, “Miracles,” 228. On studying reports of anomalous events together, see also Ellens, “Conclusion,” 303.

ports in settings most similar to the Gospels and Acts appear fairly frequently and often stem from those that we would otherwise consider reliable eyewitnesses.³¹⁹ Moreover, whereas mere anomalies are unexpected, it is precisely theistic premises that allow us to anticipate the possibility of some miracles in a theistic context.³²⁰

One might also treat these anomalies not as a special class of miracle by themselves, asking first what the evidence is for their occurrence and only afterward a question of divine causation. While the collision of a comet and a planet are rare enough to appear improbable for a given time frame, one cannot rule out that they occurred in the past or might yet occur. Based on knowledge of planets and comets, we might even predict a very likely occurrence for a given finite time frame rather than denying its likelihood based on the usual failure of planets and comets to collide.³²¹ Similarly, the probability that a reliable witness tells the truth about an event that appears anomalous in view of current knowledge can be supported if other anomalies are observed; the additional question of divine causation then strengthens the plausibility of these observations by providing a coherent intellectual framework in which to explain them.

The Theistic Factor

Analogies with lotteries are relevant only for epistemic reasons, but the real issue is that a theistic context (if not ruled out) allows for the possibility of miracles, and multiple well-attested miracle claims in that context make them probable. As philosopher Richard Purtill emphasizes, unusual events might even be *expected* in the right contexts.³²² We do not expect athletic world records to be broken regularly, but we might expect them to occur at times at the Olympics.³²³ Purtill then argues that while Jesus's resurrection makes no sense as a random event, it fits the context of his life and teaching, which it climaxes.³²⁴ Similarly, Jesus's earlier miracles would support the resurrection claim, and vice versa, if a reader accepts either.

As noted above, many thinkers appeal to the special religious context of miracles for their significance. Hume's appeal to general experience cannot counter claims

319. Whether or not these are comparable to those behind the reports of miracles in the Gospels and Acts is a matter of debate, but those who argue on other grounds that these narratives reflect carefully transmitted tradition may in fact regard some of the modern reports, especially those passed on orally secondhand, as *less* reliable rather than more reliable than the ancient analogies with which we compare them.

320. See discussion of the religious context of miracles above.

321. Evans and Manis, *Philosophy of Religion*, 131.

322. Purtill, "Proofs," 43; cf. Hamburger, "Belief," 601. See discussion of the context of miracles' religious significance, above.

323. Purtill, "Proofs," 43. For a more detailed development of this sort of analogy, see Evans, "Judgment," 197–98, who specifies degrees of plausibility based on the quantity of relevant data available. Purtill also offers the example that presidents do not regularly grant pardons to ex-presidents, but Ford's pardon of Nixon makes political and historical sense in its specific context (Purtill, "Proofs," 44), as would presumably be the case with any future instances.

324. Purtill, "Proofs," 44; cf. Licona, *Resurrection*, 146, 162–64. Certainly the claim of Jesus's resurrection is consistent with his theology and mission (cf. discussion in Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 347).

to miracles within a theistic framework, since theists do not deny general experience but argue that the relevant cases for comparison are those involving divine activity.³²⁵ In other words, if one presupposes neither theism nor nontheism, one must examine evidence for particular miracle claims inductively to see if a pattern emerges. And if evidence for some miracles makes them probable, the general a priori improbability previously assigned to miracles decreases accordingly.

Again, were Hume to object that rare events were merely improbable but miracles are impossible, he would be back to restating his (ultimately theological) presuppositions without offering evidence.³²⁶ If it is the possibility of a miracle-working God rather than the rareness of miracles to which he really objects, he is offering the wrong argument. That Hume would accept extranormal phenomena *not* involving religion suggests a serious element of bias;³²⁷ as one scholar notes, “Hume’s attempt to distinguish the miraculous from the merely extraordinary is scarcely justified on his own principles.”³²⁸ His argument formally depends on “what always happens” (the point under dispute), not “what necessarily happens,” that is, not a priori limitations of what is possible.³²⁹ Therefore his conclusion does not follow.

The Circularity of Hume’s Approach

Houston challenges at length Hume’s belief that the general improbability of events in a particular class of event prejudices “the probability of the truth of an actual report of the event.”³³⁰ As I have been noting, Hume implies that he is arguing inductively. He actually, however, argues deductively based on a conclusion that rests on an inadequate range of data, partly because it has a priori excluded disagreeable evidence. Rather than allowing genuine induction based on evidence, Hume produced a deductive approach that a priori virtually excluded the evidence

325. Schlesinger, “Miracles,” 228 (employing the example of water turning to blood).

326. Beckwith, “History and Miracles,” 93–94. This does seem to be Hume’s approach in the one passage where he seems to allow for exceptions to known natural law—so long as they are not granted supernatural attribution (see Dietl, “Miracles,” 130). Ellin, “Again,” 206, argues that for Hume the merely extraordinary does not defy natural law (just the *usual* course of nature) but miracles contradict laws of nature; this position presupposes that God is not above such laws, as noted above. McKinnon, “Miracle,” denies the logical possibility of miracles (see refutation in, e.g., Swinburne, “Violation,” 80); Holland, “Miraculous,” allows that something “conceptually impossible” may nonetheless occur.

327. The argument noted in Lawton, *Miracles*, 56; Taylor, *Hume*, 11–12. Formally, for the purposes of his argument, his allowance of anomalies while rejecting all miracles is unjustifiable (cf. Taylor, *Hume*, 10–12), so long as he argues from rareness in experience; in fact, in a theological context, direct divine agency may supply a particularly coherent explanation of highly extraordinary phenomena.

328. The argument noted in Lawton, *Miracles*, 54; Taylor, *Hume*, 16–17.

329. See Swinburne, “Introduction,” 13. This limitation inheres in Hume’s traditional empiricist approach.

330. Houston, *Miracles*, 133 (developed on 151–68). Against such an argument, see Ward, “Miracles and Testimony,” 133 (noting that greater caution is warranted, but not the rejection of careful observation). Prejudging likelihood by classification also depends on the reliability of the classification and the likelihood one assigns to it. Again, since an event that was ordinary would not be defined as miraculous, ruling out extraordinary events not only rules out much of actual history but also creates a default setting that a priori excludes the probability of miracles, as often noted (e.g., Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 13).

for miracles. He cites experience against experience—typical experience against rare experience, though both are attested by witnesses.³³¹

As is frequently noted today (including above), Hume's argument against miracles is thus circular, assuming what it claims to prove,³³² an observation also offered by some of Hume's contemporaries.³³³ His rejection of some experience on the grounds that it differs from usual experience actually contradicts his own empiricist tradition.³³⁴ The more genuinely inductive approach of English scientists of his era was to adjust research models and methods to accommodate new evidence from diverse phenomena, an approach that rendered their position immune to the arguments raised by the deists and Hume.³³⁵

Hume prevents his own argument from being falsified by rejecting evidence that contradicts his thesis. As Robert Larmer complains, Hume's denial that any amount of evidence favoring miracles could ever be acceptable "commits him to holding that there are logically possible empirical events which no conceivable amount of positive evidence could ever confirm, but which a finite body of negative evidence disconfirms." Hume at one point allows the relevance of empirical evidence for deciding the question but then contradicts his normal empirical approach by ruling it out of court.³³⁶

One may illustrate this predisposition in Hume's own argument. As I have noted, he cites some strong testimony for some miracle reports but then uses the very strength of this testimony to argue that even strong testimonies are useless in favor of miracles, since (he asserts, without argument) these particular miracles may be dismissed!³³⁷ An early twentieth-century writer complained, "It is no use

331. On Hume's citing the experience of natural laws against the experience of human testimony, and problems therein, cf. Johnson, *Hume*, 93; Mozley, *Lectures*, 98–99. Johnson also raises the question (on 97) why—apart from a priori—one should accept the testimony of Tacitus or a lab technician yet reject that of historical reports now in the biblical canon. To argue that early Christian writers were biased and Tacitus was not would reflect a serious misunderstanding of the character of ancient historiography (see Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 95–125, esp. 117–23).

332. E.g., Lewis, *Miracles*, 102 (often cited to this effect); Taylor, *Hume*, 15; Johnson, *Hume*, 18–19; Larmer, "Critique," 163–64, 167; Kennedy, "Miracles," 17–18; Evans, *Narrative*, 153–54; Brown, *Philosophy*, 72; Purtill, "Defining Miracles," 66; Geisler, "Miracles," 77–78; Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 100 (citing Lewis, and Gregory, "Secular Bias," 137–38); Ruthven, "Miracle," 548. Surprisingly, Millican, "Theorem," 494, who supports Hume, claims not to mind his tautological reasoning.

333. See Burns, *Debate*, 219.

334. Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 23 (cited also in Geisler, "Miracles," 78); cf. also Smart, *Philosophers*, 31–32. Wright, *Miracle*, 54, describes Hume's immunity to evidence as "stultifying" genuine historical inquiry. Lawton, *Miracles*, 53, notes that many complain that Hume's demand for conformity with current experience also "militates against the acceptance of new scientific discoveries."

335. Burns, *Debate*, 15–16.

336. Larmer, *Water*, 38.

337. Hume, *Miracles*, 41–48; idem, "Miracles," 38–40. Hume argues against resurrections on the basis that the dead have never returned to life (Hume, *Miracles*, 31; idem, "Miracles," 33), a basis that simply ignores contrary testimony, even for Jesus's resurrection (Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 105–6). It is analogous to dismissing the credibility of five witnesses to a murder based on 875 witnesses attesting that they never witnessed the alleged murderer killing anyone over the years (Beckwith, "History and Miracles," 93; cf. idem, "Epistemology," 96). In popular language, Hume compared apples and oranges.

investigating these events, Hume says in effect, for no matter how conclusive your arguments for their occurrence, they cannot be accepted.”³³⁸

Various writers have noted the circularity of Hume’s denial of these reports of miracles, for example, among Jansenists, which he denied on the mere basis that miracles cannot happen,³³⁹ a denial that some today regard as “obscurantist.”³⁴⁰ Hume viewed the evidence for Jansenist miracles (often immediate, credible, and multiple testimony) as stronger than that for Jesus’s alleged miracles,³⁴¹ so that denying the former made denial of the latter much simpler. But that at least some cures did occur is difficult to deny. After the pope condemned Jansenism in 1713, the ascetic Jansenist deacon François de Pâris lived even more austere and died in 1727. At his interment, a widow’s paralyzed arm was said to be healed, and many subsequent visitors experienced ecstasy and healing. Cardinal Noailles’s report in 1728 acknowledged genuine healings, and reported cures on the site included “cancerous tumors, . . . paralysis, deafness, and blindness.” Finally the king had the cemetery closed in 1732, whereupon one graffittist opined, “By order of the king, God is forbidden to perform miracles in this place.”³⁴² Officials secured considerable evidence that the most dramatic

338. Wright, *Miracle*, 52. Dietl, “Miracles,” 132, illustrates the extraordinary lengths of absurd improbability to which such extreme naturalistic explanations can resort.

339. See Hume, *Miracles*, 43–47, citing but rejecting the testimony of abundant witnesses, and noting on 44 that the only (yet sufficient) case against them was the impossibility of miracles. Despite Jansenists’ education, numbers, and reputation, Hume may have rejected their testimony partly because some of the miracles were not public, being among a few witnesses (though cf. comments on witnesses below, acknowledged by Hume), and because they were employed to justify something sectarian (since he rejected whatever could be created to justify a new religion; Slupic, “Interpretation,” 525–26). Slupic, “Interpretation,” 535, argues that Hume viewed the history of miracles as people claiming them to justify their own sects (cf. Hume, *Miracles*, 40–41, 50). In fact, new religions often do not claim miracles, and without examination one cannot assume that a new religion has invented miracles rather than experiences of miracles having called a new religion into being (Taylor, *Hume*, 16–17). More than Hume, some outright mocked Jansenist miracle claims, as in the polemic of Rev. Robert Wallace (1697–1771), “Observations” (1764; for some comment, see Badia Cabrera, “Nota”); far more than Hume (though apparently to his delight; *Miracles*, 47), some French Catholics of Jesuit leaning attributed Jansenist miracles to demonic manipulation of natural causes (Daston, “Facts,” 107), much to the annoyance of Pascal (117); and the bishop and Jansenists traded blame for incurring judgment on society (Deconinck-Brossard, “Acts of God,” 362). For one approach to the form and function of the earliest written Jansenist testimonies, see Engels, “Grammaire” (noting the classical structure for miracle accounts and Jansenist theology).

340. Gaskin, *Philosophy*, 125; see also Wright, *Miracle*, 51–52, 80; Brown, *Miracles*, 88; Larmer, *Water*, 106; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 39–40; cf. Lawton, *Miracles*, 58; Holder, “Hume,” 57; deSilva, “Meaning,” 14–15. Thus Keller, *Miracles*, 65, criticizes Hume’s dismissal of Abbé Pâris’s miracles as fraudulent as simply revealing Hume to be a child of his era. (Monden, *Signs*, 309–21, explains them naturalistically, apparently because they are not orthodox Roman Catholic.)

341. Kreiser, *Miracles*, 399; see Hume’s tongue-in-cheek argument in Hume, *Miracles*, 44–45. Orthodox Protestant detractors sought to challenge the parallel but ultimately undermined trust in testimony and criteria for establishing genuine miracles (Kreiser, *Miracles*, 399).

342. Brown, *Miracles*, 64; for the graffiti, Kreiser, *Miracles*, 181. Our knowledge of François himself is limited because of the polemical context in which surviving reports formed (Kreiser, *Miracles*, 82). Warfield, *Miracles*, 119, complains that the claim of a Jansenist who lacked legs, as attested by two surgeons, yet grew them miraculously, is unbelievable.

of these particular miracle claims were false;³⁴³ their evidence may be correct, or it may reflect the use of political power in a propaganda war. Certainly the claims of the now-marginalized Jansenists were amenable neither to mainstream Catholics nor mainstream Protestants. But Hume fails to note either these detailed challenges to their credibility (differentiating their claims from some other historical miracle claims) or the potential political motivation for the challenges (allowing that the healing claims possibly could be more reliable than their critics conceded).

Hume, like most Catholic and Protestant critics, could dismiss Jansenist reports, but some intellectuals closer to the events felt differently—that is, those who were closer to “direct experience” than Hume was. Consider the influential mathematician Blaise Pascal, who devised a calculating machine that was the forerunner of modern computers, invented the syringe and the barometer, devised the mathematical theory of probability (hence his famous wager about faith), demonstrated the possibility of vacuums, and so forth.³⁴⁴ Pascal’s commitments to Jansenism (and his reasons for penning the *Pensées*) were reinforced precisely by the healing of his niece, Marguerite Perrier, in a Jansenist setting, long before the more controversial cures noted above. A severe, long-term fistula in her eye disappeared during the touch of a consecrated relic on March 24, 1656, at the Jansenist Port-Royal monastery. From all the evidence available, the cure must have been organic and not merely psychosomatic. The repulsive odor from her wound, which had forced her separation from the other girls, and her apparent bone deterioration vanished immediately. Her case provided significant medical evidence and was verified by the diocese. The royal physicians examined Mlle Perrier, and the Queen Mother herself was persuaded by their positive verdict of a miracle.³⁴⁵ In the next few months, some eighty further miracle claims followed.³⁴⁶

The vast majority of us today would question the relic’s authenticity (a thorn from Christ’s crown),³⁴⁷ but the dramatic recovery is difficult to deny. Even the Jansenists’ critics acceded to the official recognition of the miracle’s genuineness, but whereas Jansenists cited it as a sign of divine approval, their detractors treated it as a warning.³⁴⁸ For Hume, however, writing in a period of established Protestant

343. McGrew, “Argument,” 656–58, cites the evidence, including retractions from some witnesses and others who claimed that their documents had been tampered with. Detractors attributed less controversial minor cures to imagination or normal restorative processes. McGrew drew my attention to this material in personal correspondence (Nov. 26, 2009).

344. See the summary in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 84 (more fully on Pascal, including excerpts from his writings, 79–101). See also Pascal, *Pensées*; idem, *Life*.

345. Brown, *Miracles*, 39; Larmer, “Manuscript”; Kreiser, *Miracles*, 70–71. Mlle Perrier lived on to age eighty-seven, continuing to affirm miracles at the tomb of François de Paris (Brown, *Miracles*, 39–40). (For the Catholic tradition of miracles near saints’ tombs, see also examples in Duffin, *Miracles*, 45, 47, 151, 153–55.) Hume, *Miracles*, 47–48, acknowledges the abundant testimony for the cure of Pascal’s niece, then merely dismisses without much argument its value because it is miracle testimony.

346. Kreiser, *Miracles*, 71.

347. Hume’s ridicule rises to an eloquent pitch here (*Miracles*, 48).

348. Daston, “Facts,” 119. Hume himself acknowledged that the Jansenists’ enemies could not deny the early miracles, recognizing scores of respectable witnesses (*Miracles*, 44–47). On some Jansenists’ apologetic use of miracles, see, e.g., Kreiser, *Miracles*, 71–73, 97.

and Catholic polemic over whose miracles were authentic, all miracle claims were religiously partisan and thus unreliable.³⁴⁹ Though these miracles were recent, public, and attested by many witnesses—that is, they fulfilled Hume’s evidential criteria—he dismissed them as irrelevant because they would have entailed what he considered a violation of nature.³⁵⁰ His dismissal, then, rested on his argument challenged above; Jansenist claims were rejected by Hume, Conyers Middleton, and others not because of lack of evidence but simply because they were *miracle* claims.³⁵¹

Hume follows the line of argument established by a deist predecessor challenging recent miracle claims surrounding the Huguenots (1705). Deist Thomas Chubb emphasized the vast number of otherwise reliable witnesses, arguing that they were better attested than NT miracle claims, yet dismissed their credibility by appealing to the authority of consensus: “not one in ten believe it now.”³⁵² Other deists advanced the same form of argument, which Hume merely dressed in a special outfit, with Jansenists as the target.³⁵³ Hume could scoff at Jansenists with impunity, since they were too Catholic for Protestant tastes (Hume’s primary English readership) yet not acceptable to Catholics either.³⁵⁴

Hume recognized abundant reliable witnesses for such a case and that by all normal means of inquiry, one would conclude that a miracle occurred. Nevertheless, Hume felt justified in dismissing such evidence by appealing to his premise that miracles are impossible.³⁵⁵ It is difficult to comprehend what would qualify as circular reasoning if this approach does not. Hume could logically deny that any evidence for a miracle can be compelling only if he could a priori show that miracles are “logically impossible (that is, conceptually impossible, like a ‘square circle’ or a ‘married bachelor’)”; yet Hume does not do so.³⁵⁶ Some critics further counter that Hume’s own approach is epistemologically flawed in that it proves referentially self-defeating.³⁵⁷

349. He deemed miracle reports in religious contexts irrational (a view critiqued in Larmer, *Water*, 105, who notes that Hume unfairly universalizes). Yet Hume found the accusation of religious deceit ready at hand in Protestant polemic against Catholics (on which see Daston, “Facts,” 118).

350. Swinburne, *Miracle*, 16; Beckwith, *Argument*, 51.

351. Brown, *Miracles*, 71. Hume presents against them a doctor’s report that such cures were naturally impossible, to which of course those proclaiming a miracle responded that this was the entire point (Ellin, “Again,” 209). Middleton’s approach was limited to postbiblical claims and exhibited an anti-Catholic purpose (Fogelin, *Defense*, 1); though he was apparently less committed to the literal historical veracity of Gen 1–3 than were many of his contemporaries (Frei, *Eclipse*, 5–6, 120–22, 125, 168, 171), this may have been a genre observation.

352. Burns, *Debate*, 74.

353. *Ibid.*, 75.

354. On contemporary Protestant audiences rejecting Jansenist testimonies, see *ibid.*, 174.

355. Cf. Larmer, “Manuscript.”

356. Beckwith, “History and Miracles,” 94; Wright, *Miracle*, 52; on the coherency of miracles, see, e.g., Dietl, “Miracles”; Mumford, “Miracles,” 191; Blaauw, “Verdediging” (carefully defining terms); Helm, “Miraculous,” 91 (contrasting “squaring the circle”). Hume excludes any evidence for miracles because they are conceptually impossible—because of his a priori assumption of what is conceptually possible (Brown, *Miracles*, 94).

357. A problem also for some of today’s cosmologies, on the principle that we have no reason to expect that a product of pure chance (such as the human mind would be assumed to be) should be able to reason

Hume's argument is not inductive; rather, it is designed to support his conclusion. When he cites the need for public events attested by many credible eyewitnesses and then dismisses even their testimony, his language is too general to function as a full argument in itself. Rather, he is simply listing ad hoc characteristics that Christian apologists cited in favor of the apostolic witnesses, which he then finds deficient.³⁵⁸ His failure to provide a complete argument at these points invited severe critique from his contemporaries.³⁵⁹

Other Noninductive Elements in Hume's Approach

Other factors also indicate that Hume is not arguing inductively. I have noted first that Hume does not argue inductively, but constructs a deductive argument against miracles based on a probability rigged by his nontheistic starting assumptions. A second observation is that Hume's explicit exclusion of beliefs of "ignorant and barbarous nations"³⁶⁰ reflects ethnocentric bias that the vast majority of scholars would reject as unacceptable today. This is a serious problem, but I reserve a more extensive response to it for my discussion in later chapters (most explicitly in ch. 7). Suffice it to note now that he was again adopting a typical deist argument; John Toland, for example, condemned superstitions that flourished among "ignorant and barbarous" peoples.³⁶¹ Third, Hume explicitly mentions even some European miracle claims from his own era (i.e., the Jansenists) but then rejects them, because, he contends, miracles cannot happen. I have already commented on the circular character of this reasoning.

Fourth, Hume uses many bogus claims of miracles (already rejected by many Christian critics) to deny the reality of any miracles.³⁶² This guilt-by-association approach, however, reflects the logical fallacy of false analogy, of generalizing based on specific cases without examining other cases that may differ in relevant details.³⁶³ Hume thus effectively argues here against a straw man. To proceed genuinely

at the abstract level necessary to authenticate epistemologies (cf. Polkinghorne in Frankenberg, *Faith*, 345; Nash, "Conceptual Systems," 127–30, following Taylor, *Metaphysics*, 115–19; Plantinga, *Warrant*, chs. 11–12). Survival of the fittest might explain adaptable intelligence, but does this alone explain reasoning at such a level of abstraction (e.g., theoretical mathematics) when this becomes relevant only in recent millennia (and most commonly in the past few centuries)? Is it another "lucky accident"? (Cf. similar discussion in Polkinghorne, *Reality*, 41–46, 51–57.) While acknowledging that intellectuals lack unanimity, some believe that design fares better than chance by orders of magnitude as the likeliest explanation for human intellectual capacity (esp. in view of the limited time frame for chance to accomplish such a feat, from the Cambrian explosion and even more narrowly in the span of human development).

358. Burns, *Debate*, 237; against Hume's generalizations here, see also Breggen, "Miracle Reports," 6; idem, "Seeds."

359. Burns, *Debate*, 237–38 (citing, e.g., John Leland).

360. Hume, *Miracles*, 37; idem, "Miracles," 36.

361. Burns, *Debate*, 75 (noting that Toland was targeting witchcraft, not miracles, but citing Thomas Chubb with a more general argument). Toland's influence is independently noted in McGrew, "Argument," 653. On Toland, see further Okello, *Case*, 103–8.

362. Hume, *Miracles*, 36–37.

363. See Larmer, *Water*, 121–22, citing the Pyrrhonic fallacy (an objection noted already in the eighteenth century; see Burns, *Debate*, 117, 119); Smart, *Philosophers*, 43; Beckwith, *Argument*, 51–52.

inductively, Hume would have to examine each miracle claim and show it to be false; and he still would not have foreclosed the possibility of some miracle claim. So long as he proceeds inductively, a single confirmed miracle would disprove his case.³⁶⁴ Indeed, reliable witnesses for sufficiently numerous different miracles, if genuinely independent, support the class of events.³⁶⁵

It is impossible to prove a negative by induction when one has observed a limited range of data, and it is precarious to infer an inflexibly negative rule by induction when abundant eyewitness claims exist that one merely refuses to admit as evidence. Inferring from superstitious supernatural claims that *all* supernatural claims must be rejected is logically analogous to rejecting any form of theism because we have found earlier forms of polytheism wanting. The latter argument would have been more scandalous in his day, however; his milieu was better prepared to reject direct divine action in nature than to reject theism in general.

Hume's Critics

Despite its glaring weaknesses, Hume's approach to miracles became popular and dominated much of the thought of the following era. Nevertheless, from the start Hume had serious critics. Christian apologist William Paley (1743–1805) sought to counter Hume by arguing that reliable testimony should be permitted to challenge what people assumed was natural law.³⁶⁶ Paley's approach on this point is a reasonable one if one's definition of natural law proceeds from inductive observations,³⁶⁷ as Hume's is supposed to.³⁶⁸ Others, for example, E. A. Borger

Some consider transferring associations from one object to another often unethical when used in persuasion (cf. McLaughlin, *Ethics*, 146–47); perhaps more precisely, it is poor logic.

364. Smart, *Philosophers*, 33–34 (detailing the relevant principle of logic); Holder, "Hume," 58; Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 100; Keener, *Gift*, 90; cf. Lawton, *Miracles*, 54; others also discuss the idea of any single miracle increasing the probability for miracles in general (e.g., Tucker, "Miracles," 383, on Earman). Some decry the view "that one counter-instance can falsify a law" as "Popper's fallacy" (Mumford, "Laws," 271, against Popper, *Logic*, 62–63, and others); since I am treating laws as descriptive, general statements that may be modified by other principles or actors, I am not making this claim generally. Rather, I am here responding to Hume's less flexible "uniformity of nature," which leaves no room for miracles. He claims that induction rules out miracles; yet by induction a single instance of a miracle would discredit his inflexible argument. (Although the supernatural interpretation might be deemed a matter of probability, in some cases the probability could be very high.)

365. See Holder, "Hume," 54–56 (challenging Schlesinger).

366. Mullin, *Miracles*, 33. For Paley's argument, see Paley, "Evidences." On Hume's critique of Paley's version of the design argument, see, e.g., Smith, "Introduction," 28.

367. See early critics of Hume (including Paley, 137–38) in Craig, *Faith*, 134–38; also Brown, *Miracles*, 89–91, and (on Paley) 144–46; Lawton, *Miracles*, 62–80 (including Paley, 70–74).

368. By depending only on what has been observed, Hume's view of laws of nature should not rule out what has not been observed (Cramer, "Miracles," 132; on 133 he notes the earlier expectation that swans are white by definition, but notes that some swans are grayish in color). It could reduce its probability if nature were uniform, but we now know that nature behaves differently in different conditions, not all of which are known to us (divine conditions being the specifically relevant differentiating factor postulated for claims of genuine miracles).

(1784–1820), also sought to defend supernaturalism.³⁶⁹ I have already mentioned Babbage, Price, and other critics, and further adversaries were legion.³⁷⁰

Much of the intellectual milieu eventually embraced Hume's approach, however: most thinkers elevated laws over testimonies, and once they did so for present miracles they inevitably applied the same objection to biblical testimonies for miracles as well.³⁷¹ They did so despite critics who pinpointed the problem in their logic. Thus, for example, in 1865 Rev. James B. Mozley (1813–78) pointed out this same problem I and others have continued to note. He complained that natural law tended to be a generalization from many examples, but such a generalization to exclude exceptions was an invalid use of inductive principles.³⁷² Generalization should accommodate all the evidence; thus, this approach to natural law unfairly ruled out exceptional cases, which induction ought to have taken into account.³⁷³ Completely sidestepping the point, antisupernaturalist polemicist John Tyndall retorted that scientific induction had brought remarkable progress.³⁷⁴ By contrast, appealing to evidence that Hume would have excluded, many scholars have countered that an inductive examination of evidence from most cultures in history includes abundant testimony to supernatural phenomena.³⁷⁵ Among others, the coauthor with Charles Darwin of the theory of natural selection articulated this objection to antisupernaturalism.³⁷⁶ Scientific induction is useful; it is Hume's epistemological reductionism that is problematic.

While the conclusion of Hume's argument has pervaded the Western worldview today, critics of his argument are stronger today than in the past. As David Johnson noted in a recent monograph on Hume and miracles from Cornell University Press,

369. See Van der Woude, "Discussie."

370. See the survey in Burns, *Debate*, 176–246; for critics of earlier deist formulations, 96–130.

371. Mullin, *Miracles*, 33.

372. *Ibid.*, 37; cf. Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 22; on Mozley's arguments more generally, see Brown, *Miracles*, 159–62. Against extrapolating nature's uniformity with what we know of nature, see Mozley, *Lectures*, 26–48 (e.g., 26–27, 34–35). In 1925, Tennant, *Miracle*, 17–18, regarded Mozley's basic contention as on one level "unanswerable" (18), though often ignored, and though he averred its limitations in view of subsequent discussion (cf. further mention in 63, 81, 87, 89). Along with another of Mozley's arguments, this argument "reshaped the miracle debate" of his era (Mullin, *Miracles*, 40); some scholars have continued to respond to Mozley (e.g., Hay, "Contranatural View," critiquing his lectures). Defending induction in philosophy of science, see Shimony, "Scientific Inference" (concluding on 161 that Hume's "basic lesson remains valid," despite refinements; the nature of our existence that compels our dependence on induction also limits "our ability to justify" it).

373. Cf., e.g., Earman, "Bayes," 298: if Hume says that no amount of evidence can challenge a putative law of nature (which results from induction), his argument is illogical and cannot be supported by any form of Bayesianism.

374. Mullin, *Miracles*, 40–41. For Tyndall's hostility to religion, see, e.g., Numbers, "Aggressors," 34–35.

375. E.g., Wink, "Write," 6; from a less supernatural perspective, yet acknowledging the pervasiveness of phenomena so interpreted, Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 310.

376. Alfred Russel Wallace (Mullin, *Miracles*, 186). Wallace, increasingly discussed today, was a spiritualist, not a Christian (see, e.g., Herrick, *Mythologies*, 113–14; Michael Casey, "Forgotten Evolutionist Lives in Darwin's Shadow," accessed at http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/as_fea_malaysia_forgotten_evolutionist, June 28, 2009), but his position does illustrate that more than two approaches exist.

the view that there is in Hume's essay, or in what can be reconstructed from it, any argument or reply or objection that is even superficially good, much less, powerful or devastating, is simply a philosophical myth. The mostly willing hearers who have been swayed by Hume on this matter have been held captive by nothing other than Hume's great eloquence.³⁷⁷

Johnson argues that Hume's argument is so inconsistent that it appears incoherent unless some unstated assumptions are fleshed out in some way or another; and scholars thus reconstruct the argument in various ways. Johnson's persuasive thesis is that *none* of these reconstructions provide a coherent argument against miracles.³⁷⁸ The title of John Earman's very different Oxford University Press monograph seems to concur: *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument Against Miracles*.³⁷⁹ Yet despite its logical weaknesses, Hume's essay provided the primary argument behind most prejudice against miracles today.

Conclusion

According to a common interpretation of Hume's argument against miracles, miracles violate inviolable natural law and hence are impossible. Most scholars today note that if this is Hume's argument, it is a circular argument by fiat of definition and therefore proves nothing. Other questions aside, if a deity genuinely generated the patterns of nature, no logical necessity precludes that deity from acting at will on nature at a more complex level, just as lesser intelligent agents *within* nature can do. Hume also argued, apparently based on this first argument against miracles, that eyewitness testimony can never be sufficiently persuasive to overcome the uniform experience against miracles. If this argument against testimony is understood as it usually is, it likewise constitutes a circular argument, since whether human experience is uniformly against miracles is precisely the question under debate. Given abundant and sometimes well-attested claims of miracles today, Hume's argument on this point should appear even less persuasive in a twenty-first-century multicultural context than it appeared in his own day (see chs. 7–12).

377. Johnson, *Hume*, 4. Or, I might add for the many who have heard of his essay but not read it, by Hume's reputation. Cf. also Earman, *Failure*, 71.

378. For various reconstructions, see the survey in Johnson, *Hume*, 22–27 (J. L. Mackie), 28–45 (John Stuart Mill), 46–54 (Antony Flew), 55–67 (Jordan Howard Sobel). For Mackie's argument, see Mackie, "Miracles and Testimony"; against his conclusions, see, e.g., Reppert, "Miracles"; Ward, "Miracles and Testimony"; Otte, "Treatment." Mill's axiom of uniformity treated causes and results as invariable (McClendon, *Events*, 5); against Mill's approach to miracles, see McGrath, "Mill"; earlier, briefly, Tennant, *Miracle*, 15–18; Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 31–34.

379. See also the early Cambridge publication, Taylor, *Hume*. Taylor repeatedly notes the "confused" state of Hume's argument (e.g., 15) and concludes (54) by wondering, because philosophy must involve more than "surface opinions" irrelevant to one's personal life, "whether Hume was really a great philosopher, or only a 'very clever man.'"

Hume's argument proceeds mostly by definition rather than induction, and is logically unworkable even on his own philosophic premises. It succeeded historically largely on the weight of his intellectual prestige and its appeal to some popular trends in his intellectual milieu. As Oxford theologian Keith Ward points out, Hume's arguments regarding miracles "are exceptionally poor and are found acceptable only by those who are (rightly) impressed by his general philosophical acuteness—an acuteness that does not carry over into his remarks on miracles."³⁸⁰

I have omitted in this chapter some points of Hume's argument that I will treat briefly in relevant later chapters. These include especially his specific prejudice against religious testimony, particularly in view of testimony from competing religions (ch. 6) and his prejudice against testimony from "barbarous and ignorant" peoples (ch. 7). We must also turn to broader consequences and problems that arose from the position of Hume and those who shared it.

380. Ward, "Believing," 742. Cf. Johnson, *Hume*, 4; Earman, *Failure*, passim.

Developing Hume's Skepticism toward Miracles

Among many academics . . . , the belief that miracles are impossible in principle seems natural, normal, obvious, undeniable—rather like religious beliefs in close-knit, traditional societies. The conviction has an aura of neutrality and objectivity, as if dogmatic metaphysical naturalism were somehow not as much a personal conviction as is dogmatic religion, as if rejection of the very possibility of transcendent reality were the default position, one obvious to any intelligent person. —Brad Gregory, in the 2006 theme issue of *History and Theory*¹

In the previous chapter, I noted Hume's argument, or at least its frequent application, against miracles: miracles as violations of nature are more incredible than eyewitnesses and their interpretations can be trustworthy, and therefore no evidence can prove persuasive for miracles. I concurred with many that this argument is circular, even granted something like Hume's definition of miracles. I also suggested that Hume's case was more persuasive in a context in which miracles were rarely claimed or accepted among Hume's intellectual peers than it should be today; I shall address reasons for this context in chapter 10. Hume's argument from the supposedly uniform course of nature cannot appear as persuasive in settings in which vast numbers of people have claimed to have witnessed miracles, a point that I will develop in chapters 7–12 and especially chapters 7–9, 12. That

1. Gregory, "Secular Bias," 138; for ideological secularism's function as a religion, see also Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 40 (following Minogue, "Religion"); Wolfe, "Potential," 34. (Such critiques involve secularism in its form as an antireligious dogma, not in its popular sense of religious tolerance, which is a positive value with Anabaptist and other religious roots. Part of the problem is divergent uses of the label "secular"; see discussion in Boer, "Introduction," 2–3; very different senses in Plantinga, "Science," 94–97.) For a comparison of use of even scientific theories as working hypotheses with religious faith, cf. Gingerich, "Scientist," 27; Kuhn, *Structure*, 158. For some approaches to science fitting sociological definitions of religion, see Wuthnow, "Contradictions," 164.

is not to decide in advance what proportion of such claims might reflect authentic supernatural activity, a matter discussed in chapters 13–15.

In this chapter, I survey some continuing developments of the philosophic tradition against miracles to which Hume contributed, as well as to some questions raised by Hume but not treated in the previous chapter.

Consequences and Problems of the Humean Consensus

The sort of arguments articulated by Hume eventually became dominant in much of academic philosophy, with far-reaching effects. I shall address some of these effects in this chapter. Among these effects, in time, some forms of theology adjusted to fit the Humean consensus, conceding that God works in the natural order only through means already established in that order. Even more often, historiographic discussion came to *a priori* exclude the question of supernatural causation.

We must also address in this chapter some relevant Humean arguments not treated in the preceding chapter. Beyond the dominance of Hume's approach typically presupposed in the academy, his objection to miracles based on competing religions could exert an independent appeal today, though on the whole it may carry less weight today than it once did. One implicit concern about granting the possibility of supernatural causation appears to be the compromise of academic religious neutrality, though one need not compromise such neutrality to conduct the investigation. At the same time, modern readers are also less apt to count religions against one another, weakening Hume's appeal. More generally, many of Hume's arguments no longer make the strong sense in our contemporary milieu that they made in the context of English deism and Christian apologetic of his era. Because the larger worldview is shifting, even some traditional academic boundaries prohibiting discussion of supernatural perspectives are being challenged more freely, an observation that will prepare us for following chapters.

Effects in Philosophy

Lest we think that skeptical currents of thought such as Hume's had little practical effect, the gap between the Enlightenment elite and more traditionally religious masses affected, among other areas, the treatment of mental illness. Among the poor confined to asylums, "patients who insisted that their torments were spiritual afflictions were liable to have their beliefs numbered among their symptoms."² Both John Wesley and George Whitefield secured the release of individuals from such asylums whom they believed to be merely religiously devoted; ninety patients admitted in Bedlam between 1772 and 1795 were said to be "insane because of religion and Methodism."³

2. MacDonald, "Healing," 124.

3. Ibid. Early U.S. Methodists were also accused of "driving some persons mad" (Wigger, *Saint*, 66). Similarly, German rationalists falsely charged some with insanity caused by Pietism (Ising, *Blumhardt*, 263).

Better-known effects are those on the development of religion and philosophy. In philosophy, Hegel, with his long-standing influence in German thought, followed by Strauss and other Hegelians, was particularly effective in redirecting the course of modern Western thought. On this subject he articulated an antithesis "between ancient religion" and nineteenth-century "intellectual sophistication."⁴ This vantage point solidified into an uncontested consensus until relatively recent times,⁵ without any adequate impartial, massive empirical investigation into diverse miracle claims.⁶ Although scientists, like other people, do not live daily life bound exclusively to the dictates of empirical epistemology, modern Enlightenment thought has often identified "scientific" as true and "unscientific" as false. Modern thought's simultaneous a priori "exclusion of the supernatural from the domain of science" taints supernatural approaches with the suspicion of "falsity and irrationality." Yet such identifications unfairly load the deck epistemologically.⁷

This radical Enlightenment approach continued into the twentieth century. Early twentieth-century logical positivists, accepting only a priori truths or empirically verifiable ones, excluded metaphysics, normative ethics, and theology. That positivism's approach was unverifiable by its own epistemology, however, ultimately weakened the approach's appeal, especially in its strict form.⁸ One of

and used legal force to suppress some teachers of Scripture (91). Even in the early twentieth century, it is said that some charged others with insanity on the grounds of the others' religion (Stewart, *Only Believe*, 20). The charge already was available in Protestant denunciation of Catholic miracle claims (Daston, "Facts," 118). Like his Anglican peers, Wesley disliked Hume's essay on miracles (Deconinck-Brossard, "Acts of God," 374).

4. See Kee, *Miracle*, 14–16. There are ethnocentric elements of Hegel's construction, consistent with some dominant perspectives of his era. Despite Hegel's dissatisfaction with Prussian corruption, he believed that the *Geist* had moved history toward its outstanding pinnacle in his own nineteenth-century German civilization. For his relatively negative assessment of Judaism, see, e.g., Luft, "Unfolding," 56–57.

5. E.g., in contrast to what we saw in ch. 4, Darwin, despite his brilliance, dismissed early Christian miracle claims as the views of incomprehensibly "ignorant and credulous" ancients, like the beliefs of all "barbarians" (Frankenberry, *Faith*, 135, quoting from Darwin's autobiography). In his early years he nevertheless publicly presented his natural selection theory as compatible with divine laws in nature (Moore, "Darwin's Faith," 146–47), a view widely shared (see Livingstone, *Defenders*). On the historical-critical method, especially regarding its reductionist, antisupernaturalist form, to recent times, see Kee, *Miracle*, 12–41.

6. Some cross-cultural studies recognize phenomena that various cultures interpret as caused by intelligent suprahuman entities; much of the anthropological literature addressing spirit possession is also sufficiently objective to glean data regardless of one's interpretive grid (cf., e.g., descriptions in Kiev, *Magic*, passim; Goodman, *Demons*; Goodman, Henney, and Pressel, *Trance*; see more fully appendix B). There have also been helpful investigations into particular healing movements (e.g., Harrell, *Possible*; Hardesty, *Faith Cure*), but to my knowledge no one has yet begun collecting the many case studies of healings that could be gathered even from the circles in which I move, except on an anecdotal level.

7. O'Connor, *Healing Traditions*, 15; cf. also 16 and more generally all of ch. 1 ("Defining and Understanding Health Belief Systems," 1–34).

8. McGrath, *Universe*, 195; Geivett and Habermas, "Introduction," 14 (noting on 15 the resurgence of explicit Christian thought in philosophy); cf. Clark, *Philosophy of Science*, 80; K. Clark, *Philosophers*, 11–12; McInerney, *Miracles*, 17–18; D'Souza, *Christianity*, 182–83. Popper, *Conjectures*, 198–99, argues that empirical theories, like theories in general, can be described as rational only with respect to the problems they are meant to resolve. As noted, many view metaphysical naturalism as similarly epistemologically self-defeating (cf. Nash, "Conceptual Systems," 127–30) as an a priori (cf. Giere, "Naturalism," 214).

positivism's common faults has been that, by merely assuming the correctness of accepted scientific paradigms, it renders itself immune to correction⁹ and thus could actually hinder scientific progress.¹⁰ It also neglected the role of subjectivity in the formulation of scientific theories.¹¹ Moreover, as those ignorant of history are destined to repeat it, positivists' deliberate neglect of the history of philosophy led them to repeat many of the previous century's debates as if for the first time.¹²

The value of positivism is its empiricism, but one can utilize the empirical approach for the sort of data it was designed to address without thereby excluding every other epistemological approach, such as abstract mathematics or even questions about epistemology itself. Traditional scientific empiricism involves knowledge that can be replicated experimentally. But if all knowledge were limited to this approach, there would be little place for historians, journalists, or members of other professions working with different forms of human knowledge.¹³ Nor can one justify an exclusively experimentalist epistemology by experimental means.¹⁴ As historian of philosophy Frederick Copleston notes, "there are other levels of experience and knowledge than that represented by empirical science."¹⁵ In fact, multiple epistemologies are needed; as abstract mathematics and empirical inquiry can be employed in a complementary manner, we may need different methods to discover different kinds of knowledge.¹⁶ In many cases, complementary explanatory models, each explaining different elements of our data, can work together.¹⁷

9. Kuhn, *Structure*, 98.

10. Barbour, *Myths*, 36.

11. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 11, 93.

12. Colodny, "Introduction," xii–xiii.

13. See, e.g., Gorsuch, "Limits," 284–85, noting that the epistemic method must be tailored to the discipline. Cf. also the observation in Hart, *Delusions*, 10–11; Licona, *Resurrection*, 102.

14. Ian Hutchinson, head of the Department of Nuclear Science and Engineering at MIT, argues eloquently against pure scientism (the approach that accepts only scientific knowledge as meaningful); see Ecklund, *Science*, 107–8 (cf. a political scientist's warning against scientists pronouncing on areas outside their expertise, in *ibid.*, 138; biologists on 139–40). Professional overspecialization is largely responsible for the disdain in which a minority of scientists hold nonscientific approaches to knowledge. Some in the humanities have likewise written disparagingly of the hubris of scientific knowledge. Neither side's prejudice against the other is helpful.

15. Copleston, *Philosophy*, 43–44. Ecklund, *Science*, 17, notes that some scientists, although a minority, have regarded science as the only reliable guide for all areas of life. (On 18, she offers the example of one scientist who equated the value of human existence with that of cockroaches, dismissing questions of meaning as unimportant.)

16. Cf. Gerhart and Russell, "Mathematics," 122–24; Smart, *Philosophers*, 30, 40; cf. the limitations of science and even mathematics (with a qualified reading of Kurt Gödel) in Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 26–27, 52; Jaki, *Patterns*, 200–201 (noting the limits of scientific epistemology and "statistical significance"); Margenau, "Laws," 62; Mott, "Science"; Salam, "Science," 97–98; Townes, "Question," 123; Granit, "Attitude," 178; Snell, "Science," 211; Szentágothai, "Existence," 215. For multiple epistemological criteria, see Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 109–10; cf. Peach, "Miracles," 82.

17. Niels Bohr viewed apparently contradictory aspects of electron behavior as complementary (MacKinnon, "Complementarity," 256, 261–69; cf. Rescher, *Studies*, 145n2; for the historic philosophic background of Bohr's approach, see Loder and Neidhardt, "Dialectic," 284–88; discussion in Kaiser, "Complementarity"; for evaluation, see Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 167–70; but negatively in Bohr's case, cf. Saunders, "Physics," 578); Kant also argued for some complementarity (MacKinnon, "Complementarity,"

In contrast to pure empiricism, even much of the structure of mathematics rests on axioms that are presupposed rather than proved;¹⁸ they “work” within their closed system, but they do not allow the “pure” deductive logic that some earlier rationalists supposed.

Partly for reasons such as those noted above, many philosophers today readily distance themselves from positivism and positivist epistemology.¹⁹ The movement's wane in professional philosophy did not, however, immediately offset its effects in twentieth-century historiography,²⁰ nor did it neutralize all of this approach's common legacy of prejudice against religion.²¹ First, however, we turn to the impact of philosophic skepticism on religion and theology.

Effects in Religion and Theology

The impact of Hume, Kant, and positivists on discomfort with miracles and other transcendent claims remains in some theological circles, although much ground has been taken back by those working in philosophy of religion and philosophical theology.²² The strongest impact on religion, however, was felt in the centuries between skepticism's ascent and its more recent travails.

On a religious level, eighteenth-century English deism was more than ready to accommodate the arguments of Hume and others for antisupe naturalism; nineteenth-century religion directly absorbed such a worldview into a naturalistic German Protestant liberalism.²³ As I have noted, Hume himself was not strictly a deist,²⁴ and some of his arguments undermined deism as well as monotheistic orthodoxies.²⁵ Nevertheless, some of his arguments reflected deist influence,²⁶

259–61); and some complementarity of diverse perspectives seems a necessary approach to our diverse data (cf. *ibid.*; cf. the complementarity of some objective and subjective approaches in Ward, “Cross-Cultural Study,” 16). Some appropriation of scientific models in philosophy of religion, however, is not as nuanced as it could be (cf., e.g., the critique of Barbour in Woodsmall, “Analysis,” 167–256).

18. Stannard, “Purpose,” 43.

19. E.g., Popper, *Myth of Framework*, 67, 75–76; *idem*, *Conjectures*, 21–22, 69–71, 156–57, 253–92 *passim*; Polanyi, *Knowledge*, e.g., 9, 11; Copleston, *Philosophy*, 26–44; cf. Hesse, “Language”; Maxwell, “Theories,” 33; Craffert, “Origins,” 337, 342; some who claim its heritage depart substantially from its method (cf. Giberson and Artigas, *Oracles*, 121–22, on Hawking at an earlier point).

20. Geivett and Habermas, “Introduction,” 15.

21. See Marsden, *Outrageous Idea*, 26–28.

22. See Morris, “Introduction,” 3–4.

23. Geivett and Habermas, “Introduction,” 11. Nevertheless, many American deists appealed to metaphysical grounds foreign to Hume, and Hume's political views made him controversial in the colonies (see Fosl, “Hume”).

24. Fosl disclaimed the title of deist (from a testimonial anecdote about Hume cited in Fosl, “Hume,” 171, 188n23). If meant sincerely, Hume may have allowed an escape for fideists out of respect for his Calvinist upbringing or Presbyterian friends (Backhaus, “Falsehood,” 290–91), but *Miracles*, 55, may be satire (Gaskin, *Philosophy*, 125, leaves open both options). While he claims to avoid attacking all religion, little of it is genuinely immune from his assaults (Smith, “Introduction,” 19, 51), and he reacted against his Calvinist upbringing (1–13, 47). Mistrust of religion permanently supplanted the religion of his younger days (76–79, reproducing a final interview with Hume).

25. Fosl, “Hume,” 174.

26. See Brown, *Miracles*, 52–53; Burns, *Debate*, 141 (cf. 70–95).

and his prestige undoubtedly increased the respectability of such arguments in Europe.²⁷ Long before Hume's essay, deist John Toland (1670–1722) had already embraced naturalistic explanations for OT miracles, in contrast to Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768), who viewed them as Moses's deception of the people.²⁸ The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), who knew but fell out with Hume, valued Scripture but believed that Jesus's teachings mattered more than his miracles. On his view, the miracles might be explained naturally and simply appeared miraculous to those who did not know better.²⁹

Naturalistic approaches to religion grew quickly. For example, Heinrich Paulus (1761–1851) offered naturalistic explanations for Gospel miracles.³⁰ Thus, for instance, the healings merely benefited the ill persons' nervous systems; the dead were only in "suspended animation"; and the feeding of many people merely involved setting a good example of food sharing.³¹ Earlier, Karl Friedrich Bahrdt (1741–92) opined that the secret order of Essenes provided medical and psychosomatic cures; he suggested that Jesus and the Essenes merely accommodated superstition to communicate rational truth.³² Karl Heinrich Venturini (1768–1849) similarly postulated that Jesus carried medicaments around to cure people.³³ As I have complained elsewhere, "Both Bahrdt and Venturini seem to have conveniently overestimated ancient medical capabilities."³⁴

Ultimately more persuasively, because his view requires fewer gymnastics to explain the text,³⁵ David Friedrich Strauss (1808–74) explained early Christian miracle stories as myths depicted as history.³⁶ Strauss developed the eighteenth-

27. Similarities existed between Hume's approach and deism (Fosl, "Hume," 174–75; Backhaus, "Falsehood," 292), but American deists did not draw much on Hume (Fosl, "Hume," 175).

28. Lang, "Toland"; see also Brown, *Miracles*, 49. On Reimarus, see Schweitzer, *Quest*, 14–26; Brown, *Miracles*, 107–10; Heyer, *Jesus Matters*, 21–23; Mullin, *History*, 167. Note also the early eighteenth-century debates addressed in Hillerbrand, "Historicity."

29. Burne, "Rousseau," 143 (on his valuing Scripture), 145–47 (on miracles, esp. 146 on ancients not yet understanding the natural explanation).

30. Sabourin, *Miracles*, 63; Geivett and Habermas, "Introduction," 11; Schweitzer, *Quest*, 48–57; Trench, *Miracles*, 59–62.

31. Loos, *Miracles*, 17. Most scholars today recognize the weakness of this approach (e.g., Eve, *Healer*, 147); Clark, "Miracles and Law," 24, disdains it as so forced as to suggest that its promoters are disingenuous.

32. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 39–44.

33. *Ibid.*, 44–45.

34. Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 4.

35. Most exegetes today view the naturalistic explanations as "ridiculous" (Placher, *Mark*, 78), not to mention their missing the points of the reports (see, e.g., O'Grady, "Miracles," 371), which constitute virtually the only sources we have.

36. Frei, *Eclipse*, 233–44 (see esp. 236, 239), 275; Brown, *Philosophy*, 152; *idem*, *Miracles*, 117–23; Loos, *Miracles*, 19–21; Sabourin, *Miracles*, 63–64; Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 14; Keller, *Miracles*, 80–91; Geivett and Habermas, "Introduction," 12; Dunn, *Remembered*, 32–34. For a nearly contemporary critique, see Trench, *Miracles*, 62–67; even Schweitzer, *Quest*, 68–95, opined that Strauss went too far. On Strauss, see further Heyer, *Jesus Matters*, 24–25; Paget, "Quests," 143; Rössler, "Mensch." Strauss did value the imaginative ideals he thought the miracles symbolized (Zachman, "Meaning," 12–13); he allowed for some naturalistic interpretations rather than myth in his third edition (1838–39, concessions retracted in his fourth, in 1840) but never conceded a supernatural approach (Brown, *Miracles*, 121–22). On the

century emphasis on naturalistic historical explanation, using literary-psychological categories to preserve the value of the text while stripping it of any "unhistorical" supernaturalist elements.³⁷ Because we would expect that the formation of myths of the sort that Strauss envisions would take more than a handful of decades, Strauss needed to date the Gospels quite late. Thus he went against all concrete internal and external evidence by dating the Gospels to the second century,³⁸ an expedient that most scholars will not follow today.³⁹ While usually forgetting his untenable dating of the sources, Strauss's mythological approach retains heirs today,⁴⁰ though it is not, I think, dominant in historical Jesus scholarship.⁴¹ Correcting it thus remains one significant motivation for this book.⁴²

Interestingly, Strauss did hear of contemporary miracle claims involving Lutheran pastor Johann Christoph Blumhardt (see ch. 10), and a friend of his found himself cured of inability to walk after visiting Blumhardt. Consistent with his worldview, however, Strauss apparently dismissed the friend's cure as psychosomatic.⁴³ Likewise, he regarded Blumhardt as a sincere pastor who was simply limited mentally.⁴⁴ For his part, Blumhardt, who also had theological training that included exposure to rationalism, did not have a high view of Strauss either.⁴⁵

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), who two centuries after Spinoza popularized antisupernaturalism in theology, used syllogistic reasoning that follows only if one accepts his naturalistic premise from the start.⁴⁶ (I have noted that Spinoza's views depended on his pantheistic assumptions. Schleiermacher seems to have

influence of Strauss on modern academic treatment of miracles, see further Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 32–33. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72) viewed miracle as fantasy or wish fulfillment (Brown, *Miracles*, 123–24; Keller, *Miracles*, 94–108; cf. Larson, "Centuries," 96–98).

37. See Frei, *Eclipse*, 239, 241–42; cf. 274. Strauss did allow for Jesus's cure of "nervous" disorders (so Wilson, "Miracles," 13).

38. Note this complaint in Sabourin, *Miracles*, 64; Bernard, "Miracle," 392.

39. Thus, as Dunn, *Remembered*, 672, notes, these stories were recounted as miracles from their first tellings. Those who date the Gospels or some of them to the second century (e.g., Koester; Pervo) remain a respectable but small minority.

40. Sabourin, *Miracles*, 64, notes that this approach appears most commonly in the form of scholars speaking of the early Christian community generating stories about Jesus's miracles without actually accounting for their origin.

41. See, e.g., critiques in Evans, "Mythology"; Craig, "Tomb" (regarding the resurrection, esp. 67–69), and the work of Burridge, myself, and many others on Gospel genre.

42. With many others, I have argued elsewhere against elaborate legendary accretion in the first-century Gospels (Keener, *Historical Jesus*), and I think viewing the Gospel narratives as mythical allegories would have even fewer advocates.

43. Ining, *Blumhardt*, 222–23 (regarding Eduard Mörike's improved ability to walk).

44. *Ibid.*, 93. Though rarely investigating any claims firsthand, contemporary rationalists mocked Blumhardt and those who claimed firsthand experience of the healings (263–64).

45. Ining, *Blumhardt*, 93–94. He opposed the Enlightenment rationalist theology (90–92, 404), including naturalistic explanations of miracles (92).

46. See Dembski, *Design*, 63, 66. On his approach to miracles, see also discussion in Brown, *Miracles*, 114–17; Grenz and Olson, *Theology*, 48; Loos, *Miracles*, 17–18; Trench, *Miracles*, 56–59; excerpts in Manschreck, *History*, 339–40.

been heavily influenced by Spinoza.⁴⁷) Schleiermacher's influential critique simply presupposed the naturalism that he claimed to prove; both arguments thereby beg the question by excluding God or other nonphysical entities as legitimate causative metaphysical options.⁴⁸ Schleiermacher accepted Jesus's miracles but by claiming that we simply do not understand the dynamics of matter and spirit;⁴⁹ what made events miraculous was the subjective wonder they evoked,⁵⁰ and he warned believers not to expect God to intervene today.⁵¹

By the late nineteenth century, skepticism regarding supernatural intervention had become dominant even in much of theological academia.⁵² Despite Adolf Harnack's interest in much historical information in the NT, for example, he regarded miracles, angels, apocalyptic prophecies, and the like as nonhistorical, alien intrusions on the NT message.⁵³ He doubted nature miracles and the like, while allowing that Jesus's powerful personality may have effected some recoveries.⁵⁴ Yet it was metaphysical presuppositions, not empirical evidence, that drove scientism in a naturalistic direction,⁵⁵ and it was the "assured results of modern science" that shaped the rout in theology.

In more recent scholarship, Bultmann and his ilk simply restated uncritically such dominant philosophic assumptions.⁵⁶ In the wake of such arguments, some

47. Schleiermacher's basis appears to be "his assimilation of Spinoza" (Dembski, "Critique," 443), and Dembski regards it as "an exercise in question begging" (463).

48. Idem, *Design*, 63, 66. For the philosophic history of theological antisupernaturalism, see Hamilton, *Revolt* (for various metaphysical approaches, see 67–124; for Schleiermacher and his allies specifically, 67–90; Hamilton himself prefers more of Bonhoeffer's approach, 169–80); on Schleiermacher's rejection of the need for miracles, see Frei, *Eclipse*, 313, 316; Richardson, *Age of Science*, 81; Zachman, "Meaning," 10–12. Even Victorian Christians often struggled with reconciling prayer with their assumption of the uniformity of natural law (Opp, *Lord for Body*, 17).

49. See Larson, "Centuries," 94–96.

50. Clark, "Miracles and Law," 26 (on Schleiermacher and Ritschl).

51. Edwards, *Christianity*, 418.

52. For the late nineteenth-century triumph of skepticism toward supernatural intervention in NT scholarship, despite the valiant efforts of the earlier "Cambridge triumvirate" of J. B. Lightfoot, B. F. Westcott, and F. J. A. Hort, most effectively through the conversion from supernaturalism of their apparent successor William Sanday, see Mullin, *Miracles*, 138–78 (on Sanday, 163–65; cf. a nuanced position in Sanday, "Miracles"). On the gradual neo-orthodox reconsideration (esp. in the 1920s to the 1950s), see Mullin, *Miracles*, 254–59. Yet already by the late eighteenth century, most German pastors no longer offered theological explanations for or accounts of miraculous escapes in current natural disasters (Lehmann, "Miracles," 334); for changing approaches to "acts of God" in England and France, see Deconinck-Brossard, "Acts of God."

53. Grenz and Olson, *Theology*, 60. For Harnack's approach to the historical Jesus, see, e.g., Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 5–6 and sources there; for earlier "liberal lives" of Jesus, besides the survey in Schweitzer, see Heyer, *Jesus Matters*, 25–32; Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 5; Paget, "Quests," 143–45.

54. Loos, *Miracles*, 28, noting that Harnack also left some cases unexplained.

55. See Dembski, *Design*, 82–85.

56. See Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 13–14; McGinley, *Form-Criticism*, 71; O'Connell, "Miracles," 55; deSilva, "Meaning," 7–10 (critiquing esp. H. Braun on 10–12); Anderson, *Quest*, 178; Smith, *Thinking*, 94. Other theists have also critiqued Bultmann on miracles (e.g., Geisler, *Miracles*, 67–74; Torrance, *Space*, 37–38, 48ff., as cited in Yung, *Quest*, 7; McGowan, *Authenticity*, 70); against Bultmann and others regarding other spiritual forces besides God, see also arguments in Twelftree, *Triumphant*, 135–70.

scholars have downplayed biblical miracles even for theological reasons.⁵⁷ By contrast, some recent scholars have observed the incompatibility of Bultmann's assumptions about miracles with his theistic assumptions.⁵⁸ More generally, Wink observes that many scholars speak only of God working through human agents.⁵⁹ "So acclimated are we to this attitude of functional, methodological atheism," he complains, "that we may no longer be shocked by the vast gulf between this view and the Bible's, where God is depicted as directly intervening in nature and history at will!"⁶⁰ The necessary philosophic foundations for antisupernaturalism are not theistic but atheistic or deistic (see ch. 5). Yet as we have been observing, this practice of merely presupposing the inadmissibility of supernatural explanations has a long pedigree.

A Sound Approach?

The frequent reduction of what is real to what is material, thereby excluding explanations like God,⁶¹ in the name of science is not the fruit of empirical science per se but a philosophic construct.⁶² Much of this argument comes down to simple assertions based on plausibility structures dominant in the era in which

57. E.g., Hobbs, "Miracle Story," 126, thinks that the genuine Gospel paradigm resembles "Jesus's final 'failure' to achieve a miracle, to escape the Cross." This peculiarly Western reading somehow neglects the resurrection narratives.

58. Ward, "Believing," 742; cf. Culpepper, "Problem of Miracles," 213; deSilva, "Meaning," 10 (noting that Bultmann's approach suppresses the genuine "otherness" of the NT). Ward, "Believing," 743, notes that even Immanuel Kant did not restrict intelligent action to laws so inflexibly. Kant may have even allowed for something like divine design in creation (see Nuyen, "Kant on Miracles," 320–21); indeed, even some statements of Hume elsewhere tend in that direction (see Backhaus, "Falsehood," 293). Some theological writers have regarded the basic problem as not scientific arguments but simple human unbelief (Spurr, "Miracles," 333–34).

59. I.e., as if this was the only way that a god could be expected to work.

60. Wink, *Transformation*, 31.

61. The real issue in theism is not, however, materialism *outside* the question of God (the only question I am addressing here). Though dualist approaches remain common (cf., e.g., Garcia, "Minds"; Beauregard and O'Leary, *Brain*), theists can offer monistic anthropological approaches (see Richardson, "Agency," 357; Peacocke, *Creation*, 133; Green, *Life*; Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 9, 59–60, 75–76, 117–37; Polkinghorne, *Reality*, 46–49; for a survey of some approaches, see Johnson, "Neurotheology," 218–22); note also the mostly mediating approach of emergence (see Davies, "Preface," x–xi, xiii; Clayton, "Foundations," 27; idem, "Appraisal," 312, 315; Ellis, "Nature," 97–98; Deacon, "Emergence," 149; Silberstein, "Defense"; Murphy, "Causation"; Peacocke, "Emergence"; note also Van Gulick, "Charge"). Those who embrace anthropological monism on this level of reality, or whose conception of reality seeks to explain material and spiritual elements in a cohesive whole, need not exclude aspectual distinctions on a functional level, such as appear in the NT. Some writers appeal to consciousness as divinely created (e.g., Mott, "Science," 66; Eccles, "Design," 164; Garnham, "Stage"); others emphasize more fully its connection to the brain (Snell, "Science," 210, while considering himself a dualist on this issue).

62. See Houston, *Miracles*, 123; Williams, *Miraculous*, 204; cf. Marsden, *Outrageous Idea*, 75–77. Macklin (an anthropology professor), "Yankee," 74, therefore contends that scientism thus functions as religion rather than as science (cf. similarly Barrington-Ward, "Spirit Possession," 464, and others). Still revolting against an earlier era's religiously framed dogmatism, many scholars a priori exclude intelligent personal causation from empirical consideration and do so with the dogmatism of which they have become unwitting heirs.

they originated.⁶³ Influential philosopher William James complained that “orthodoxy is almost as much a matter of authority in science as it is in the Church.”⁶⁴ The legitimacy of metaphysical options is a philosophic and metaphysical, not a strictly scientific, question; metaphysical naturalism is a metaphysical theory, not a necessary reading of scientific data.⁶⁵ (It was at least partly a reaction against Aristotelian teleology.⁶⁶) That is, if a scientist or anyone else dismisses the possibility of supernatural reality, she is offering a metaphysical view and pontificating on metaphysics no less than someone who simply assumes the contrary. Moreover, as I observed in chapter 5, these assumptions depended on a scientific worldview quite different from ours today, and were offered not by scientists themselves but by philosophers (especially deists and Hume) with a religious agenda.

God Acting in the Natural World?

There is no unanimity even among theists themselves regarding the *nature* of God’s activity in the universe.⁶⁷ Usage defines terms’ socially agreed meaning, but even the loosest use of the term “miracle” normally designates something distinct from God’s ordinary activity in the universe.⁶⁸ (Some thinkers restrict the term further to acts that reveal God’s character, resembling what biblical texts often mean by “signs.”⁶⁹) Some theists have concluded that God works through the natural

63. See Williams, *Miraculous*, 34.

64. Noted in Macklin, “Yankee,” 74.

65. Osmond, “Physiologist,” 158. He notes that there is no scientific reason per se for excluding final causality (159). See further Okello, *Case*, 10–13, following Alston and Plantinga.

66. Osmond, “Physiologist,” 155, observes that seventeenth-century mechanistic philosophy, emphasizing efficient causes, reacted against Aristotelian teleology. For the analogy of humans (as a formal, intelligent cause) forming tools by “shaping forces (efficient causes)” acting on “raw materials (material causes)” for a specific outcome (final cause), see, e.g., Wilcox, “Blind,” 169, who notes that belief in purpose/final cause does not exclude the scientific pursuit of efficient causes. For the history of approaches to causation, see briefly Wilcox, “Blind,” 170–71; for the value of medieval approaches concerning causality for modern discussions of science and theology, see Ramachandra, *Myths*, 175; for various levels of causation and theology, see Spitzer, *Proofs*, 210–15, 220–25; for various forms of causality in Aristotle, see, e.g., Deacon, “Emergence,” 113; for these forms applied to the question of miracles, cf. Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 40–45.

67. For one survey of approaches, see Peacocke, *Theology*, 135–83; for a philosophic response to Tillich’s denial of miracles possibly violating natural law (Tillich, “Revelation”), see Swinburne, “Introduction,” 15; for other challenges to Tillich’s approach, see Putnam, “Tillich”; for Tillich’s historical baggage, see Brown, *Miracles*, 172. Hay, “Concept,” 195, notes that miracle is meaningless in the approach of Tillich and Bultmann, in which God is simply active in everything; but he contends (from a process perspective) that while God is active in everything, “the content of that activity varies from situation to situation,” leaving miracle significant. Keller, “Power,” 122, argues that in process theology God can influence natural factors, supernatural differing from natural more in degree than in kind; Epperly, “Miracles,” 61, even allows that from a process approach one “can pray for healing” and “expect miracles,” though they will not always happen (cf. also idem, *Touch*, 16–22, 43–46, 109–11). By contrast, Langford, “Problem,” 52, contends that God’s mind affects humans, but only in an “inter-psychosomatic” way. I am not promoting a process approach or any other here; I am not a philosophic theologian, and am here simply surveying various approaches that can sometimes accommodate miracles.

68. Evans, *Narrative*, 137, 141.

69. Ibid., 141. Cf. discussion of miracles’ religious context in ch. 5.

order, but only through that order, not in ways for which no naturalistic explanation is possible.⁷⁰ They thus think that miracles outside the norm of nature's regularity that God established would be unlikely, inconsistent with God's normal working.⁷¹

This conclusion is not a necessary corollary of the evidence, however. Granted, a biblical theist would see God *typically* working through the created order. In biblical narratives, God might do extraordinary acts through a powerful wind (Exod 10:13; 14:21; Num 11:31); some have offered plausible arguments that even the plagues in Egypt intensified the local ecosystem in an extraordinary way.⁷² Similarly, Moses is rescued by extraordinary yet human means as an infant, though many babies perished (Exod 2:1–10); because Paul was a Roman citizen, he survived a situation in which Stephen was martyred (Acts 6:13–14; 7:57–58; 21:28; 25:3, 10–12). Many Christians have traditionally described such rescues as providence. My point is that Scripture is more interested in divine acts than in whether particular instances violate nature; yet even many Christians have unwittingly accepted definitions of miracles as violations of nature ultimately from Humean philosophy. Yet God working through nature does not explain either all our biblical evidence or all our empirical evidence today, unless we define “working through the created order” at a level higher than what we normally mean by it. This is a possible way of describing miracles, but is simply a matter of changing the definition, not of excluding the phenomena.⁷³

As Polkinghorne and others have responded, why should God choose to be limited to one way of working?⁷⁴ Granted that God would be free to work through

70. Peacocke, *Theology*, 183. Peacocke argues for God's working in a top-down way similar to information input (in “Emergence,” 261–66, he envisions top-down causation as the whole contextually influencing the parts). The demand for radical consistency might in that respect resemble the wholly other, passionless deity of Platonic theology, but this approach emphasizes immanence and God's character much more than Platonism could have allowed. He argues for “hierarchies of complexity” (Peacocke, “Emergence,” 257–61). Some might embrace some insights of this approach without accepting pantheism more generally (on pantheism, see, e.g., discussion and critique in Grenz and Olson, *Theology*, 38, 39, 126, 142, 181–82; summary in Davies, *Mind*, 43). Some theologians have long used pantheism to try to reconcile theism with current scientific models (e.g., Pittenger, “Miracles 1,” 106). Against the assumption that God's action is “confined by the limits of probability” and variation within the natural sphere, see Ward, “Believing,” 747.

71. Peacocke, *Theology*, 208, 211; for the resurrection, 284 (Peacocke is not dogmatic here, but requires an extraordinarily high standard of evidence).

72. See, e.g., Hort, “Plagues” (the classic statement of the case, challenged appropriately in Sarna, *Exodus*, 70–73); Duncan Hoyte, “Plagues” (Duncan Hoyte is a parasitologist); Fretheim, “Plagues” (resembling natural plagues but transformed to a cosmic level); Stieglitz, “Records” (in their ancient setting, esp. from Amarna, Mesopotamian, and Ugaritic texts). The idea was prominent as early as 1911 (Flinders Petrie, cited in Perry, “Believing,” 341; idem, “Miracles,” 67), and divine intensification of Egypt's ecosystem appears earlier in Trench, *Miracles*, 10 (following Hengstenberg). For Egyptian elements in the plagues, see Zevit, “Ways”; for heavy Egyptian influence in Exod 1–15, see Niccacci, “Faraone.” Others point out that the Egyptians could not construe the first and last plagues naturalistically (Currid, *Egypt*, 106–7) and rightly emphasize that the theological issue seems paramount (ibid., 108–17 and sources cited there; see Exod 12:12; Num 33:4).

73. Cf. Evans, *Narrative*, 157.

74. With, e.g., Polkinghorne, *Quarks*, 100.

the apparent randomness of nature (and human lives) to achieve long-range purposes,⁷⁵ is there any reason why God could not sometimes work differently, to communicate something special by making it distinct from the broader general revelation? Such a supposition requires no inconsistency in God's character, only multiple means of achieving divine ends, just as humans can perform physical work either directly or through verbal communication that elicits a physical response.⁷⁶ If a theist allows that God could initiate time and space (according to the currently dominant cosmological model, through the big bang), how is it logical consistency to insist that a consistent God must work *only* through the normal character of time and space? Whatever terms we use to define the case, God working through nature does not itself logically exclude the possibility of extraordinary and atypical acts of God as signs; it instead reveals far more than sufficient power requisite to accomplish miracles such as are claimed in the Gospels and Acts.⁷⁷

Because it focuses on repeatable natural events, physical science does not predict all specific actions of intelligent agents. Some philosophers of science have pointed out that "the action of agency (whether divine or human) need not violate the laws of nature; in most cases it merely changes the initial and boundary conditions on which the laws of nature operate."⁷⁸ Miracles are not meant to be understood as

75. On the idea of God's interplay with chance, which God wrote into creation, see Peacocke, *Creation*, 105; Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 56, 142–43; Inwagen, "Chance"; Bartholomew, *Chance*; for a process approach to miracles (God working in rather than from outside nature), see Hay, "Concept" (e.g., arguing on 188 that it seeks to meet the scientific worldview). Evans, *Narrative*, 138, notes that theists do not necessarily see God as *directly causing* each event (cf. also Young, "Impossibility," 33–34, arguing for God as one and the determinative causal factor in some events); for the nature of randomness at the quantum level, see Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 42. The dichotomy between randomness and intelligent causation has been a long-standing one, though some today have moved beyond it; ancient Stoics affirmed intelligent design whereas Epicureans affirmed randomness (Wilcox, "Blind," 170). For design arguments in antiquity, see, e.g., Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.54.133–2.61.153; Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.6.3–10, 23–24; 1.16.8; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 12.28–29, 34, 36–37; Plutarch *Isis* 76, *Mor.* 382A; Maximus of Tyre 27.8.

76. All analogies with humans or anything else natural are limited, but we lack anything nonnatural with which to compare God's activity (cf. Isa 1:3; 46:5; John 3:12; Rom 6:19), unless (some would argue) it is our conceptions of what is possible (which would also be sufficient to make the case).

77. Of a different character might be resurrection as eschatological transformation, but this would seem analogous to the creation event. If one accepts the oft-argued anthropic principle, God working through nature could also be used to argue for sufficient benevolence and interest in humanity to support some special acts like miracles.

78. Meyer, "Scientific Status," 167 (quotation); Colwell, "Defining Away" (among sources Meyer notes); Young, "Petitioning," 196; Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 59; Nichols, "Miracles," 704; Larmer, "Laws," 231; cf. Brümmer, *Pray*, 69–87. Recognizing the reality of natural causes thus in no wise excludes the possibility of extranatural ones (Alston, "Action," 53). Although postmodern emphasis on social forces poses the problem of human agency in a new way (Shaw, "Agency," 1–3), it does not obliterate it as a factor (Shaw, "Agency," 7–9), and in any case human agents need not be autonomous for an analogy with divine agency, since no analogy is precise. God's greater autonomy ought if anything to grant God *greater* freedom of agency (*pace* notions of transcendence that assume isolated cosmic domains without interaction). One need not, however, assume that God's freedom requires "freedom" to violate his own moral character; see discussion in Moreland, "Agency," 155–56. That claim would blend different concepts under the same label and involves a logical impossibility rather than freedom as an agent.

expressions of law, but instead belong to the sphere of "contingent events."⁷⁹ We could reason from nature's uniformity only if we knew all the causal conditions present and could exclude intelligent (and in this case extranatural) causes. Probability estimates for rolls of dice will be skewed if the dice are loaded, and if one allows for the possibility of distinctive divine action in some circumstances, one cannot rule out miracles in those circumstances.⁸⁰

That is, not just unintelligent entities or processes but human or divine agents can also function as causes.⁸¹ We do not speak of human actions as violating nature simply because the laws of physics do not predict them.⁸² Physics and biology certainly constrain our options, but human actions depend on and function at a higher level of complexity than the basic patterns in physics and chemistry. On the premise of theism, a God not dependent on the universe would be even less constrained in that God's action than humans are. Just as helicopters constructed through human intelligence do not contradict the normal principle of gravity, neither is the specific activity of a divine intelligence incompatible with normal principles of nature.⁸³ Everyone understands that nature's laws describe normal existence⁸⁴ but that other factors, particularly intelligent actors, can affect the factors they describe and thus "interfere" (if one chooses to use that language) with the "laws."⁸⁵

79. Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 11. Distinctions between necessity and contingency figured in ancient Greek philosophy, and are helpful here.

80. Cf. Levine, *Problem*, 35 (noting that Hume would still opt for uniformity of nature and the impossibility of knowing that miracles have occurred, 35–36).

81. Cf. also Blomberg, *Gospels*, 106; Moreland, "Miracles," 142; for the analogy between human and divine intelligent causation (allowing for the analogy's limitations), see also Gwynne, *Action*, 184–87; Hesse, "Miracles," 41–42; Peacocke, "Incarnation," 332; Alston, "Divine Action" (e.g., 258, 280, advocating partial univocity, hence partly literal and partly figurative analogy); cf. already Mozley, *Lectures*, 130; Sanday, "Miracles," 65; Keene, "Possibility of Miracles," 212; Ferm, "Miracles," 217; defended against objections in Forsman, "Double Agency," 125–26 and *passim*. On the philosophic question of divine agency, see the discussions in Polkinghorne, "Chaos Theory"; Hebblethwaite and Henderson, *Divine Action*; Ellis, "Action"; Young, "Epistemology," 122; Kellenberger, "Miracles"; against divine agency, see Chrysides, "Miracles" (but note the reply in Berhenn, "Miracles"). Many allow also both divine and human causation simultaneously, though others demur (see one summary of "double causation" perspectives in Thomas, "Thought," 46–50). Some define miracles in terms of divine activity on the analogy of human minds (Langford, "Problem," 52); others demur (Wei, "Meaning," pinpointing problems in Langford's approach). Hume rejected an analogy between human and divine causation, accepting only predictions based on the natural order (noted in Langtry, "Probability," 72); but if humans are the most intelligent personal entities we know, they ought to provide our closest available analogy to deity. In a posthumously published work, even Hume might allow a distant analogy between human intellect and order in the cosmos; see Backhaus, "Falsehood," 294, though viewing the allowance as fideist. Transcendence can be postulated against any sort of divine agency only on particular theological understandings (e.g., by ruling out immanence and analogical language).

82. Ward, "Miracles and Testimony," 137. The actions of personal beings cannot be readily formulated in terms of physical laws (cf. Ward, "Believing," 746–47, regarding God as a nonphysical being).

83. A common analogy, although some (e.g., Clark, "Miracles and Law," 24) find the illustration inadequate.

84. That is, they are descriptive and nomological rather than ontological, but are sufficient to offer predictions under the ordinary circumstances they depict (Dietl, "Miracles," 133). See discussion in ch. 5.

85. Davis, "Actions," 175–76 (closely following Alston, "Action," 56); Evans, *Narrative*, 145–46 (also following Alston); the gravitation argument (without helicopters) is an old one (e.g., Trench, *Miracles*, 13).

(In fact, they do not suspend the laws but merely introduce higher order activity in particular cases.) Over the past century, physics has become more “hospitable” to accommodating human agency, and this understanding likewise makes divine agency more plausible.⁸⁶

Although our experience with human intelligent actors makes them miniscule in size compared with the universe, they are not miniscule in complexity. According to calculations in the fairly fresh discipline of bioinformatics, the information content in the DNA of even a bacterium is many times that of the entire universe a billion years ago, which consisted mainly of hydrogen and helium atoms. (By one recent, minimal estimate, the comparison is something like $10^{10,000}$ to 10^{80} .) The complexity necessary to allow human beings, and thus intelligent human action, is far beyond both.⁸⁷ Intelligent actors may not “disrupt” the “regularity” of nature, but their existence operates on a level of complexity quite different from most of the vaster cosmos of which they are a part. How much more should this be true of a putative divine actor not subject to a cosmos that this actor originated? Those who, with Scripture and/or creed (“maker of heaven and earth”), affirm a Creator would hardly be impressed with any demand that this God be subject to patterns of nature that this God initiated.

Scientific language is adequate (and designed) for depicting natural phenomena, but we employ a different order of language to describe human relationships.⁸⁸ One might be forced in some circumstances to use both, say, the case of a doctor treating his or her spouse to whom the doctor is personally attached.⁸⁹ Naturalistic description can recount a person’s recovery; explaining that recovery in terms of God, however, invokes second-order language involving personal relationship.⁹⁰ Human experience necessitates metaphysical as well as scientific language; the languages describe different aspects of existence and are not intrinsically contradictory.⁹¹ Human history, therefore, is not subject to pure scientific description.⁹² “The so-called conflict between science and miracles,” Ian Ramsey observes, “is

Hume himself allowed human action within nature but treated divine action differently if God was viewed as immaterial (Smith, “Introduction,” 48), an approach that remains a restatement of presuppositions. Electromagnetism overpowers gravitation; how can we suppose that a Creator could not? We can do so only if we a priori rule out the possibility of a Creator active in the world—again, by presupposing (among the dominant Western options) atheism or deism.

86. See Polkinghorne, “Chaos Theory,” 250–51 (though cautious about formulating the analogy). For the analogy of divine information input into the universe and human creative “shaping-information,” see Puddefoot, “Information Theory,” 312. On another level, of course, human agency usurped the notion of divine agency in the wake of the Enlightenment (Bowald, *Rendering*, 13–19).

87. Cf., e.g., information in Davies, “Downward Causation,” 47; Ellis, “Nature,” 97–98; more detailed studies in bioinformatics.

88. Ramsey, “Miracles,” 24.

89. *Ibid.*, 23.

90. *Ibid.*, 24–25. Physics may describe providence and the natural side of existence; miracles and the personal side of existence, however, involve metaphysical concepts (25–26).

91. *Ibid.*, 21.

92. See *ibid.*, 10.

a pseudo-conflict which only arises when complete adequacy is claimed for the language of science."⁹³

God Acting in History?

Hume's reasoning influenced not only the practice of science but also that of historiography.⁹⁴ Philosopher F. H. Bradley took his approach as essential to critical historiography; Ernst Troeltsch labeled this argument the principle of analogy, a principle by which events not known to happen today should not be accepted as happening in the past.⁹⁵ In its dogmatic form, this approach has been subjected to considerable challenge, as I suggested in the previous chapter.⁹⁶ Some of Troeltsch's followers have continued to employ his basic argument, however. These notably include Van Harvey in historical Jesus research several decades ago,⁹⁷ though Harvey's version of impossibility is not metaphysical but rather the alleged impossibility of modern thinkers believing in miracles.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, this principle of analogy makes first-century miracle reports more rather than less plausible today, as many scholars now argue. I will return to this point later, and seek to elaborate it more fully in subsequent chapters.

Historian Ronald J. Sider⁹⁹ warns that "the morality of" modern historiography demands that historians, regardless of personal convictions, "must remain methodologically neutral" or agnostic. Neutrality regarding God's existence means that historians in this public role must allow miracles as a real possibility rather than ruling it out a priori.¹⁰⁰ Historians must be cautious about reports of unusual or supernatural events; they are not, however, obligated, as historians, to rule them

93. *Ibid.*, 26.

94. See, e.g., Force, "Breakdown," 157.

95. McGrew, "Miracles" (3.3). For a survey of Troeltsch's approach to the historical-critical method, see Keller, *Miracles*, 198–212.

96. See, e.g. (esp. against Troeltsch), Craig, *Faith*, 153; Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 98–99; idem, *Resurrection*, 140–42; Licona and Van der Watt, "Historians and Miracles," 3–4; Beckwith, "History and Miracles," 96–97; Kelly, "Miracle," 52–57, esp. 54–56; Okello, *Case*, 15–19. For a critique of Troeltsch's a priori approach, see Evans, "Judgment," 200–201; Brown, *Miracles*, 128–30. Because Troeltsch affirmed the culturally conditioned character of historical claims, placing Troeltsch's own methods in their historical setting should free us from obligation to simply perpetuate them uncritically (Kelly, "Miracle," 55).

97. For critiques of Harvey, *Historian*, see Sider, "Methodology"; Evans, "Judgment," 186–201; Okello, *Case*, 15–19. Sider, "Methodology," 24, critiques Harvey's approach as ruling out past events differing from one's experience; this may compare with Hume's approach militating against scientific discovery.

98. Sider, "Methodology," 25–26; idem, "Historian," 311. My following chapters will challenge that premise in considerable detail, including the tight restriction of modernity to a minority of the world's population, but it may have seemed more plausible in Harvey's earlier Western academic context. Some have sought to find modern analogies in whatever divine works draw attention to God's power (Steinmetz, "Wunder," rejecting the biblical defensibility of cessationism); the exclusion of some kinds of "wonders," however, could weaken an analogy argument for miracles.

99. Known today more for his social activism, Sider was trained first as a historian at Yale.

100. Sider, "Methodology," 28. For one philosophic treatment advocating that historians decide on a case-by-case basis, see Basinger and Basinger, *Miracle*, 31–51 (esp. 51).

out.¹⁰¹ If neutrality is less in vogue for writers in the humanities today, tolerance is not; if advocacy against theism is acceptable, then advocacy for theism should be acceptable as well.

Some scholars today define history in such a manner as to exclude the possibility of genuine miracles in history.¹⁰² Especially as applied on a popular level, however, this definition risks confusing two meanings of history, namely, a self-limited methodology that *as history* cannot pronounce judgment concerning claims of supernatural causation,¹⁰³ and history as events that actually happened.¹⁰⁴ Such a confusion further risks (and sometimes produces) the assumption that history as a discipline rejects the possibility of miracles. History as history might not pass judgment on whether or not an occurrence (such as the resurrection) was a *miracle* (a theological judgment involving philosophic questions about God's existence and activity), but it can seek to address whether or not an event literally happened.¹⁰⁵ If an event happened and some evidence for that event remains, it can be subject to historical investigation.¹⁰⁶

By contrast, to a priori deny that such events happen is to prejudge the conclusion before doing objective investigation—and that judgment involves a philosophic issue, not a historical one. Such explanations were originally ruled out of court in some historiography, as in science, for philosophic reasons, yet the original reasoning for that exclusion no longer dominates the philosophy of religion on

101. Sider, "Methodology," 28–29. Cf. the discussion of presuppositions and miracles with respect to historiography in Légasse, "L'Historien," 140–43.

102. E.g., Ehrman, *Prophet*, 193; idem, *Historical Introduction*, 241–44; idem, *Brief Introduction*, 172; Price, *Son of Man*, 19–20, 131 (appealing, he claims, not to metaphysical presuppositions but to the argument from analogy).

103. Ehrman, *Prophet*, 196–97, notes that many historians as people of faith believe that miracles did happen but at these times speak "not in the capacity of the historian, but in the capacity of the believer" (see also idem, *Historical Introduction*, 244). On history's limits, see, e.g., Wright, *Miracle*, 81–82. Nevertheless, one wonders if the methodology is neutral if historians *as historians* must be committed to atheistic/deistic presuppositions even if evidence suggests stronger alternative explanations. Historians can, of course, bracket out questions of causation without ruling out the possibility of causation.

104. For the relevance of definitions of history, see the discussion in Wright, *Resurrection*, 12–13. Some who do not actually rule out the possibility of divine intervention exclude such events from history by using a definition of history that excludes the supernatural (e.g., Meier, "Reflections," 106). While such a difference is a matter of definition, hence ultimately semantic (some allow for supernatural events in history but assign their interpretation solely to theology—e.g., Padgett, "Advice," 303), it risks reinforcing a traditional Enlightenment philosophy of history that is open to challenge, since some have used the narrow definition as license for excluding an event not only from their methodological purview but also, by simple definition rather than argument, from possibility as a genuine event.

105. See Habermas, *Evidence*, 25; Sider, "Methodology," 30, 33; Beckwith, "History and Miracles," 88. This would answer the argument of Ehrman, *Prophet*, 193, that history involves only "events that are accessible to observers of every kind." Still, Ehrman is right in his point that because miracles are irregular events, we do not simply take miracle reports at face value without some evidence; the debate involves the level of evidence necessary to provide probability in a given case or whether the standard is too high to admit any evidence.

106. Habermas, *Evidence*, 25. Explanations or lack of explanations for events do not affect whether an event can "be accurately narrated"; one can narrate someone being cured after Jesus touched him or her regardless of the explanation (Colwell, "Miracles and History," 13).

which such assumptions in other disciplines were based. The standard epistemic method of science (demanding replicability) does not work in history; the best that one could do is to exclude a *class* of events that lack analogy, but one may exclude miracles on these grounds only on the circular assumption that they have never happened. Historical evidence for particular miracle claims should thus be investigated rather than being dismissed as *a priori* impossible.¹⁰⁷

Nevertheless, while historians may bracket out questions of causation (as noted above), they are not normally required to do so. If an event happened, it is legitimate to explore the best hypotheses to explain causation or factors contributing to that event.¹⁰⁸ Against those who contend that one might not posit a cause with which one does not have direct experience, such a recourse is often necessary in science. For example, physicists often use particles and other factors to explain phenomena before such factors are more directly verified.¹⁰⁹ A limited methodological naturalism may be a wise caution against gullibility, but if one insists that any *legitimate* conclusion *must* be naturalistic, one's conclusions regarding the possibility of God have been simply defined by one's presuppositions, presuppositions historically framed against belief in an active God.¹¹⁰ As I have mentioned and shall observe more fully in chapter 15, this presupposition does not reflect the sole or even dominant perspective in philosophy of religion today, hence cannot simply appeal to a universal philosophic consensus in its favor.

Some contend that even if a theistic explanation for an event might appear more convincing at present, a purely naturalistic explanation will eventually emerge. This approach attempts to evade a possible "God-of-the-gaps" explanation (a theistic interpretation that might be overturned in light of further discovery). It posits in its place, however, something like a naturalism-of-the-gaps explanation (a naturalistic interpretation that *awaits* further discovery) and thus presupposes that only a theistic explanation bears any burden of proof.¹¹¹ Again, this approach is not

107. Cf. Swinburne, *Miracle*, 33–51, though rightly keeping the bar of evidence fairly high (see esp. 51). In historiography, see here also Tucker, *Knowledge*, 99 (cf. 52), although he unfortunately follows the more skeptical critics regarding the sources on 99–100 (though perhaps mostly for ancient Israel, 53–59), whereas the trend is at least partly toward a more favorable reading of the sources about Jesus (see, e.g., Theissen, *Gospels in Context*; Theissen and Merz, *Guide*; Hengel, *Mark*; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*; Keener, *Historical Jesus*; Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*; esp. now Holmén and Porter, *Handbook*).

108. Ancient precursors for modern historiographic method did ask why events happened (e.g., Polybius 2.56.13; 3.32.2); ancient historians did not, as some contend, ignore lines of cause and effect (Rajak, *Josephus*, 102).

109. See here Johnson, *Hume*, 42 (against John Stuart Mill). Arguing for theism from indirect inference should be no more problematic than the analogous inference of entities in physics (Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 29; cf. now also Licona and Van der Watt, "Adjudication of Miracles," 2).

110. See, e.g., the complaint against this approach in Evans, *Narrative*, 158–61. He allows that the amount of evidence needed to surmount appropriate methodological caution should vary according to the nature of the miracle claim (159) but contends that the demand to eliminate all possible natural explanations before allowing a theistic one simply restates metaphysical naturalism.

111. The approach challenged, for example, in Plantinga, "Science," 109, 112–13. I revisit this observation briefly in ch. 14.

neutral: it simply works from the presupposition that theism is a philosophically illegitimate explanation. As David deSilva points out, bracketing out the possibility of supernatural explanations “merely served to authenticate and legitimate a naturalistic worldview over against a supernaturalistic worldview,” reinforcing an artificial grid through which Westerners tend to view reality.¹¹² In sociological terms, antisupernaturalism supports itself circularly: our world construction shapes how we understand our experience, then we (like Hume) “make our experience normative for all experience,” and we allow no phenomena to challenge our construct.¹¹³

Miracles may be viewed as unique events, but history, unlike science, is full of events that are unique in some respects.¹¹⁴ Were historians to begin excluding unique or extremely unusual events, they would have to rule out much of history. Seeking to illustrate this point, in 1819 one scholar, parodying Hume, demonstrated that one could explain away a large measure of Napoleon’s life by this method.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the first-century rise of a movement exalting Jesus as Lord within Judaism lacks prior analogy; yet no one denies that this movement began.¹¹⁶

Some distinguish miracles from other sorts of unique events, making them unique in *kind*. That is, they belong to a category that differs too much from normal experience to ever be deemed probable.¹¹⁷ Yet this approach, which is not shared by all historiographers, again simply begs the question of whether human experience includes any miracles.¹¹⁸ To argue that a supernaturally caused event can have no analogies, one must presuppose that no other supernaturally caused events have occurred, and this constitutes a circular argument. Still more important, at least

112. DeSilva, *Introduction*, 372; see further idem, “Meaning.”

113. DeSilva, “Meaning,” 15.

114. Ehrman, *Prophet*, 195; Wright, *Resurrection*, 685; cf. Tucker, *Knowledge*, 240–53. On the unpredictability of historical development and history being of a character quite different from physics, see, e.g., Popper, *Historicism*. Popper contends “that history is characterized by its interest in actual, singular, or specific events, rather than in laws or generalizations” (*Historicism*, 143, emphasis his). In citing sources like Popper on particular points, I do not imply that we share fully common premises; e.g., Popper condemns older “modern” historicism’s sense of “progress” as continuing earlier divine teleologies.

115. Richard Whately (*Doubts*), in Brown, *Miracles*, 146–47; Blomberg, *Gospels*, 110. McGrew, “Miracles,” 3.3, points out that other satires of Hume’s method appeared in Hudson (*Doubts*) and Buel (*Lincoln Myth*).

116. Wright, *Resurrection*, 16–17.

117. Ehrman, *Prophet*, 196. Ehrman contends that no matter how credible the witnesses are, their credibility is less probable than our knowledge that miracles do not happen. Yet such “knowledge” is hardly universally conceded and is in fact the point under debate.

118. Some have argued that events may be unique of themselves but should be able to be classified in larger categories (authors noted in Tucker, *Knowledge*, 243); but there are exceptions even to this (see 244), and miracles could in any case constitute such a class, again unless one a priori excludes them. Tucker, writing on historiography, notes that events that appear unique in kind may still be confirmed by other evidence, though one cannot use comparable events to increase the likelihood (244–45). Many events or phenomena initially considered unique gave way to a larger pattern of data as new discoveries were admitted (cf. 245), but attempts to reduce complex historical events to commonalities necessary for analogies have proved inadequate (249–53).

from the standpoint of what appear to be miracles, this appeal to analogy and experience today is more apt to cut the other way than when it was formulated,¹¹⁹ since (as I argue at some length in chs. 7–12) supernatural claims belong to the widespread experience of much of humanity today.¹²⁰ Thus some philosophers of religion today are appealing to contemporary miracle reports to reinforce the plausibility of miracles in principle.¹²¹

Does the historical task exclude discussion of superhuman causes or not? To a great extent this question is semantic: words have socially agreed meanings, so how we define them is a matter of choice within a community. If the academy chooses to define “history” in such a way to exclude such causes, however, we must recognize that we have not made the question illegitimate; we have simply circumscribed the epistemic sphere within which our particular discipline works. We can work within such boundaries (and I do in appropriate settings); we may choose (or not) to define such questions as part of “history,” but we have not thereby made them improper objects of academic inquiry.

Even conceding these points, the boundaries themselves reflect a particular line of historical development, namely a particular Western Enlightenment tradition in our discipline; there is no transcultural or transhistorical assent to these boundaries, and some disciplines have already moved beyond them. We cannot appeal to some cosmic “rules of our discipline” to prevent exploration of these issues; those rules evolved in a particular historical context, and as the guild we are allowed to rethink and revise them if needed. That is, we cannot blame the discipline as we have inherited it; we are responsible for what we do with the inheritance. Freedom to reengage old questions from new perspectives is part of what it means to think critically. From a theistic perspective, the exclusion of superhuman causes is arbitrary or even apologetically motivated against theism; from a neutral perspective, it is at best a suspension of the question for the sake of dialoguing based on agreed-on assumptions, not a metaphysical conclusion.¹²² However we define the rules of the discipline, historiography no more excludes the possibility of knowledge outside its conventional methods than historians would grant that physics does. Historians who choose to ask the questions may ask them with the same academic rigor employed when inferring human causation in events where such causation is debated. In a postmodern context, for better or for worse (or some of each), historiography’s rules are shifting.

119. So also Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 310; Wink, “Write,” 6; cf. Nichols, “Miracles,” 705.

120. See, e.g., Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 107, 122–31; De Wet, “Signs”; Lambert, *Millions*, 109–20; Khai, “Pentecostalism,” 268–70; Grazier, *Power Beyond*; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*; Harris, *Acts Today*; Rumph, *Signs*; Chavda, *Miracle*; Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 67–73, 82–83; cf. Berger, *Rumor*, 1–34.

121. See, e.g., Breggen, “Miracle Reports,” 381–84; Robert Larmer (personal correspondence, Aug. 4, 2009).

122. Meanwhile, scholars are in fact allowed to debate various assumptions on which we do not agree and to make cases against other “rules” in our discipline that we deem ill-founded (on questions of detail, e.g., the double dissimilarity criterion).

History and Theory

A recent issue of *History and Theory* challenged the ideologically secular bias that has sometimes been rampant in historiography. In particular, historian Brad Gregory warns that historians presupposing pure metaphysical naturalism have produced a sort of “secular confessional history, parallel to traditional religious confessional history only with different embedded metaphysical beliefs.”¹²³ These beliefs, he warns, are so deeply ingrained at the unconscious level that those writing with this bias are far less apt to acknowledge their bias than writers of other confessional histories are.¹²⁴ In the sense in which he uses “confessional history,” the phrase is linked with bias and officially “rejected by most professional historians”—so long as the confessional character is religious.¹²⁵

Gregory further notes that the traditional forms of social-scientific methods used to read history are often embedded with assumptions about religion that differ markedly from how those not sharing the methodology’s assumptions understand it.¹²⁶ While often regarded as neutral, Gregory argues, these approaches impose “*undemonstrable metaphysical beliefs*” no less than religious perspectives do.¹²⁷ Thus, he notes, these beliefs are no less historically contingent than are those of particular religions;¹²⁸ for example, much of the traditional approach of sociology of religion simply takes for granted without argument that all religion may be *reduced* to natural social factors—an approach formed in the heyday of antitheistic assumptions in the academy.¹²⁹ “Historians whose analyses of religion depend upon such views,” he concludes, “are therefore writing a form of secular

123. Gregory, “Secular Bias,” 132 (from the abstract). Michael Licona brought my attention to this theme issue.

124. Ibid. On historians’ perspectives shaping their historiographic decisions, see, e.g., Lonergan, *Method*, 214–22 (supporting perspectivism, not relativism).

125. Gregory, “Secular Bias,” 135.

126. Ibid., 136. When in nascent psychology Freud and his followers excluded belief in God or miracles as a form of wish fulfillment or projection of a father figure (for faith in miracles as narcissistic fantasy, see, e.g., Merenlahti, “Reality,” 16–18, 31), they worked from the explicit presupposition of religion’s falsehood at the outset. This reductionist approach did not offer replicable data, and is challenged by many voices today (see, e.g., Gorsuch, “Limits,” 283–84; Gaztambide, “Relocating,” 29–30). Wilson, “Miracle Events,” 278, in fact contends that miracles have been verified often enough that *denial* of them represents irrational “passion or prejudice.”

127. Gregory, “Secular Bias,” 136–38 (quoting 136, emphasis his).

128. Ibid., 136.

129. Gregory shows the specific commitment to metaphysical naturalism in the work of Émile Durkheim (1912), whose approach helped shape the discipline of sociology of religion (ibid., 139–40). A social approach to religion is invaluable, but a reduction of all religion to social structures simply assumes metaphysical naturalism (141, 144; so also for reducing religion to politics, 144–46). Durkheim’s successors felt no need to demonstrate a methodological premise they now took for granted (142–43). Even past the mid-twentieth century, challenging Durkheim seemed risky, but eventually multiple challenges brought his views into disfavor (Turner, “Advances,” 39–40). Gradually religious anthropology emerged, relinquishing anthropology’s previous “tight positivism,” sympathetic to rather than suspicious of the sincerity of much religious experience (44); Turner regarded the old approach of Durkheim as imposing atheism on other peoples (51–52), the sort of behavior for which anthropologists sometimes castigated missionaries (cf. her comments about Christianity in 51). For more open antecedents, see Poewe, “Rethinking,” 253–54.

confessional history.”¹³⁰ Others also argue that the traditional social-scientific grid that reduced religious experience purely to cultural shaping has been shown untenable in light of subsequent research.¹³¹

He contends that a better approach would be to avoid imposing “any metaphysical beliefs” on our subjects.¹³² Certainly this approach could come closer to claiming the label of neutrality. A truly neutral approach should examine hypotheses rather than dismissing them without consideration. Those who rule out the possibility of historiography speaking about God or other supranatural entities must relinquish the possibility of excluding such explanations as well as of confirming them.¹³³

Some simply assume the irrelevance of the question, however; in their view, true modernity values neither miracles in particular (hence Bultmann's view noted earlier) nor religion in general. Thus some historical scholars bolster academic bias by arguing that religion is no longer plausible in the modern world, a thesis that would surprise, for example, most ordinary people in the United States today, and one historian astonishingly proposes replacing its social function with history.¹³⁴ But some other historians counter that most modern people have not rejected religion; earlier assumptions about religion becoming increasingly marginalized due to secularization have proved false in many cultures, including in the United States.¹³⁵ As Jon Butler points out, modernity “has not produced the disappearance of religion that Weber, Freud, and late-nineteenth-century American religious leaders anticipated and that Hall insists is central to the concept of modernity.”¹³⁶ Indeed, the assumption that modernization would inevitably lead to secularization reflected an ethnocentric extrapolation from earlier Western trends for a global reality that never corresponded to it.¹³⁷

One might suppose that this failure of predictions could warrant a rethinking of the theoretical foundations that produced them; we often evaluate hypotheses based on whether their predictions succeed. Butler thus argues that history needs

130. Gregory, “Secular Bias,” 143.

131. McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 46–47, citing known physiological factors in anomalous experiences, their appearance in diverse cultures, and genetic predispositions to suggestibility (citing on the last point Morgan, “Heritability”).

132. Gregory, “Secular Bias,” 146. Whether historians concede the possibility of the miraculous in practice or only in principle often depends on their initial presuppositions (Smart, *Philosophers*, 45). For a further defense of allowing the open question of miracles in historical discussion, see the very helpful work, Martin, “Historians on Miracles”; Martin (424–25) cites others, like J. D. G. Dunn, who do allow for some historical access to miracles.

133. Licona, “Historicity of Resurrection,” 122 (following W. L. Craig, against B. Ehrman); Beckwith, “History and Miracles,” 88.

134. Fasolt, “History and Religion.”

135. Cladis, “Modernity”; see also Butler, “Theory”; Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 38–47; Ecklund, *Science*, 133, 152; in the academy, *ibid.*, 89–90, 92; for an example of religion's adaptation to flourish in a secular context, see, e.g., Kennedy, “Customers.” On early sociology's expectations of religion's demise, see also Ammerman, “Sociology,” 76–77; on religion's persistence against some traditional academic assumptions, see also Haught, *Atheism*, 58–59.

136. Butler, “Theory,” 54.

137. See Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 38.

to grapple afresh with theory concerning religion to produce an interpretation that better accommodates actual social realities.¹³⁸ David Gary Shaw notes that the opposing of religion and history is a legacy of modernity that neglects the current situation as well as some of the history of historiography.¹³⁹ Historiography today needs to revise its reading of modernity to accommodate both sacred and secular within its purview.¹⁴⁰ In other words, religion should be taken into account and not excluded from public discourse; courtesy should remind us that we are no longer living at the apex of the French Enlightenment.

This may be the appropriate place to broach another historiographic issue raised by postmodern skepticism. This approach correctly recognizes that history is always written from perspectives, as are our sources for writing it; its critique of pretentious claims of pure scientific historiography is well taken. The problem comes when the critique is pushed too far, inconsistently failing to recognize its own limits. As I shall elaborate more fully in chapter 13 (under the heading “Epistemological Premises”), limitations in our knowledge need not compel us to relinquish claims to knowledge altogether. With respect to this book, some might complain that most healing claims reported later in this book depend (with a few exceptions) on other witnesses rather than on events that I as the author have witnessed directly or, at still further remove, that most readers have witnessed directly. But as I have noted, without witnesses we would know almost nothing of history; this warning applies all the more to antiquity, my own area of historical research.

For that matter, this limitation also applies to information about parts of the world where we have not lived, to people we do not know in our own parts of the world, and even to most events we have heard about in the lives of people we do know.¹⁴¹ Indeed, we do not expect every individual scientist to repeat every prior experiment because he or she does not trust earlier scientists’ records.¹⁴² Do we know *nothing* of history or of world events? Granted, all our sources are usually seriously slanted by observers’ and reporters’ perspectives; yet we cannot avoid depending on information in these sources if we hope to say anything beyond our own very limited experience. Despite Western culture’s individualism, making

138. Butler, “Theory,” 60–61.

139. Shaw, “Modernity,” recognizing (4) that “religion has turned out in a variety of ways to be more important and a more clearly permanent factor in history than our paradigms had supposed.”

140. Shaw, “Modernity,” 5 (following C. T. McIntire). He notes (8) that a repeated emphasis in the theme issue on religion and history is the assault on “modernity’s definition as non-religious.”

141. If one responds that today we can document some events with video cameras, we should note that many such events are not so documented when occurring. Moreover, we do have some healings so documented as well. To make the point, however, we can simply move the question back two centuries, well before the advent of video cameras: did no one in that era know anything about the world not experienced by them firsthand? Making video recordings an epistemic requirement would rule out most historical knowledge, as well as much knowledge about the world today.

142. Cf. Jaki, “Miracles and Physics”; Ward, “Miracles and Testimony,” 133; Licona, *Resurrection*, 103. The problem is less dramatic in science than in history, however, since experiments are confirmed through multiple tests and must be replicable. Analogies in history are much less precise, and precise experiments normally impossible (as often noted, e.g., Clark, “Miracles and Law,” 31).

direct experience of events a requisite for knowledge about them, as Hume seems to require for miracles, would postulate an autonomy more severe than any normal person would sanction in practice.

The Religious Factor

One of Hume's arguments against miracles is that incompatible religions claim miracles and thus, on his view, their claims cancel each other.¹⁴³ Although several responses to Hume's argument from incompatible religious claims are possible, we should note that it was not framed in any neutral manner. Hume believed that miracles recounted in religious contexts were not credible, because, he insisted, religious observers who claim miracles are irrational.¹⁴⁴ He warned that all testimonial claims were suspect if they supported religious faith, and he treated religious gullibility as a special category more prone to deception than regular, nonreligious gullibility.¹⁴⁵

His argument against testimony specifically in the religious sphere¹⁴⁶ is drawn not from empirical studies but from the polemic of the deists against Christianity.¹⁴⁷ His prejudice concerning the specific gullibility of religious persons is tendentious. He does not address countervailing religious motivations for integrity,¹⁴⁸ or the universal desire to conform new information to what one already knows or has affirmed, which can lead the nonreligious to explain away miracle claims as easily as it can lead the religious to be gullible about them. That some Enlightenment thinkers revolted against the epistemological constraints of prior religious tradition is not surprising in view of their milieu; in the academy

143. Hume, *Miracles*, 40–41. New studies of diverse traditional polytheistic religions had already influenced academic thought about religion in terms of deism (Popkin, "Deism," 27), but the understanding of comparative religions in Hume's day was so limited as to lead him to false conclusions on the evolution of religion (Root, "Introduction," 9). More understandably, Hume argued for the emergence of theism from polytheism (*History of Religion*, 41–45) and that polytheism was intrinsically more tolerant than monotheism (48–51). Cf. Kugler, "History," 134.

144. Larmer, *Water*, 105. Hume's prejudice could draw on an established tradition of Protestant and Catholic polemic against each other, denouncing superstition, deception, religious enthusiasm, and the mental instability with which it could be connected (on which see, e.g., Daston, "Facts," 118).

145. Colwell, "Miracles and History," 11, counters that people are as apt to be skeptical as gullible; certainly that is true today, where even some of us who have witnessed apparently extranormal events double- and triple-check ourselves, grasping for natural explanations. Though defending Hume, Coleman, "Probability," 214, like others, concedes that Hume treats testimony for "religious miracles" more skeptically "than testimony to marvels." McGrew, "Miracles" (3.2.4) allows that miracle claims marshaled for developed ecclesiastical purposes are more dubious, but contends that this bias fits later conditions better than the more spontaneous claims behind the NT record.

146. Hume, *Miracles*, 36–53, esp. 36, 49–50, 53.

147. See Burns, *Debate*, 75–76, for the relevant sources. Writers of the era often stressed the human propensity to believe (*ibid.*, 76–77), but those who note proneness to deception may qualify it with proneness to critical examination (esp. after knowledge of some deceptions). Although not all religious claimants are sincere in their fundamental beliefs, sincere practitioners of faiths that emphasize truth telling may have a special incentive to avoid lying.

148. On this tendentious approach of Hume to religion in some of his other work, see Root, "Introduction," 17.

today, however, it is dogmatic nontheism that offers narrower epistemological constraints.

Despite prejudices that persist in contemporary academia, today most critics recognize that Hume's generalizations about religious people's reliability reflect his own irrational antireligious bias.¹⁴⁹ Blind faith may distort perception regardless of its object (religion, romance, politics, etc.), without requiring all testimony from adherents of views to be false.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, dogmatic irreligion is no less blinding than dogmatic religion. Hume's mistrust of religious witnesses as misled by religious "enthusiasm"¹⁵¹ blatantly ignores many intellectuals of deep faith of whom he himself was aware. This included not least Robert Boyle, whom I have already noted is often called the father of chemistry.¹⁵² Hume's opposition to apologetic use of miracles to support religious claims may seem less neutral and tolerant in today's environment, especially when leveled against all religions, than when first deployed in the heyday of the Enlightenment.

At the same time, his disclaimer of miracles that could favor any *particular* religion over others retains some attraction in our environment. One often unspoken, perhaps impolite, factor that makes some current Western academicians uncomfortable with claims of supernatural activity is the frequent apologetic use of such claims (i.e., their sign value for their religious claimants). Some critics are concerned that some apologists might exploit apparently supernatural phenomena to favor one religious system over another or to support the value of some religious claims (their frequent function as signs). While this concern might be accurate, some critics therefore fear that acknowledging such phenomena could appear to compromise the academy's neutrality vis-à-vis various worldviews.

When such discomfort interferes with objective investigation, however, it invites critique for several reasons. First, the academy so far has hardly been neutral in its worldviews, as I have been noting. Indeed, historians have documented the early twentieth-century power struggle in which the ultimately dominant side deliberately promoted antireligious agendas in U.S. academia,¹⁵³ in some cases funded by some of the robber barons,¹⁵⁴ and ultimately leading to a climate of antireligious prejudice in many sectors of the academy.¹⁵⁵ Far from being religiously neutral, those who a priori rule out any supernatural claims effectively deny the worldviews and religions held by the majority of the world's population. To rule out even asking questions about divine activity is not neutral but, as N. T. Wright

149. See, e.g., Larmer, *Water*, 105; Beckwith, *Argument*, 52, and sources he cites. Noting Hume's Presbyterian friends, Taylor, *Hume*, 2–3, argues that Hume was not personally antireligious but used such language in this essay as essentially a publicity stunt.

150. Indeed, some adherents are converts convinced by the reports they offer (cf., e.g., 1 Cor 15:8–9).

151. Hume, *Miracles*, 36, echoing a popular charge against some forms of religious expression in his day.

152. Burns, *Debate*, 240. Cf. his views in Okello, *Case*, 82–88.

153. See, e.g., Smith, "Secularizing Education," 103, 152–53; Ecklund, *Science*, 87–88.

154. Marsden, *Soul of University*, 279–84, 332–33; Smith, "Rethinking Secularization," 74–77.

155. Marsden, *Soul of University*, 396, 429–30, 437–40; idem, *Outrageous Idea*, 3–7, 13–43. Note also comments on some academic bias against religion in ch. 14.

objects, an act of cultural hegemony.¹⁵⁶ We might regard this assumption as right or wrong, but as a starting assumption it is hardly neutral. Like atheism, deism is no more religiously neutral than theism is; one cannot simply rule out of court the alternatives to one's worldview while claiming neutrality.

Second, this approach confuses how a phenomenon might be exploited (in this case, for apologetic purposes) with the authenticity (open to further interpretation) of its occurrence; these are distinct questions. Thus this approach in the name of objectivity risks compromising objectivity. A more genuinely objective approach, although one that requires a more multidisciplinary competence than expertise in any single relevant field may confer, would examine various competing truth claims. On atheistic or deistic premises, divinely driven supernatural phenomena cannot exist; on the premises of many faiths, they must exist; on the agnostic premises from which critical intellectual inquiry claims to begin, one must investigate the evidence to determine whether or not they do exist. This attempt at a neutral starting point does not mean that those who engage in the discussion do not already have some personal views, which many inevitably do. Rather, it means that for the purpose of academic dialogue, they agree to suspend judgment, or at least to listen respectfully, while considering and presenting evidence.

Third, if one a priori assumes that neutrality in the historical quest demands that one must not find data that could be construed as favoring the truth claims of any particular religious movement or movements, one potentially subordinates the objectivity of one's method to desired conclusions. In fact, such an assumption further assumes a particular perspective about religion, sometimes pontificating from a standpoint of cultural superiority without much particular knowledge of religion. With respect to our particular subject, anthropologists document experiences of paranormal cures—however outsiders may define or explain them—in a variety of religious cultures, though in some more than in others.

Incompatible Religions Claim Miracles?

Hume himself may illustrate this predisposition to neutralize religious particularities when he offers the above-noted complaint that incompatible religions all claim miracles. He probably drew this argument from the deists, who in turn had used similar arguments of Protestants and Catholics polemicizing against each other's miracles.¹⁵⁷ Hume advances this observation to argue that miracle claims as a whole are therefore suspect (part of a universally or at least widely tendentious religious rhetoric).¹⁵⁸ But using this observed incompatibility as an objection to miracles fails to reckon with multiple potential philosophic alternatives to the

156. Wright, *Resurrection*, 712–13.

157. Burns, *Debate*, 72–73; see ch. 10 below.

158. Houston, *Miracles*, 203. Given various possible alternative explanations, Sider, "Historian," 316, contends that the argument by comparison with founders of other religions constitutes a false generalization from analogy. Cf. the observations of Brooke, "Science," 22, comparing arguments of Matthew Tindal. Tindal was a deist, though of more moderate stripe than some of his deist predecessors (see, e.g., Mullin,

objection. For example, such miracles could be understood as supreme powers' "goodwill" toward people of different faiths "without necessarily endorsing" particular beliefs;¹⁵⁹ the related idea that most miracles in response to prayers do not explicitly specify a particular religious system;¹⁶⁰ the systems could be less incompatible than their adherents suppose;¹⁶¹ or one could argue that there are multiple supernatural or at least superhuman powers, a view held by traditional religions and even by most traditional forms of monotheism.¹⁶²

One need not subscribe to a particular one or combination of these responses to acknowledge that Hume's objection is massively vulnerable to logical criticisms that he failed to anticipate. Already his contemporaries challenged some of his premises on this matter. For example, some of his early evidentialist critics insisted on inductive examination of the miracle claims in question, arguing that the competing claims for miracles were historically weaker than those in the NT. Likewise, only those miracles clearly designed to support a particular system count as evidence for it, so even if other miracles were proved to occur they would not undercut the contemporary Anglican apologetic.¹⁶³ One may agree or disagree with using miracles for apologetic purposes, but the logic of these objections weakens or undercuts this argument of Hume against that use.

History, 166; Lawton, *Miracles*, 35–37; Richardson, *Age of Science*, 37; Brown, *Philosophy*, 77; idem, *Miracles*, 50–51; Frei, *Eclipse*, 61). Locke had already sought to address this question (see Dumsday, "Locke").

159. Houston, *Miracles*, 204; cf. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 58; Breggen, "Miracle Reports," 6. Licona, *Resurrection*, 148, cites here 2 Kgs 5:11–14.

160. Swinburne, "Introduction," 17 (specifying Jesus's resurrection as one of the exceptions); cf. Larmer, *Water*, 108–9.

161. Houston, *Miracles*, 204; Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 43. Such a solution is quite popular today even in the extreme form in which all religions share the same core (an idea reminiscent of the Enlightenment optimism of finding the universal rational "core" to all religion, noted in Brooke, "Science," 25). Nevertheless, I offer it only as a *hypothetical* objection because I believe that it fails to do full justice to the evidence and suffers from logical fallacies. This solution, if applied to all religious systems, risks reducing a number of potentially competing systems to a commonality that most of them would reject (despite overlap among many of them on many points), a commonality that may not be plausible in the end (cf., e.g., arguments in Woodward, *Miracles*, 20; Groothuis, *Religions*; Netland, *Voices*; Fernando, *Attitude*). It also assumes that all religion is benign, but the fruits of Jim Jones, David Koresh, and the Nazis' Reich Church suggest otherwise. To reduce that claim of benignity to "all religion-that-becomes-widespread is benign" fails to show how long-term popularity constitutes a criterion for becoming benign. The same qualification might be applied to the goal of truth, which need not be identical with being benign; popularity is an inadequate criterion.

162. Cf., e.g., Clark, "Miracles," 210; Rev 13:13; 16:14. Hume's argument cannot even begin to make sense on this level without presupposing the only two options being atheism/deism or the form of monotheism dominant in his day, ignoring polytheism and monolatry. Not only henotheism (allowing other deities) but also traditional Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all allow for both good angels and evil demons. On the large-scale academic disappearance of the preternatural category in the era immediately preceding Hume, see Daston, "Facts," 100–113; cf. Hiebert, "Excluded Middle," 43. Nevertheless, early modern apologists for miracles such as Joseph Glanvill and Robert Boyle continued to attribute paranormal events outside proper theological contexts to such other forces (Burns, *Debate*, 49–51, 55; for others, e.g., 107–9); some others, like William Fleetwood, claimed that only God could perform miracles but that he sometimes allowed them to happen through the devil or unscrupulous human agents who misinterpreted his purposes (97–99).

163. See the survey of these criticisms from Hume's era in Burns, *Debate*, 242–44.

Moreover, Hume's complaint ignores some concrete data. Not least, he failed to give attention to the concrete fact that not all religions equally claim miracles.¹⁶⁴ Further, not all miracle claims are equally well attested; for example, those in historical narrative recounting recent events are not comparable in historical value to legends transmitted orally for centuries or surfacing first in generally nonfactual genres.¹⁶⁵ It is a logical fallacy to reject stronger claims simply because weaker ones exist;¹⁶⁶ on such grounds one could dispute most kinds of truth claims, since they usually have false or weaker competitors.¹⁶⁷ Hume himself had given at least lip service to evaluating the credibility and number of witnesses and the like; by treating all claims equally, he treats them uncritically, simply presupposing what he hopes to prove.

Most important, Hume's counting the testimonies of different religions against one another is poor logic in any case; no court would throw out two testimonies on the allegation that one is false.¹⁶⁸ Some could be true and others false; but the recognition that some miracle claims may be (and in fact are) false does nothing to damage the possibility that some other miracle claims may prove true.¹⁶⁹ My goal here is not to favor a specific possible response or combination of responses to Hume over the others on this matter, but to point out that, once potential

164. Purtill, "Miracles," 199–200; Houston, *Miracles*, 204 (noting that Islam, for example, does not claim many); Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 43; Smith, *Comparative Miracles* (in detail, though sometimes tendentiously; summary esp. 178); Brown, *Thought*, 247–48; cf. Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 123. Most scholars believe that the founders of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Islam did not claim to work miracles, though Islam and later forms of Buddhism allow for miracles (Clark, "Miracles," 203–4; Smith, *Comparative Miracles* [106–37, 179–80 on Muhammad, 150–56 on Buddha]; Wright, *Miracle*, 57–62; Purtill, "Proofs," 46–47 [comparing later tradition on Muhammad's horse ride to the moon]; Licona, *Resurrection*, 178; Pagan, "Miracles" [questioning those attributed to Muhammad]; cf. the lateness of the tradition of Buddha's miracles in Woodward, *Miracles*, 26). Traditional Islam associates miracles especially with historic apostles and prophets (only the Qur'an with Muhammad); see Wensinck, "Mu'djiza"; but for subsequent traditions, see Hoffman and McGuire, "Miracles," 224; for Islamic and Hindu supernaturalism, see my note earlier in the chapter and many non-Christian claims noted in ch. 7. Yet miracles are *central* to Christianity (because associated with Jesus's ministry) in a way that they are not central to some other faiths (cf. Hoffman and McGuire, "Miracles," 221–24). Tens of thousands of cures are attributed annually to the Hindu deity Venkateswara, and paranormal phenomena to Hindu yogis, Christian Science, and other circles that are theologically incompatible with the majority of my examples in this book (Hiebert, *Reflections*, 239). Different religions would explain the presence of supernatural phenomena in other religions differently. Hinduism, for example, can accommodate a wide range of other perspectives under its umbrella, whereas monotheism by its nature is more exclusivist and in some forms attributes other religions' signs to negative spiritual forces; both might allow for alternate spiritual forces at work.

165. Johnson, *Hume*, 88; Beckwith, *Argument*, 55; Clark, "Miracles," 200–201; Jensen, "Logic," 151; Breggen, "Miracle Reports," 6; Licona and Van der Watt, "Adjudication of Miracles," 5; Licona, *Resurrection*, 146–47.

166. Larmer, *Water*, 108.

167. Clark, "Religions," 61.

168. Houston, *Miracles*, 205, considers inept a modern court that would favor a defense argument that rested its entire case on an inconsistency between two prosecution witnesses. He notes (206–7) that the best account is not weakened by evidence adduced in favor of weaker competitors; all evidence must be weighed.

169. See Johnson, *Hume*, 81.

alternatives are factored in, his argument from competing religions is too frail to bear any weight.

Some argue that Hume viewed the history of miracles as people claiming them to justify their own sects.¹⁷⁰ But in fact, new religions often do not claim miracles, and without examination one cannot assume that a new religion has invented miracles rather than that experiences of miracles have called a new religion into being.¹⁷¹

Disbelief in Miracles as a Dogmatic Assumption?

All these points aside, we must also examine the question of alternate explanations for supernatural claims (as in chs. 13–15). An extranormal phenomenon need not be construed as divinely or even supernaturally caused simply because those who experience it so interpret it.¹⁷² Scholars working from a variety of religious and philosophical assumptions may recognize the validity of claims about events (say, a spontaneous remission of a disease) without necessarily accepting the claimant's interpretation of the event (say, divine healing). Some events offer more compelling evidence for supernatural activity than others, but where one places the bar depends in great measure on one's initial assumptions.

My point here is simply to say that while some interpretations may be more plausible than others in an academic setting (we might prefer cumulative evidence in controlled studies, to the extent that those could be conducted on such matters), we must be honest with ourselves and our students about the philosophic grid through which we sift the evidence. We must not confuse our presuppositions with the evidence, nor dare we confuse them with neutrality.¹⁷³ As Alan J. Torrance observes, "the assessment of probability is in no small measure a function of one's epistemic base." If one presupposes dogmatic antisupernaturalism, one will assign to all miracle claims a zero probability. This verdict is not necessary, however, for those open to other possibilities.¹⁷⁴

Views about whether any intelligence exists outside nature are interpretations, not data, hence belong to a different sphere of reasoning than purely empirical scientific expertise confers. As one scholar puts it, facts in isolation "are unintelligible and nonexplanatory," inviting explanation.¹⁷⁵ Yet science *as* science in the strictest sense proceeds inductively, accumulating finite bodies of information and constructing patterns. The interpretation that structures the information, by

170. Slupic, "Interpretation," 535.

171. Taylor, *Hume*, 16–17.

172. On the role of personal experience in typical charismatic epistemology, see Poewe, "Rethinking," 250–52. Hume's epistemology valued personal experience highly, but he would have considered charismatics' experience subjective, since he did not share it.

173. Except to the extent that our working premise is open to the most plausible readings of the evidence. And even there, we must be open to redefining our understanding of "plausibility" if sufficient evidence so demands.

174. Torrance, "Probability," 259.

175. Varghese, "Introduction," 15.

contrast, is ultimately metascientific.¹⁷⁶ Even moving to the metascientific level may presuppose an intelligence that exceeds pure, random naturalism. Einstein believed that acceptance of the world's "rationality or intelligibility" also entailed belief in "a superior mind," which he defined as God.¹⁷⁷

As philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn has noted, even scientific hypotheses, which often reign for a period of time until a paradigm shift provides fuller explanatory models, are persuasive only to those within historic communities that accept the paradigm in question,¹⁷⁸ often on what he calls "faith."¹⁷⁹ The scientific method involves explanatory models for empirical evidence; even when the evidence is undisputed, some explanations (such as Newtonian physics) prove inadequate for some situations as further discoveries expand the range of available evidence.¹⁸⁰ Rationalism and empiricism often presented themselves as throwing off an older epistemology of revelatory authority, yet these systems demand (by authority) an a priori acceptance of their own epistemologies.¹⁸¹ Put more simply: everyone has presuppositions. Those who dismiss others' evidence because those offering it have different presuppositions are being neither charitable nor open-minded, and they short-circuit the possibility of dialogue.

If an eyewitness claims that she has witnessed someone raised from the dead—and many eyewitnesses do offer such claims, as I shall note later in this book—one is free to explore multiple explanations for such claims. But to simply assume, barring other plausible naturalistic explanations, that such claims must be disingenuous in each case

176. *Ibid.*, 11, on "the Principle of Explanation."

177. *Ibid.*; cf. Spitzer, *Proofs*, 48. I do not by citing Einstein imply that he would support the notion of miracles (he followed Spinoza's pantheism; Frankenberg, *Faith*, x, 143–45, 151–52; thus he resisted the indeterminism of quantum mechanics, *ibid.*, 145–46); I cite him only for the point in question here. Einstein held that he maintained a deep Jewish faith, but it was one of his own definition (Stanley, "Einstein," 195).

178. Kuhn, *Structure*, 94.

179. Kuhn speaks of trusting or putting "faith" in scientific paradigms, a "decision" that "can only be made on faith" (*ibid.*, 158)—language more often traditionally associated with fideism.

180. Cf. Batens, "Role," 48; Loewer, "Determinism," 331. Nevertheless, a physicist responds that Newtonian physics retains its place (even in physics graduate programs) within its sphere, with continuing practical application in engineering. Newer theories simply modify it for different conditions (on modifying theories in light of new evidence, see also Smart, *Philosophers*, 37). Thus "special relativity reduces to the Newtonian case when relative speeds are low compared with the speed of light," and large groupings of particles "tend to follow Newtonian physics" in most cases, despite "the effects of quantum mechanics . . . on small size scales" (Chris Keener, Jan. 27, 2009). Philosophers of science, however, debate how to describe the extent of this modification. Thus whether Newtonian physics is merely inadequate or even incompatible with the Einsteinian paradigm remains a matter of debate (Kuhn, *Structure*, 98–105; some in Worrall, "Change," 287–88); already Whitehead remarked on the demise of the once-grand Newtonian physics (Frankenberg, *Faith*, 178), and others continue to employ such language (e.g., Polkinghorne, *Physics*, 17, though on 49 he notes that Kuhn overstated the contrast). For a different example, Maxwell's reigning paradigms likewise faltered with new evidence (Kuhn, *Structure*, 107–8; Polkinghorne, *Physics*, 56–57). Some contend that modern physics in some respects adopts positions more like "Newton's predecessors" than his followers (Kuhn, *Structure*, 108; cf. Young, "Chaos," 227–28). On quantum theory vs. classical physics, see also Joos, "Emergence."

181. Note how textbooks, by simplifying and articulating as fact reigning paradigms, often promote an epistemology of authority (in science, see Kuhn, *Structure*, 136–39). The history of scientific "progress" is often rewritten from the standpoint of current paradigms (*ibid.*, 167). The nature of scientific investigation does, however, significantly mitigate the dangers of the authority approach (167–68).

exalts one's presuppositions above the evidence. The presence of some less certain claims to this effect does not license us to dismiss cases from credible witnesses.

Moreover, if in some of these cases a supernatural explanation is a plausible one, scholars ought not to feel intellectually obligated to rule it out, as if Hume's eighteenth-century essay has the final epistemological word. A critic might respond that I am arguing against the consensus methodological assumption of Western scholarship. As I have attempted to show, however, that assumption is historically contingent and has never been effectively demonstrated.¹⁸² If an antisupernatural consensus exists, it exists more by historic default than by most of its supporters having examined the reasons for their belief. We would also be using "consensus" in terms of majority practice rather than unanimity; indeed, I believe that there are far more scholars in our discipline who allow for divine activity than such a statement of a consensus would warrant.

In any case, I believe that a paradigm shift is in order. In any discipline, consensus must sometimes be overturned for progress to occur. Whether such a shift will happen in my lifetime I do not know, and I do not suppose that a single book would bring it about. But should we not grant greater credence to the word of a thousand eyewitnesses (even if that were all there were) than to the insistence of a hundred thousand nonwitness colleagues merely restating unproved assumptions? (One would hardly expect an officer at an accident scene to exclude all eyewitnesses as biased and thus turn to nonobservers for the most reliable information.) Granted, interpretation is a question distinct from that of testimony's reliability, and our ability to evaluate the nature of the claims in subsequent chapters is in a number of cases very limited; their relevance to the thesis of potential supernatural activity varies. Nevertheless, these observations need not invalidate the principle that, should some of these claims prove best explained on supernatural terms, a rethinking of our reductionist premises should be in order.

The Shift in the Western Worldview

The Western worldview has been shifting toward a more open posture toward other worldviews. Although we need not uncritically embrace all worldview shifts as beneficial, we often cannot accommodate new knowledge without being willing to consider stretching or replacing traditional paradigms.

Scholars often begin with fundamental principles and seek to construct and defend a case from those principles. As philosophers of science note, however, even supposedly fundamental principles—presuppositions that we take for granted—must be open to revision in the light of further discovery.¹⁸³ In science as in other

182. Moreover, assigning burden of proof based on academic consensus repeats the fallacy with which philosophers of science once charged religion: epistemic appeals to authority and consensus rather than fair-minded investigation of evidence.

183. See discussion in Popper, *Myth of Framework*, 59–61. Popper argues that the inductive, scientific approach to knowledge is limited even in yielding probabilities, given the inadequacy of its approaches

disciplines, paradigm shifts become revolutions in ways of conceptualizing the universe,¹⁸⁴ bearing changes in worldview.¹⁸⁵ Theories succeed by proving more persuasive than their competitors,¹⁸⁶ but once they become dominant they are displaced only with difficulty. Academic politics can play a role in their resilience.¹⁸⁷ When changes do occur, they can prove dramatic; some philosophers of science note that, because of new ways of framing the evidence, even some of the hard data may appear to change.¹⁸⁸ Professionalization, however, means that such paradigm shifts usually face considerable resistance before taking hold.¹⁸⁹ Some resistance to new extranormal claims from around the world is thus not surprising, though the quantity of these claims is now becoming overwhelming.

A Shift among Scholars

Resistance or not, a shift in worldview has been occurring, and Bultmann's once ready assumption that no one in the modern world believes in miracles is even more demonstrably false today than when he claimed it. Likewise, as I have noted in the last chapter and this one, the particular arguments once used by Spinoza, Hume, and others to form the modern consensus against miracles made sense only on the philosophic and scientific presuppositions of their era, not those of our own.¹⁹⁰

to probability (*Conjectures*, 64–65). He challenges both essentialist and instrumentalist paradigms (see *ibid.*, 97–114).

184. See Kuhn, *Structure*. Though Kuhn's thesis was itself revolutionary and widely received, there has also been criticism (see some essays in Gutting, *Paradigms*, including Shapere, "Structure"). MacIntyre, "Crises," 73–74, argues for the need to locate theories in their specific historic contexts.

185. Kuhn, *Structure*, 111–35.

186. *Ibid.*, 154–55. Working to conceive of alternate hypotheses should be inherent in the process of testing hypotheses (Feyerabend, "Problems 1"; he illustrates the value of this contention in the apparently counterinductive yet ultimately successful approach of Copernicus and Galileo, in "Problems 2," 280–82, 322–23, and *passim*).

187. In addition to previously prevailing academic views, Galileo's problems included (see Frankenberry, *Faith*, 6) politics in the court system, "a personal sense of betrayal between Galileo and Pope Urban VIII," and (cf. also Osler, "Revolution," 98) concerns regarding the Reformation. Galileo's academic enemies were wedded to older paradigms inherited from Ptolemy. The political element of academics is true today as in Galileo's day: though arguments for paradigms are typically portrayed in terms of models' explanatory value, "the issue is which paradigm should in the future guide research on problems many of which neither competitor can yet claim to resolve completely" (Kuhn, *Structure*, 157; on the politics, see, e.g., Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 14–15; MacIntyre, "Crises," 61; for nuancing the history, cf. Heidelberger, "Astronomy"). From a sociological approach, Wuthnow, "Contradictions," 164–65, notes scientists' competition in constructing views of reality (following Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life*, esp. 243).

188. Kuhn, *Structure*, 135.

189. *Ibid.*, 64–65. Crises for old paradigms, such as unanswerable questions, often pave the way for new paradigms (see 66–76). Nevertheless, new ones often face considerable attacks before becoming acceptable (e.g., 107, 133); scholars tend to accept old solutions to problems until an overwhelming amount of new evidence forces a reappraisal of their tenability (169).

190. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:519–20 (citing, e.g., Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics); cf. also Wink, "Stories," 213. See further arguments for the possibility of concrete divine activity in history in the essays in Geivett and Habermas, *Miracles*.

More scholars today acknowledge that the long-standing academic assumption that only atheistic or deistic approaches can be objective (i.e., epistemologically neutral) presupposes that atheism or deism is self-evidently true; it does not prove their truth, and it is certainly not neutral. Christian philosopher William Lane Craig contends:

The presupposition of the impossibility of miracles should, contrary to the assumption of nineteenth and for the most part twentieth century biblical criticism, play no role in determining the historicity of any event. . . . The presupposition against the possibility of miracles survives in theology only as a hangover from an earlier Deist age and ought to be once for all abandoned.¹⁹¹

New Testament scholars have become increasingly less comfortable with such unproved postulates of the Enlightenment era. As Leonhard Goppelt remarks with reference to the assertion that miracles are historically impossible, critical reflection must question that proposition, because “there is no such thing today as a complete and generally accepted philosophical understanding of reality.”¹⁹² “History” in the sense of “what happened,” other scholars note, may be distinguished from “history” in the theoretical sense of “what can be explained by natural causes without recourse to supernatural causes.”¹⁹³ As theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg points out, “The decision to exclude God from the public understanding of reality is of course not a specifically historical issue,” but a “prejudice” that inevitably can only misguide the historical quest if divine action in fact occurs.¹⁹⁴

Likewise, historical Jesus scholar Marcus Borg rightly points out,

The primary intellectual objection to it [supernatural activity] flows from a rigid application of the modern worldview’s definition of reality. Yet the modern view is but one of a large number of humanly constructed maps of reality. It is historically the most recent and impressive because of the degree of control it has given us; but it is no more an absolute map of reality than any of the previous maps. All are relative, products of particular histories and cultures; the modern one, like its predecessors, will be superseded.¹⁹⁵

Indeed, theoretical science has already abandoned “the modern worldview in its popular form.”¹⁹⁶

Other NT scholars offer similar warnings. For example, Charles Talbert notes that the antisupernaturalist, materialistic worldview is less dominant today, not

191. Craig, “Miracles,” 43, concluding his discussion in the study; similarly Craig, *Faith*, 154. Cf. Boyd, *Sage*, 113–28; Wink, “Stories,” 211 (regarding “materialism”).

192. *Theology*, 1:145.

193. France, “Authenticity,” 105–7; cf. Wright, *Resurrection*, 12–13.

194. Pannenberg, “History,” 64 (cf. also 71).

195. Borg, *Vision*, 33–34.

196. *Ibid.*, 34. Definitions of science vary; see Okello, *Case*, 13, following Plantinga.

because "of new evidence" but because of "shifting evaluations of what is possible."¹⁹⁷ Similarly, Rick Strelan notes that scholars are moving beyond the old paradigms and becoming more open to examining supranormal phenomena claims in early Christian sources, albeit most often in exclusively scientific (e.g., neurophysiological) terms.¹⁹⁸ Scholars addressing extranormal claims increasingly reckon with the bias of their own "post-Enlightenment Western" worldview in seeking to grapple with miracle and magic claims in ancient sources foreign to our understanding.¹⁹⁹

Do Modern People Believe in Miracles?

In considering the shift in the Western worldview, we should not take into account only those who are experts in narrowly defined fields of knowledge, not all of them equally relevant to the matter at hand. Consensus does not determine truth, and many statements of consensus are premature in any case. As I have noted more than once in this book, some older modern theologians like Bultmann declared that "mature" modern people do not believe in miracles, and that "no one can or does seriously maintain" the NT worldview.²⁰⁰ Those following such an approach can examine miracle accounts' theological and social functions while dismissing their historical foundations.²⁰¹ Yet even as some theologians were demythologizing the Bible to make it relevant for an antisupernaturalist audience, belief in miracles was rising among the Western public.²⁰² Some biblical scholars, too, have long questioned whether Bultmann's approach risked demythologizing away not just the form but the content of the message.²⁰³

197. Talbert, *Mediterranean Milieu*, 216. Grace Jantzen suggests that monistic reductionism without room for God or miracles "is as inadequate as the dualism which it was supposed to supersede" (Jantzen, "Miracles," 357).

198. Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 9.

199. Note, e.g., Reimer, *Miracle*, x.

200. Bultmann, "Mythology," 4 (noting on 5–6 that modern beings presuppose all activity as coming from ourselves, not alien powers, even deity, and on 9 forcing a choice between accepting or rejecting the entire NT worldview); cf. idem, "Problem of Miracle"; Max Weber's designation of modernity as "disenchanted" (in Remus, *Healer*, 106). Bultmann allows that God acts existentially in ways communicated by mythical language ("Mythology," 32; "Demythologizing," 110), but Bultmann employs the presence of miracles as a criterion of inauthenticity in Jewish texts (*Tradition*, 58); he denies that the historical continuum may be "interrupted" by supernatural interventions (e.g., "Exegesis," 147; cf. "Demythologizing," 122; Perrin, *Bultmann*, 86; Thiselton, *Horizons*, 292) and affirms as "myth" whatever involves supernatural forces (Bultmann, "Demythologizing," 95; cf. "Mythology," 9; Perrin, *Bultmann*, 77; Poland, *Criticism*, 11; Richardson, *Age of Science*, 109). Although now arguing against the dominant culture, cf. similarly the antisupernaturalism of Mack, *Myth*, 51, 54, 76, 209–15. Beit-Hallahmi, "Signs," 181, disdainful of anything supernatural, regards the demythologizing approach as an obvious attempt to circumvent the narratives' plain meanings.

201. Cf. Kleine, "Wissenschaft," emphasizing investigation of their functions rather than investigation into their historical reliability; such questions can be bracketed methodologically.

202. Mullin, *Miracles*, 262. Wuthnow, *Heaven*, 115–16, emphasizes the rising interest in the miraculous, though also documenting the polyvalent character of these popular beliefs (cf., e.g., 229n25).

203. E.g., Robinson, "Challenge," 330; O'Connell, "Miracles," 55; Kallas, *Significance*, 112–13. Demythologizing struck not only at eschatology but also the "mythology" of Christology (rightly perceived by Mussner, *Miracles*, 81) and theology.

The observation that belief in miracles persists (indeed, flourishes) in the modern world is even more obvious today than it could have been in Bultmann's era. As John Meier points out, a 1989 Gallup poll showed that 82 percent of the people in the United States believe in miracles today, with only 6 percent categorically rejecting that view.²⁰⁴ A different *Time* poll from 1995 reports more than two-thirds of people in the United States affirming miracles, with churches emphasizing signs constituting the "fastest-growing" segment of U.S. Christianity.²⁰⁵ A 1996 media poll suggests that roughly 80 percent of medical patients believe that prayer can be helpful in healing.²⁰⁶ Seventy-two percent of U.S. respondents in a 2003 *Newsweek* poll believe that God may cure even a mortally ill person for whom science has surrendered hope.²⁰⁷ Even a majority of Americans who rarely or never attend church believe that miracles probably do occur.²⁰⁸

A more recent Pew Forum survey concludes that 79 percent affirm that "miracles still occur today as in ancient times"²⁰⁹ (a statement that would exclude not only antisupernaturalists but even the strictest conservative Christian cessationists, who accept biblical miracles but do not believe that miracles occur in the same way today).²¹⁰ More surprisingly, 34 percent of Americans claim to have *witnessed or experienced* divine healing; these figures include 30 percent for Hindus; 34 percent for members of Orthodox churches; 27 percent for Catholics; 54 percent for members of historic African-American churches; 50 percent for evangelicals (with Pentecostals and independent charismatics perhaps raising the overall evangelical figures); and so forth.²¹¹ I will offer some even more dramatic figures internationally in the next

204. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:11, 520–21; Woodward, *Miracles*, 21 (citing Gallup and Castelli, *Religion*, 58); Johnson and Butzen, "Prayer," 249; cf. Keener, *John*, 266. Naturally, not all who answer Gallup polls share identical interpretations concerning their answers (cf. the observation of Cadbury, "Intimations," 80).

205. Gibbs, "Miracles," 64 (cited also by Breggen, "Miracle Reports," 381); the "fastest-growing" claim also appears on 67. It is doubtful that the percentage dropped thirteen points (to *Time*'s 69 percent) in six years from the Gallup poll, but how one asks and interprets questions matters (Gallup polls may reflect more optimism regarding Christianity), and one must allow for a significant margin of error. Perhaps a median estimate around 75 percent is likely, but this again might depend on what people mean by "miracles."

206. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 4 (citing polls from *USA Today Weekend* and *Time*). Forty-four percent of respondents in a poll in California claimed to use prayer to address musculoskeletal pain, and 54 percent of those who prayed for their pain found it "very helpful" (Koenig, *Medicine*, 55, citing Cronan et al., "Prevalence").

207. Johnson and Butzen, "Prayer," 249.

208. Wuthnow, *Heaven*, 122.

209. "Landscape Survey," 11 at <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report2-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf> (cited by Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 111n89; accessed Dec. 2, 2008).

210. Traditional cessationists apparently account for a minority of evangelicals today, since evangelicals have one of the highest proportions of belief in present miracles (with not only a strong majority agreeing, but 61 percent agreeing intensely, the same percentage that strongly affirm the existence of angels and demons), second only to Mormons (roughly 80 percent) and close to members of historically black Protestant churches (58 percent).

211. At <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report2-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf> (accessed Dec. 2, 2008). Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 23–24, cites a much smaller 1986 survey of 586 people in Richmond, Virginia, in which 14 percent of respondents claimed to have experienced what they thought was divine healing. They also cite another study (on 76: King, Sobal, and DeForge, "Experience") in which

chapter: *hundreds of millions* of persons alive today claim that they have *witnessed* or *experienced* miraculous healings. One might disagree with all of these claims, but one cannot simply arbitrarily exclude all the claimants from the modern world.

While numbers are lower in some regions, such as many parts of Europe,²¹² they are higher in some other regions, such as most of Africa and Latin America. Most faiths affirm supernatural activity. Orthodox Judaism,²¹³ Christianity,²¹⁴ and Islam,²¹⁵ as well as many Hindu and Buddhist traditions,²¹⁶ traditional tribal religions, spiritism, and in fact most worldviews not derived from Western rationalism, including its Marxist derivatives that are specifically atheistic, affirm the reality of supernatural phenomena.²¹⁷ Bultmann's position summarily dismissed such worldviews—easily the majority of the world's population—as not part of the modern world.²¹⁸ Perhaps they were not part of the modern world in which he

half of respondents claimed to have "watched faith healers on television; 6 percent said that they had been healed by faith healers, and 15 percent said they knew someone who had been healed in this way."

212. Religious beliefs tend to be higher in the Americas (Höllinger and Smith, "Religion," 235), but Asian healing techniques are more common in northwest Europe (238). For the charting of cultural variations in paranormal beliefs by country, see McClenon, *Events*, 21 (with Iceland, Britain, and Germany reporting more such beliefs than, say, Denmark). Statistically, "early religious training" is more apt to dispose one to religious, including paranormal, beliefs (Wuthnow, *Heaven*, 125–26), which could account for the geographic disparity to a high degree.

213. In addition to the Scriptures, subsequent Jewish history includes accounts of miracles. Some of the ultraorthodox (a small minority within Judaism today), like Lubavitch Hasidim, have even looked to their rebbe for wonders in response to his blessings (Woodward, *Miracles*, 375–77 on Rabbi Schneerson before, and to a lesser extent after, his death). Nevertheless, the power attributed to legendary rebbes declined after the Nazi Holocaust (see Lewis, "Martyrdom"). For miracle and prophecy stories regarding the founder of Hasidism, see *Praise of Baal Shem Tov*, 3, 14–15, 22–24, 31, 71, 213–14, 218–19, 227, 241–42, and passim; Ben-Amos and Mintz, "Introduction," xxiv, xxix, xxx. These stories often resemble somewhat analogous late medieval Christian hagiography.

214. See chs. 8–12 and sources cited there.

215. For later Islamic tradition on Muhammad's miracles, cf., e.g., Sahas, "Formation"; Woodward, *Miracles*, 173–205; note Sufi saints in Woodward, *Miracles*, 206–30. Natural and supernatural cures are often combined in folk Islam (Shenk, "Conversations," 7; Hiebert, "Power Encounter," 57); extraordinary signs are attributed to "Baba Farid, a Pakistani Muslim saint" (Hiebert, *Reflections*, 239); Islam in South Asia pursues healing by spiritual as well as material means (Hermansen, "Healing," 411–12; cf. Sufism on 414–16); Muslim faith healers exist in South Africa (Ally and Laher, "Perceptions").

216. For Hindu miracles, see Dumsday, "Locke," 421; Thouless, "Miracles," 255–56; some Hindus believing that deities consume sacrifices, in Wood, "Appetites"; note miracles attributed in the past to Krishna, Woodward, *Miracles*, 249–66; to past Hindu saints in Woodward, *Miracles*, 267–95; for current Hindu gurus, see, e.g., Woodward, *Miracles*, 378–82. Tens of thousands of cures are attributed annually to the Hindu deity Venkateswara and paranormal phenomena are attributed to Hindu yogis (Hiebert, *Reflections*, 239). For miracles attributed to the Buddha, see Woodward, *Miracles*, 296–328; to Buddhist saints, Woodward, *Miracles*, 329–62. See especially the many non-Christian sources for healing claims cited in the note in ch. 7.

217. See, e.g., Woodward, *Miracles*, 23–24 (citing various religions); Abogunrin, "Search"; Mbiti, *Religions*, 253–57; Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 129; Nanan, "Sorcerer"; Ashe, *Miracles*, 26–27; Loos, *Miracles*, 4 ("universal"); McClymond, *Stranger*, 82–83 (citing the views of "billions of people," probably without exaggeration). The kinds of questions one asks about miracles also vary in different cultural contexts (e.g., Arowele, "Signs").

218. For a critique of Bultmann's demythologization program and its theological consequences, see Bockmuehl, *Theology*, 9–76, especially 70–74. For a critique of demythologizing from a historical

instinctively moved,²¹⁹ but to extrapolate from his personal sphere to all modernity suggests a major induction based on a comparatively small range of data—a move reminiscent of Hume. Such summary dismissal of the supernatural without appeal to satisfying contemporary philosophical arguments or concrete scientific data may have succeeded among those who shared the assumptions held by Bultmann's mid-twentieth-century Western academic setting, but evidently does not satisfy most of those outside that fairly elite subculture.

By defining modernity ethnocentrically in terms of a mid-twentieth-century academic Western elite, Bultmann was simply restating his own philosophic presuppositions, many of which (such as those reflecting the influence of Heidegger) are no longer fashionable in the academy.²²⁰ Some leading scholars today argue that Bultmann was obsessed with a now out-of-date worldview (one that Anthony Thiselton attributes to his neo-Kantian roots).²²¹ Regardless of how fashionable the view may remain in many circles that genuine supernatural activity by a deity, deities, or spirits may be dismissed a priori, in today's multicultural world it is uncritically naive for otherwise critical scholars to simply accept and propagate that consensus without analysis of the empirical data. Normally we affirm that academic inquiry should leave hypotheses open to challenge and proceed inductively on the basis of evidence.²²² Indeed, no less a scholar than Karl Barth criticized Bultmann for uncritically rejecting some nineteenth-century miracle accounts.²²³ As another scholar complains, Bultmann and others excluded miracles without

standpoint, see Cadbury, "Intimations," 87 (why privilege as nonmythical only what is amenable to modern tastes and therefore considered theologically valuable)?

219. As Cladis, "Modernity," 93, notes, religion is "so familiar in society, so alien in the academy." Cf. the importance of religion in 96, 103; also the contrast between skeptical academia and popular belief regarding supernatural religion in Woodward, *Miracles*, 21.

220. The greatest influence on his thought is the early Heidegger (Perrin, *Bultmann*, 15; Hasel, *Theology*, 85), whom Bultmann thought discovered a modern view of experience compatible with the core experience Bultmann thought he found in the NT ("Mythology," 23–25; Mark, "Myth," 135–36; Thiselton, *Horizons*, 178–79, 226, 232, 262; Brown, *Miracles*, 252; cf. Zachman, "Meaning," 14; Edwards, *Christianity*, 477). He saw existential understanding not as a bias but a necessary perspective, like any other approach to history ("Exegesis," 149; cf., e.g., *Word*, 11; in contrast to Thielicke, who warns about corruption of the Bible by secular philosophy, in Thiselton, *Horizons*, 3). Old liberalism (despite Bultmann, "Mythology," 12–13; Poland, *Criticism*, 26–27, 29) and his logical extension of Lutheranism (Thiselton, *Horizons*, 205–26; cf. Poland, *Criticism*, 19–20) also influenced him; for influences from earlier NT scholarship (D. F. Strauss, J. Weiss, W. Bousset) and his approach to miracles as "mythology," see Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 33–37.

221. Thiselton, *Horizons*, 260–61; cf. Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 13.

222. This is not to deny the value of working assumptions, including that of naturalism; but such assumptions must be open to revision, not calcified in academic traditions. Scientific knowledge is provisional, hence on many points even consensus is temporary (cf. Clark, *Philosophy of Science*, 63–113). Paradigm shifts do not come easily; even investigators tend to approach topics laden with traditional assumptions and concerns for respectability within the guild.

223. Kelsey, *Healing*, 236–37; cf. Kydd, *Healing*, 34; Moltmann, "Blessing," 149. Others criticize him for rejecting 1 Cor 15:3–8 (which demands belief in divine activity) as kerygmatic based on his existential assumptions (Richardson, *Age of Science*, 112); his supposedly different kerygmas for different communities flies in the face of the only concrete evidence we have (Hunter, *Theology*, 65n1). Even many of Bultmann's contemporaries believed his approach too radical (cf., e.g., McGinley, *Form-Criticism*, passim; Mark, "Myth," 140; Kallas, *Significance*, 110–15; Hunter, *Theology*, 152–53).

considering any of the strong concrete evidence for miracles; "Yet, if the hallmark of empirical science is impartial openness to evidence, such a way of proceeding can hardly be called scientific."²²⁴

In view of current trends, some postmodern observers may well come to accept claims of supernatural phenomena without moral judgments concerning their sources;²²⁵ for instance, neither the early Christian claim that Jesus's miracles are from God nor the contrary pagan claim that they were works of sorcery would be a priori privileged. Whether or not one approves of such cultural trends,²²⁶ the days when supernatural phenomena can be simply dismissed without discussion may well be numbered.²²⁷ Barring unforeseen shifts, this trend toward greater openness will probably continue and grow in light of the larger context of global thought (addressed in chs. 7–9, 12). Philosophic approaches from the Majority World will bring to the table many interests, and, at least in most of Africa, Latin America, and much of Asia, the Western Enlightenment antipathy to suprahuman activity will not likely be among them.

Conclusion

The traditional radical Enlightenment prejudice against miracles rested on philosophical premises regarding nature that have since broken down. Prejudice against the testimony of people with religious interests likewise reflected a specific Enlightenment milieu and need not be maintained today. A merely intuitive rejection of supernatural claims thus rests not so much on an argument intelligible in our own cultural setting but on an older academic tradition—even though tradition is usually regarded as a nonempirical and nonrational foundation for epistemology. Contemporary approaches lack necessary grounds for a priori rejecting potential supernatural explanations, whether they are more open due to modern physics or multicultural postmodernism. Rejecting them from utilitarian fear of where they could lead also prejudices the discussion.²²⁸ An inflexible prejudice against the possibility of supernatural activity is no more neutral than a prior commitment to that possibility is. We return to such questions most prominently in chs. 13–15.

224. Nichols, "Miracles," 704.

225. For one objective anthropological investigation that takes something like this morally neutral approach, see, e.g., Goodman, *Demons*; for the value of distinguishing between what is paranormal and what is good, see, e.g., Allen, "Miracle" (although he appears to dislike supernatural healing).

226. Western Christians may learn from Asian Christians, for example, that what is at issue is not whether events are superhuman, but what spirits are behind them (Yung, *Quest*, 230, emphasizing discernment and citing Mark 13:22; Matt 7:22–23; 2 Thess 2:9).

227. Marsden, *Outrageous Idea*, 30, notes that an academy that welcomes postmodernists alongside empiricists is utterly inconsistent if it denies a voice to even overt Christian perspectives; see also McGreevy, "Histories," 65.

228. A purely utilitarian approach might as well prefer Pascal's wager, which invites theistic belief if evidence is otherwise balanced.

I myself have embraced both sides of this question at different times in my life—one side as an atheist and the other (now, for most of my life) as a Christian. What I wish to show now is just how culturally isolated are the assumptions that dogmatic antismiraculism is incontrovertible and that it speaks for modern people as a whole. More important for the book's primary thesis, I wish to show how common are firsthand claims to what the claimants believe are miracles.

Miracle Accounts beyond Antiquity

The principle of analogy once used to argue against all ancient miracles (either the occurrence of some sorts of extranormal phenomena or their supernatural causation) now undermines that very argument. In Hume's day, many Protestant theologians distinguished sharply between biblical and postbiblical miracles as part of their anti-Catholic polemic. Their polemic played into the Humean argument against ancient miracles based on the lack of many comparable modern claims. Many theologians in turn accommodated this nonmiraculous approach, further emphasizing the lack of postbiblical miracles and eventually often renouncing miracles altogether.

Today, however, abundant claims of miracles, particularly from the Majority World, challenge Hume's skepticism about the existence of many credible eyewitnesses. Hume demanded "a sufficient number" of witnesses of unquestioned integrity and intelligence who would have much to lose by testifying falsely.¹ In today's academic climate, many who testify to miracles have much to lose even by testifying truly; but I shall first respond to Hume's quantitative demand. In contrast to the environment assumed by Hume, today hundreds of millions of people claim to have witnessed miracles. Moreover, eyewitnesses claim what they believe are miracles even in the West, and this has been the case through most of history, even

1. Hume's requirements are summarized similarly also in Breggen, "Scale," 450.

when Hume framed his argument within the theological framework of academic circles often reticent to acknowledge miraculous claims. Some of these eyewitness claims involve even the healing of blindness, the raising of the dead, and nature miracles. I will treat some of these subjects in turn in subsequent chapters: claims from the Majority World (chs. 7–9); Western history (ch. 10); the modern West (ch. 11); and some specifically dramatic claims like those involving blindness, death, or nature (ch. 12).

Virtually no one would suggest that all claims reflect clearly authentic miracles (see discussion in ch. 13). Nevertheless, such claims, however we interpret them, clearly exist on an eyewitness level and hence need not be excluded from first- and second-generation testimony in the Gospels and Acts. Statistics suggest the vast numbers of claims; my primary interest in chapters 7–12 is to illustrate some of the variety of sorts of cases involved in them. While the primary point of these chapters is not the interpretation of events, some of these reports may have a bearing on that question. At the least, given the vast number and variety of claims, one can no longer simply take for granted that uniform human experience *a priori* excludes extranormal events for which many observers would find a specifically theistic interpretation particularly persuasive (see discussion in chs. 13–15).

Majority World Perspectives

There is not to be found, in all history, any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned good sense, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood; and at the same time, attesting facts performed in such a public manner and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable. —David Hume¹

It forms a strong presumption against all supernatural and miraculous relations, that they are observed chiefly to abound among ignorant and barbarous peoples. . . . *It is strange*, a judicious reader is apt to say, upon the perusal of these wonderful historians, *that such prodigious events never happen in our days*. But it is nothing strange, I hope, that men should lie in all ages. —David Hume²

Medical anthropology, like all anthropological study, could help the exegete to adopt a transcultural stance. —John Pilch³

Plausibility structures—what intuitively strikes us as rational—are culturally determined. Hume's claim does not make sense for all cultures. While antisupernaturalism remains a powerful traditional ideological force in Western culture, many cultures exist with worldviews that do not readily accommodate nonsupernaturalism,⁴ and not necessarily because they lack appreciation for science or empirical inquiry. In this chapter, I will introduce some Majority World perspectives; I will explore more concrete examples from there in the following two chapters. Suffice it to note here

1. Hume, *Miracles*, 34; idem, "Miracles," 34.

2. Hume, *Miracles*, 37, 38; idem, "Miracles," 36.

3. Pilch, *Healing*, 35.

4. On the wide diversity of worldviews available in the world, of which metaphysical naturalism is only one, see, e.g., Nash, "Conceptual Systems," 119.

that, as we shall observe soon in greater detail, *hundreds of millions* of people in the world claim to have witnessed supernatural healings. Their plausibility structures, and in general those of the cultures where many of them live, differ from the plausibility structures of those who begin with Humean presuppositions.

Scholars sometimes have opined that miracle reports like those in the Gospels and Acts must depend on later legend or a writer's imagination.⁵ This premise, however, rests on culturally and intellectually narrow assumptions that read much of the world's experiences through the nonexperiences of much of our Western academic culture.⁶ Many other cultures (as well as much of Western culture, including academic Western culture, historically) have worked from different assumptions, and the labels traditionally employed to denigrate those assumptions by modernity no longer sound charitable in a postmodern, and particularly a multicultural, world.⁷ Thus some scholars today are arguing that comparisons with shamans and analogous figures in the first century⁸ would be more helpful in understanding Jesus's miracles than are the anachronistic modernist readings of modern skeptics.⁹

In this chapter, I introduce some Majority World perspectives, and in the following two chapters, I survey some miracle claims in the Majority World. Afterward I will explore such claims in the premodern West and continuing popular culture in the West. (Admittedly, these divisions of both the world and eras are arbitrary, but I attempt to address the West somewhat separately because it has been the source and primary advocate of skepticism toward miracle claims.) The claim that no one in the modern world believes in miracles (a claim once seriously offered by some scholars as an answer to the question of miracles, as I have noted) is now too evidently irresponsible to be seriously entertained.

5. Cf. Dibelius, *Studies in Acts*, 24, regarding as characteristic of "legend" "a miracle related in naïve style" (cf. 17–18, 20); also the sort of approach noted in Achtemeier, *Miracle Tradition*, 136–37; Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 75.

6. Polybius opined that "as nothing written by mere students of books is written with experience or vividness, their works are of no practical utility to readers" (12.25g.2, LCL).

7. While demurring from much of postmodern thought, Evans, "Judgment," 201–2, emphasizes the value of this approach and its consequences for evaluating miracles. Young and Goulet, "Introduction," 9, contend that not reality but experience of reality appears multidimensional.

8. Shamans in the technical sense may belong mostly to hunter-gatherer societies (Krippner, "Medicine," 193), but healers (the primary point in the usual comparison) are more pervasive. Harner, *Way of Shaman*, 42, believes that peoples in diverse societies independently developed similar mind-body techniques because they found they worked.

9. See Craffert, "Healer" (though still naturalistic); cf. Berends, "African Healing Practices," 285–86; Borg, *Conflict*, 73, 230–31, 305, 373; Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 211–13; idem, *Letters*, 366–68; Pilch, "Usefulness," 100 (Jesus as a folk healer); Aarde, "Rabbits"; McClenon, *Events*, 90–93; also Eve, *Miracles*, 354 (following Kleinman, *Healers*, 71–82, 139–40, 366), though noting differences. Not all these approaches are supernaturalist, but all prefer comparisons with living religious options to hypothetical reconstructions of redactional layers in putative legends behind our texts. Some compare prophetic healers in what they view as analogous colonial settings (cf. in detail Davies, "Prophet/Healer"; idem, *Healer*; though cf. some criticisms of Davies's approach to Jesus's call at Jordan in Strijdom, "Hallucinating"). Though recognizing theological differences between the two, Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 24, note that Pentecostalism "resonates culturally" where shamanism is practiced and observe functional analogies between them (cf. Cox, "Miracles," 90, 91; Kim "Pentecostalism," 32).

Multicultural Miracle Claims and Ethnocentric Prejudices

If even a handful of miracle claims prove more probable than not, Hume's argument fails, removing the initial default setting against miracles. Without a special burden of proof against miracle claims, they can be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by normal laws of evidence like any other claims. To reject all eyewitness claims in support of miracles (when we would accept in court eyewitness claims of similar quality for other events) simply presupposes against miracles from the start, rigging the debate so as to exclude in advance any supportive testimony as reflecting misunderstanding or deception. At present, however, the primary issue is whether witnesses can claim firsthand knowledge of what they believe are miracles, and here the evidence is overwhelming from the outset.

Even if outside the experience of most Western scholars, today's world is full of firsthand claims to have witnessed miracles, and there is no reason to suppose that the ancient world was any different. Western scholars may readily dispute the explanations for such phenomena, which may vary from one claim to another, but when some scholars deny that such phenomena ever belong to the eyewitness level of historical sources, they are not reckoning with the social reality of a sizable proportion of the world's population. Indeed, millions of intelligent but culturally different people will be compelled by what they believe to be their own experience or that of others close to them to dismiss such scholarship as an experientially narrow cultural imperialism. In the face of far less information about other cultures than is available today, in fact, Hume and the thinkers he followed unashamedly assumed cultural superiority over supernaturalist cultures (a matter treated further below).

Thus historical Jesus scholars Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, although reluctant to attribute extranormal phenomena to purely supernatural causes,¹⁰ point out that the plausibility principle of analogy used in historiography "obliges us to recognize the possibility of healings and exorcisms. For in many cultures there is an abundance of well-documented analogies to them—and even in the 'underground' of our culture, although that may be officially denied."¹¹ Thus many scholars today

10. Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 310–13. They suggest (312) that perhaps there is a "supernatural" element within nature itself, a charisma present in many people and capable of being used benevolently or malevolently, "religious" explanations being socially determined (cf. Ashe, *Miracles*, 26–27). Other hypotheses may ultimately prove more viable, but Theissen and Merz at the least recognize the reality of the phenomena.

11. Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 310; cf. also Price, *Son of Man*, 20–21. Theissen and Merz employ the same analogy principle to discount nature miracles (310), which they think were written in light of the resurrection (301–4; but then, so is everything in the Gospels). Yet, as I note elsewhere, there are also many modern reports of nature miracles (again, whatever their explanation), though far fewer than healing and exorcism claims (e.g., Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, *History*, 223–24; Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 181–83; Kinnear, *Tide*, 92–96; Khai, "Pentecostalism," 268; Dayhoff, "Barros"; Daniel, "Labour," 157; Hellestad, "Prayer," 16–17; Yung, "Integrity," 174; McGee, "Regions Beyond," 70; idem, "Miracles," 253; Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 54–55, 59, 64, 192; Koch, *Revival*, 143–44; Numbere, *Vision*, 206–7; Lindsay, *Lake*, 48–49; Harris, *Acts Today*, 66–67, 80; Emmanuel Itapson, interview, April

observe that the principle of analogy, historically used against the reliability of eyewitness miracle reports in the wake of the radical Enlightenment, now favors their probability.¹² Some thinkers in other disciplines have also drawn on modern miracle accounts in discussing issues related to ancient miracles.¹³ Many miracle reports today resemble those in the Gospels, and it is today's accounts that we can most easily verify and falsify by consulting witnesses.¹⁴

A Multicultural Approach

Social scientists have noted that, despite a variety of interpretations, "people from all cultures relate stories of spontaneous, miraculous cures," based on experiences that they have had.¹⁵ This observation has some relevance for how we approach biblical narratives involving healings. As Justo González remarks in his commentary on Acts, the frequent denial of narratives' historicity because of their miracle reports employs a questionable epistemological criterion. Bultmann denied that modern people who use scientific inventions can believe in miracles,¹⁶ yet "what Bultmann declares to be impossible is not just possible, but even frequent." Miracles are, González points out, affirmed in most Latino churches, despite the influence of the mechanistic worldview from much Western thought.¹⁷ Cuban Lutheran bishop Ismael Laborde Figueras notes that it is hard to find Latin American Christians who do not believe in miracles.¹⁸ Noted Latina theologian Loida Martell-Otero likewise emphasizes prayers for healing in the Latina community,¹⁹ and notes that Latinas' experience helps shape their way of reading Scripture.²⁰

29, 2008; Ayo Adewuya, phone interview, Dec. 14, 2009; Paul Mokake, interview, June 3, 2006; Donna Arukua, interview, Jan. 29, 2009).

12. Besides some listed above, note here also, e.g., Wink, "Write," 6; deSilva, "Meaning," 16–17. This observation was already offered by Alfred Russel Wallace, cooriginator with Darwin of the theory of natural selection, in 1896 (Mullin, *Miracles*, 185–86; on Wallace, cf. also Vidler, *Revolution*, 120); and G. K. Chesterton in 1914 (from a Christian perspective; Mullin, *Miracles*, 219).

13. Nichols, "Miracles," 705. On a popular level, Cranston, *Miracle*, 277, appeals to miracles at Lourdes to confirm the plausibility of biblical miracles.

14. Laurentin, *Miracles*, 93.

15. McClenon, *Events*, 131 (citing for further information Hufford, "Folk Healers"; idem, "Folk Medicine"; idem, "Epistemologies"; McClenon, "Experiential Foundations").

16. Cf. Bultmann, "Mythology," 4.

17. González, *Acts*, 84–85. Although González is speaking more broadly, some estimate that 28 percent of all Latino Christians in the United States identify with Pentecostal or (esp. among Catholics) charismatic movements (Espinoza, "Contributions," 124); naturally these believers would be included among those agreeing with González's statement. Some suggest that common characteristics of Pentecostalism readily fit Hispanic and Latino culture (cf. Alexander, *Signs*, 133–34). At the least, the Latin American worldview is more accepting of the supernatural, not being "over-rationalized" (Alvarez, "South," 141–42, 144, though referring esp. to Pentecostals).

18. Ismael Laborde Figueras (interviews, Aug. 7, 8, 2010).

19. For Latina prayer for healing and other matters, see Martell-Otero, "Satos," 16–17, 32–33; idem, "Liberating News," 384–87, considering this dependence on God in a context of resistance against oppressive structures that cannot be trusted.

20. Martell-Otero, "Satos," 31–32, protesting the dominant culture's frequent view of Hispanic/Latina faith as superstitious also on 16. She cites Brueggemann, *Astonishment*, 39, 42, regarding academia's loss of

Some Asian theologians have likewise complained that the approach of Bultmann's school is irrelevant to Asian realities. Asian worldviews, Methodist bishop Hwa Yung notes, affirm miracles, angels, and hostile spirits.²¹ Indeed, *pace* Bultmann's rhetoric, most religious Westerners also fail to see any contradiction between miracles and the use of modern science²²—including a number of scientists.²³ “Modern” worldviews are too diverse to fit any one paradigm,²⁴ and despite his cultural assumption that his argument is true, Bultmann never provides a reason for it.²⁵ Cross-cultural studies suggest that socialization rather than exposure to science accounts for most of the skepticism in some circles.²⁶

Whereas fewer than 18 percent of Christians in 1900 lived outside Europe and North America, today more than 60 percent do, and an estimated 70 percent will by 2025.²⁷ As the center of world Christianity has shifted to the Global South, the dominant Christian perspectives in the world have shifted with it.²⁸ Although far from being the only groups involved in this shift, charismatic and Pentecostal forms

ability to hear sympathetically awesome experiences among the marginalized. For distinctions between global Pentecostals and fundamentalism, see, e.g., Cox, “Miracles,” 92–93; Spittler, “Review.”

21. Yung, *Quest*, 7; on the Global South more generally, see others, e.g., McGowan, *Authenticity*, 22–23 (citing Walls, *Movement*; Jenkins, *Next Christendom*). Yung notes that this perspective may seem strange to Westerners but it fits most non-Western cultures (“Integrity,” 173). Elsewhere he suggests that openness to the miraculous is so characteristic of global Christianity today that antisupernatural Western Christianity, which once marginalized non-Western Christian supernaturalism, appears to be “the real aberration” (“Reformation”).

22. See, e.g., Davis, “Actions,” 173–75; Erlandson, “Miracles” (esp. 427–28); Sider, “Historian,” 309; Robinson, “Challenge,” 323; Loos, *Miracles*, 75–76; Alvin Plantinga’s criticism in Clark, *Philosophers*, 69. Research shows that beliefs about healing are complex and are much more correlated with charismatic practice than with education and other factors (Village, “Dimensions,” studying 404 Anglicans). Perhaps halfway between Bultmann and his detractors, Welbourn, “Exorcism,” 596, thinks spiritual healing and exorcism are impossible for technological peoples but make sense in some other cultures.

23. See Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 14–15, citing (on 15) such figures as Volta, Ohm, Ampère, Faraday, and many others; Polkinghorne, *Physics*, 108–9, cites Faraday, Maxwell, and Lord Kelvin.

24. Carlston, “Question,” 99.

25. See, e.g., Davis, “Actions,” 173–75; cf. Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 13–14. Bultmann’s confidence without argument contrasts with many ordinary Christians who argue for miracles by citing examples to which they or others are eyewitnesses—an argument that some intellectuals simply dismiss without genuine consideration or self-critical examination of their own assumptions. Does not such dismissiveness risk elitism?

26. One therapist notes how experiencing the supernatural challenged the skeptical approach of his training (Malarkey, *Boy*, 135, 149–50). Still, in general, studies of undergraduates show that scientific training does “not reduce the frequency of anomalous reports,” in contrast to beliefs in circles of elite scientists (McClenon, *Events*, 35). Likewise, in cultures like Ghana there is no inverse proportionality between scientific knowledge and paranormal beliefs (*ibid.*, 22). The academy is an elite subculture, and cultural factors (at least sometimes related to academic politics) help shape its creeds.

27. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 121, noting also that by 2050 “only about one-fifth of the world’s Christians will be white.” The shift of Christianity especially to the Global South is now too widely documented and regularly noted (e.g., Escobar, *Tides*, 84–85; Rah, *Next Evangelicalism*, 13; Barnum, *Silent*, 284–86) to require much comment, but it is also reshaping Christianity in the West, in part through migration and population shifts (see, e.g., Rah, *Next Evangelicalism*, 13–14, 74).

28. Laing, “Face,” 165. The label “Global South” is not very precise geographically; in employing the title, I am deferring to a current usage.

of Christianity have been in the forefront of the recent expansion of Christianity, reportedly growing six times over in the three decades from 1970 to 2000.²⁹ Not surprisingly, readings of Scripture in the Global South often contrast starkly with modern Western critics' readings.³⁰ These readings from other social locations often shock Westerners not only because others believe the early Christian miracle narratives to be plausible but also because these readers often take these narratives as a *model* for their ministries.

Thus Western scholar of global Christianity Philip Jenkins notes that in general Christianity in the Global South is quite interested in "the immediate workings of the supernatural, through prophecy, visions, ecstatic utterances, and healing."³¹ Such an approach, closer to the early Christian worldview than modern Western culture is, appeals to many traditional non-Western cultures.³² Hwa Yung, the above-mentioned bishop of the Methodist Church in Malaysia, notes that the charismatic, Pentecostal character of Majority World churches reflects not so much direct influence by Pentecostals or charismatics as simply the worldview of the majority of humanity. They have simply never embraced the Western, mechanistic, naturalistic Enlightenment worldview that rejects the supernatural.³³

Referring to the analogous issue of hostile suprahuman forces, noted scholar of African religion John S. Mbiti complains that most Western scholars "expose their own ignorance, false ideas, exaggerated prejudices and a derogatory attitude" that fail to take seriously genuine experiences pervasive in Africa.³⁴ African psychologist

29. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 121; on Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, including Catholic charismatics, leading Christian expansion today, see also Noll, *Shape*, 115 (citing Martin, *Tongues*; idem, *Pentecostalism*).

30. See Van der Watt, "Relevance," especially here 237–42, though helpfully warning of the danger of ignoring original contexts (243).

31. Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 107, who also complains that Westerners too often contest the legitimacy of such perspectives (on 121 offering the specific example of John Spong's ethnocentric complaints about African Anglican bishops' "superstitious" and "Pentecostal" "extremism"). Admittedly, this observation is a generalization, since many in the West also report such experiences (see ch. 11, below; Kang, "World," 38).

32. See, e.g., Pocock, Van Rhee, and McConnell, *Face*, 136–37; cf. Keener, "Spirit," 170. For Pentecostal relevance to indigenous healing traditions as well as offering a connection to the Gospels and Acts, see also, e.g., Porterfield, *Healing*, 126; Yong, "Independent Pentecostalism," 401. Cultural receptivity to spiritual realities does not necessarily lead to embracing the same spirits as before. Lehmann, *Struggle*, 145, compares Latin American Pentecostal healings with earlier possession cults, but underlines significant differences (the former demonizing the latter's spirits, and Pentecostals having followers whereas possession cults have clients). Scholars argue that in Africa as well, Pentecostals have demonized the old spirits and have grown at the expense of the older "Spirit churches" that accommodated them (Dijk, "Technologies," 221; for an example, see Kalu, "Mission," 13–14); the fast-growing charismatic churches are often displacing both traditional mission churches and independent churches (Mwaura, "Integrity," 198). Turaki, "Missiology," 281, also notes that they are often evangelizing "nominal second generation Christians."

33. Yung, "Integrity," 173. In Yung, *Quest*, 238–39, he cites indigenous charismatic influences in Asia, such as Sadhu Sundar Singh, John Sung, and various revival movements, in addition to Western influences. For another illustration: in Poewe, "Rethinking," 248, traditional East Asian culture influenced a traditional Christian observer to become a proto-charismatic (before the spread of the charismatic movement).

34. Mbiti, *Religions*, 253; cf. Uzukwu, "Address," 9; Wyk, "Witchcraft," 1204. Another African scholar notes that miracle workers, both Christian and non-Christian, are an authentic part of African culture (Ukukhuku Manus, "Miracle-Workers"). Another writer with experience in Africa suggests that African

Regina Eya warns that all claims to extranormal healing are dismissed by many Western scholars, the credible along with the spurious, because of the inappropriate application of traditional Western scientific paradigms to matters for which they were not designed.³⁵ Danny McCain, a Western professor who has spent more than two decades teaching in Nigeria, notes that “nearly all African Christians and most African theologians,” regardless of their views on other critical issues, reject Western antisupernaturalism. He acknowledges the existence of some false claims, but complains that “it is arrogant and unprofessional for Western scholars to outright reject the miraculous, totally ignoring the testimonies of thousands of people,” based simply on their own lack of such experience.³⁶

In addition to differing in their paradigms involving paranormal phenomena, many other cultures are in general more holistic, expecting spiritual beliefs to impinge on physical needs in ways that Western culture has often found uncomfortable.³⁷ For example, the concern of religion for health in traditional African thought³⁸ is likely a factor in the growth of African Independent Churches (AICs), most of which include a heavy focus on healing.³⁹ Newer Pentecostal and charismatic

culture offers better foundations for understanding biblical texts addressing such issues (Roschke, “Healing”). An expert in African Christianity notes the prominence of spiritual power in African exegesis (LeMarquand, “Readings,” 496–97, citing as examples Abogunrin, *Corinthians*, 126, 131–32; Imasogie, *Guidelines*, 66; Ndubuisi, *Charisma*; Udoette, “Charismata”). For an example of one traditional African supernatural worldview, see, e.g., Kraft, *Worldview*, 263–65.

35. Eya, “Healing,” 51–52 (then research fellow in the psychology department of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; currently part of the psychology department at Enugu State University of Science and Technology). She does note that some Western works have shown greater openness to alternative paradigms (citing, e.g., Leshan, *Medium*).

36. Danny McCain, personal correspondence, June 1, 2009. McCain teaches at the University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, and is the founder of the International Institute for Christian Studies. More generally, Ramachandra, *Myths*, 154–55, complains that the elite subculture of Western intellectuals often ignore popular global Christianity and other faiths.

37. See, e.g., Allen, “Whole Person Healing,” 130–31 (resisting Western acculturation that suppresses traditional African interests); Welbourn, “Exorcism,” 595 (African allowance of both medical and spiritual treatment); Pobee, “Health,” 59–60; Bührmann, “Religion and Healing”; Dube, “Search,” 135; Jules-Rosette, “Healers,” 128; Omenyo, “Healing,” 235–38; Downing, *Death*, 62 (biomedical without spiritual healing being reductionist and specifically Western); Joubert, “Perspective,” 126–27 (on the connectedness of the material and spiritual worlds, following Yusufu Turaki); Oduyoye, “Value,” 116 (on African recognition that life is not purely materialistic); Githieya, “Church,” 240 (on the holistic emphasis of one AIC); Burgess, *Revolution*, 223; Pope-Levison and Levison, *Contexts*, 109; Lake, *Healer*, 117 (traditional Native American healing); Oblau, “Healing,” 324; Griffiths and Cheetham, “Priests” (esp. 297, 302–3); Ma, “Encounter,” 130 (regarding Korea); Clapano, “Perspective,” 116 (from Missionary Sisters of the Assumption in the Philippines, though perhaps mixing practices from varied religious backgrounds as well); Maggay, “Issues,” 34; Tarango, “Physician”; Shishima, “Wholistic Nature”; González, *Tribe*, 94; Byaruhanga-Akiiki and Kealotswe, *Healing*, 100, 108, 128; Krippner, “Medicine,” 194; cf. McCormick and Gerlitz, “Nature”; on this claim for Pentecostal worship, cf. Johns, “Healing,” 48–49; for Catholic worship (in a different form), Power, “Response,” 101–2; Pentecostal holism in Droogers, “Normalization.”

38. See, e.g., Pobee, “Health,” 58–59; among traditional Yoruba, see Ajibade, “Hearthstones,” 195–99, 211; for holism in traditional Zulu culture, see Moodley, *Shembe*, 56–57.

39. See Daneel, *Zionism*, 13, 34; Pobee, “Health,” 57; Byaruhanga-Akiiki and Kealotswe, *Healing*, 47–60; Kyomo, “Healing,” 151; Parrinder, *Religion*, 115–26; Grundmann, “Healing,” 27 (citing among examples West African Aladura churches and South African Zionist churches); Oshun, “Practices,” 242 (on

churches are also filling the same niche, sometimes at the expense of older AICs.⁴⁰ Because African culture has always connected healing with religion, African Christian movements that appropriated the biblical connection of healing with religion have grown, often challenging churchgoers in more Western churches who were secretly consulting diviners and traditional practitioners.⁴¹ Many newer churches have grown in Africa at the expense of more traditional ones, especially where the latter have refused to engage local cultures' reigning cosmologies.⁴² In some areas, older mainline churches under indigenous leadership have likewise emphasized healing in a manner relevant to their African context.⁴³ Western observers may appraise such developments positively or negatively,⁴⁴ but what is minimally clear is that Africans from various belief systems are engaging issues that Westerners

Aladura); for the healing emphasis among the Aladura, cf. also Dairo, "Healing," 10 (among the Yoruba); Brown, "Worshipping" (in Liberia); Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 180, 184–205 passim, 239–40; Ayegboyin, "Heal"; elsewhere, Parrinder, "Learning," 328 (healing and other emphases fit the traditional African context); Ojebode and Moronkola, "Healing Ministry," 41–42; Becken, "Healing Communities," 230; Amadi, "Healing"; Mwaura, "Response" (raising some concerns on 67–68); Zvanaka, "Churches," 74 (healing as contextualization in the Zion Apostolic Church); Le Roux, "Le Roux," 63. Many of these churches adapt and address traditional cosmology and healing approaches (see Oosthuizen, "Healing," 75–80, 89–90; Owuor et al., "Reinventing"); many observers therefore believe that they serve a useful social function (Oosthuizen, "Healing," 89; Wessels, "Practices," 108; Gumede, "Healers"). For one healing movement (mixing Christian and non-Christian elements) in Asia, see, e.g., Ma, "Santuala" (esp. 68); idem, "Mission," 30; Yong, "Independent Pentecostalism," 395–97. Omenyo, "Healing," 233–34, argues that many of these churches formed because mission-founded churches at that time disallowed spiritual gifts and other spiritual issues; to the extent that this explanation is accurate, the process would appear analogous to the foundation stories of many early Pentecostal denominations in the West. AICs claimed some 95 million adherents in 1995 (Shaw, *Awakening*, 56).

40. Some have argued that newer Pentecostal churches are growing at the expense of traditional independent churches (Gifford, "Developments," 525–27; cf. Walls, *Movement*, 92–93, on growing indigenous charismatic churches; Shaw, *Awakening*, 166, on Ghana; Burgess, *Revolution*, 4); Pentecostals have tended to be culturally flexible and ready to incorporate African cultural elements (Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 36, 359; idem, "Conversion," 174; Martin, "Expansion," 290; cf. Stanley, "Christianity," 82). Zionist (as opposed to Ethiopian) AICs emphasize charismatic gifts (Spear and Kimambo, "Prophecy," 229); despite classifications based on worship forms, however, some southern African AICs betray more historical influence from earlier traditional churches than from Pentecostalism (Daneel, "Churches," 186–90). For the growth in Mozambique, along with the healing emphasis, see Schuetze, "Role," 36–37.

41. Walls, *Movement*, 117. These churches often borrow forms from traditional religions but tend to be their harshest opponents (Walls, *Movement*, 99).

42. Ranger, "Dilemma," 364–65, viewing the newer approaches as a better solution to the problem of syncretism. Peltzer, "Faith Healing," 399–400, notes that Zionists and Apostolics take over traditional healers' roles, combined with Christianity. The Aladura church reflects many traditional Yoruba beliefs about spirits and witches (e.g., Babalola, "Impact"), which it confronts through prayer (Ray, "Aladura Christianity," 281–87). Dickson, *Theology*, 95–96, suggests that the mainline churches' early neglect of healing, in contrast to the interests of healing churches, reflected "European-oriented traditions." Mainline churches' failure to address spirits can encourage believers to look elsewhere for help, sometimes in ways considered syncretistic (so, e.g., Jackson Mutie Munyao, an Africa Inland Church pastor in Kenya, cited in Wagner, "World," 91; in India, cf. Hiebert, "Excluded Middle," 39). The same pattern obtained earlier in the West, some turning to Christian Science (Wilson, *Power*, 16).

43. Rasolondraibe, "Ministry" (noting traditional African cultural expectations on 344–47).

44. Though genuine health benefits are welcome, religious competition can also breed outlandish claims and false advertising. See, e.g., "Church's ad with crutches banned in South Africa," <http://news>

often ignore. At least some aspects of their interest in physical health are more in keeping with biblical cosmologies than much traditional Western Christian minimizing of the body is.⁴⁵

Regardless of how we interpret miracle reports and other supernatural claims, their frequency in various sectors of today's world indicates that large numbers of intelligent, sincere people believe that such cures are occurring today, including through their own prayers. This is true even in the modern West; how much more likely would this be the case in a generally less skeptical culture like the world of the first Christians? There is no intrinsically *historical* reason to think that the Gospel writers had to invent such miraculous claims, or that Luke had to invent them even in the eyewitness "we" material in Acts (Acts 16:18; 20:10; 28:4–6, 8–9; cf. 21:4, 11, 19).⁴⁶ Nor is there any reason to insist that the reports must have originated in a reporter's deception or imagination.

Cross-Cultural Readings

Various trends now challenge traditional readings. Consistent with the rise of global awareness and the increase in voices from the Majority World,⁴⁷ postmodernity rejects the privileging of Western cultural assumptions.⁴⁸ As an example of the trend toward cultural openness, medical anthropology now rejects "medicentrism," the ethnocentric view that only current Western views of

.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100721/ap_on_re_af/af_south_africa_church, accessed July 21, 2010. Reasonably, the church was being asked to supply evidence for its claims.

45. As often noted, e.g., Pope-Levison and Levison, *Contexts*, 109–10, 167 (on Jesus). Biblical anthropology valued healing because it valued the whole person as opposed to Western dualistic denigration of the body (see Blessing, "Healing," 188–92).

46. Bauer cited the presence of miracles against the genuineness of eyewitness claims in the narratives (as noted in Campbell, *We Passages*, 9), purely on the philosophic assumption that miracles are implausible. On the "we" narratives, see the excursus in Keener, *Acts*, at Acts 16:10 and the sources cited there.

47. To some extent, these voices are still often filtered through Western academia, that is, those who work through the Western system and gain a voice there are often required to speak its language and work by its rules to gain a hearing in Western academia, as is also the case for various minority perspective voices in the West. I am not implying that academia should have no boundaries (contrast the current glut of information on the Internet, largely undistinguished by any critical grid) but lamenting that some boundaries simply reinforce the hegemony of the dominant culture.

48. Noting the cultural shift and valuing culturally diverse voices is not a blanket endorsement of all ideas frequently associated with postmodernity, which other cultural shifts will in any case likewise presumably supersede. Though language may be incomplete, as deconstructionists emphasize, it is normally adequate (note Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*; cf. relevance theory, e.g., in Green and Sim, *Relevance Theory*). Likewise, historical evidence may fall short of scientific precision without historians needing to relinquish the possibility of making some claims about historical events. For concerns, see, e.g., Espiritu, "Ethnohermeneutics," 272–73; for one discussion of the postmodern emphasis on difference and a post-postmodern response underlining human solidarity, see Min, *Solidarity*, 47–64 and 65–88, respectively; on postmodern theology, see, e.g., Vanhoozer, *Postmodern Theology*. Apart from specifically postmodern assumptions, other domains have long valued multicultural approaches (e.g., Taylor, *Missiology*). Welcoming diverse cultural perspectives also need not require agreeing with every point (e.g., the views of some that most illnesses are caused by evil spirits, noted in Cho, "Healing," 123–24; see further documentation concerning cultures holding this view in my appendix B).

sickness and healing are authentic and that disputes the many claims to cures outside Western views.⁴⁹ Medical anthropology is a burgeoning field that has generated vast scholarship.⁵⁰ It also offers promise for biblical scholars; medical anthropology, John Pilch argues, “could help the exegete to adopt a transcultural stance”⁵¹ when addressing healing claims in the NT. “Illnesses” are often culturally defined,⁵² and varying cultural constructs of illness and wellness can actually influence health.⁵³ Some disciplines other than biblical studies have been more quick to appropriate the benefits of medical anthropology. Indeed, some physicians now partner with some spiritual healers due to the observed effectiveness of some of the latter, regardless of views of the causes.⁵⁴ Other cultural traditions often surprise unexposed Westerners; when, for example, some Western students pressed a guest speaker from the Kenyan Maasai culture whether he genuinely believed in traditional Maasai healing practices, he laughed and retorted, “It worked.”⁵⁵

Another example uncomfortable for some traditional Western assumptions, although relegated in this book mostly to appendix E, involves vision reports. Cross-cultural anthropological studies suggest that people in a variety of cultures experience visions or other altered states of consciousness and that vision reports in Acts or Revelation therefore would appear plausible to much of the world’s

49. See Pilch, “Sickness,” 183; idem, “Disease,” 135; cf. Barnes, “Introduction,” 6–7; Crawford, “Healing,” 31–32; for the influence of Eastern healing practices in Western medicine (here psychotherapy), see, e.g., Gerber, “Psychotherapy.” Tensions between diverse cultural medical approaches can create ethical and legal problems, especially when one is empirically more effective (see, e.g., “Making Room”).

50. See Barnes, “Introduction,” 3, and note the bibliography in Barnes and Talamantez, *Religion and Healing*, 353–78, just on religious traditions and healing (also Barnes, “World Religions,” 346–52). For examples of various cultural healing traditions, see, e.g., the essays in Van Alphen and Aris, *Medicine* (summarized in, e.g., Stadtner, “Review”).

51. Pilch, *Healing*, 35 (cf. also 14). For medical anthropology in general, see Pilch, *Healing*, 19–36; for application to Jesus research, see idem, “Anthropology”; for various applications of anthropology more generally to NT healing accounts, see Neyrey, “Miracles.”

52. See, e.g., Pilch, *Dictionary*, 72; Eve, *Healer*, 52–53 and others (many following esp. Kleinman, *Healers*, 71–82 and passim). Most parasites and illnesses known today existed (Avalos, “Health Care,” 760–61) but were understood differently.

53. Pilch, “Usefulness,” 102–3. We may not believe in being moonstruck or struck by the evil eye, but anthropologists recognize these as “folk-conceptualized disorders” (Pilch, *Healing*, 19; cf. idem, “Disease,” 136, 139); illnesses also affected status and marginality from social power (cf., e.g., Pilch, *Dictionary*, 77; idem, “Disease,” 138). On cultural systems approaching disease differently, see, e.g., Grundmann, “Healing,” 33. For an example of an attempt to read a biblical healing text according to ancient rather than modern medical conceptions, see Keener, “Fever”; cf. also the ancient contextual approach in von Bendemann, “Arzt.”

54. Remus, *Healer*, 114–15 (noting recent medical research, esp. Harpur, *Touch*). In many places, the number of doctors is so inadequate that health care must involve traditional practitioners (Abioye, “Faith,” 3); on the inadequacy of available modern health care contributing to dependence on traditional medicine and practices such as those in the Aladura movement, see, e.g., Ayegboyin, “Heal,” 233–34. Because members of some independent churches seek health care only from church leaders or with their permission (Kgwatalala, Villiers, and Lubbe, “Behaviours,” 276–80), those interested in health care must collaborate with them (281–82).

55. Mitchem, “Healing,” 224.

population.⁵⁶ As noted above, there has also been a shift away from antisupernaturalism itself, so that even the interpretation of such claims, as well as the existence of the phenomena themselves, is more open to discussion than in the past.

Culture affects how we read ancient miracle claims. Some modern critics have complained that early Christianity spread through claiming signs and wonders, playing on the fears of superstitious people. (Some others, by contrast, affirm that they offered culturally relevant therapies.⁵⁷) Yet most Christians in the Majority World, less shaped by the modern Western tradition of the radical Enlightenment, find stories of miraculous phenomena far less objectionable than do their Western counterparts.⁵⁸ These other cultures offer a check on traditional Western assumptions; as Lamin Sanneh, professor of missions and history at Yale Divinity School, points out, it is here that Western culture “can encounter . . . the gospel as it is being embraced by societies that had not been shaped by the Enlightenment,” and are thus closer to the milieu of earliest Christianity.⁵⁹ Encounters with non-Western societies have increasingly challenged the hegemony of many assumptions that the Enlightenment treated as universals.⁶⁰ Thus even various Western scholars are increasingly challenging the hegemony of the traditional Western approach of demythologizing, in light of the very different hermeneutical approach of African readers.⁶¹

As I shall elaborate further below, many of these voices, in fact, can recount reports (including at times their own eyewitness testimony) of phenomena, both associated with Christianity and not associated with it, that seem difficult to explain, if taken at face value, without recourse to the activity of suprahuman entities. Regardless of the explanations given, hundreds of millions of people around the world sincerely believe that suprahuman forces are at work or that miraculous healings occur. Indeed, those who deny such forces (however

56. Pilch, *Visions*, passim; see also comments regarding possession states in appendix B and visions and dreams in appendix E. Pilch notes (158–59) that such phenomena have continued despite attempts of the Enlightenment to discredit the earlier experiences throughout history.

57. Critics sometimes address the Christian exorcists in late antiquity who, like other practitioners of their era, responded to the pervasive sense of demonization in that period. Others regard such activity as a form of culturally sensitive adaptation to local psychological needs (cf. observations concerning the continuity and discontinuity in Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 273–77; on this period, see also Lewis, *Life*, 98; for anthropological assessments of the therapeutic aspects of exorcisms, see my appendix B). In either case, these claims are far more pervasive than the few samples offered in the Gospels and Acts. On the success of wonders in converting pagans after Rome’s fall, see Ward, “Monks,” 133.

58. Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 122–31; cf. also Mullin, *History*, 279 (cf. 281); Mchami, “Possession,” 17 (on spirits); Richards, “Factors,” 95–96; Evans, “Judgment,” 201–2; Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 67–73, 82–83 (also noting, on 71–73, the shift among, and citing, “many western ethnographers” and anthropologists who have grown increasingly respectful toward other cultures’ approaches to the supernatural); on a less technical level, cf. also Venter, *Healing*, 46–49, 54; the practical expansion of miracles among African Bible readers who had not been warned against this approach by missionaries, in Gardner, “Miracles,” 1929.

59. Sanneh, *Whose Religion*, 26.

60. See Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 67, 375–76.

61. Kahl, “Überlegungen.” Gaiser, *Healing*, 10, supports bringing into conversation the insights of various cultures, including those in Africa, for a contemporary theology of healing.

defined) are clearly a minority of the world's population.⁶² Whether one likes it or not, it is neither charitable nor plausible to simply dismiss the existence of such sincere claims, however one chooses to explain them. By analogy, it is plausible that many ancient claimants also sincerely believed that they reported such phenomena accurately, rather than that they were inventing them for the purposes of propaganda.

Ethnocentric Objections to Miracles

The danger of reading biblical narratives solely through the grid of modern Western assumptions is not a merely theoretical one. Traditional Western academic approaches to other cultures have often proved ethnocentric,⁶³ including through derogatory Western assumptions about "religion."⁶⁴ If research is guilty of ethnocentric assumptions when addressing cultures contemporary to us, we run an even greater risk of compounding that ethnocentrism with anachronism as we study ancient cultures.

Moreover, what is true about ethnocentric approaches to religion in general is also true of ethnocentric approaches to miracles in particular. I noted in chapters 5–6 that David Hume's arguments against miracles have been the dominant influence in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century academic dismissal of miracles. I also noted that one of Hume's arguments against miracles was that in his day most reports stemmed from "ignorant and barbarous nations."⁶⁵ Hume's attribution, however, could appear to hold true only insofar as one tautologically defined all supernaturalist cultures as "barbarous," and excluded literary and other sophistication from consideration when defining "ignorant."⁶⁶ By what sort of definition,

62. If one goes beyond those who claim to have experienced or witnessed such phenomena to those who believe that they sometimes occur, the numbers are exorbitant. As I will elaborate further below, Pentecostal and charismatic Christians alone (only a portion of those who believe in such phenomena) may constitute as many as half a billion people, though this may be a high estimate; for discussion of the figures, see Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 11. With probably the majority of Christians, Muslims, and various other groups added, it is clear that antismiraculists are a minority of the world's population (cf. also Beit-Hallahmi, "Signs," 161, despite his own apparent disdain for supernaturalism; on the supernatural worldview of much of Islam, see, e.g., Kraft, *Worldview*, 279–80; Parshall, *Bridges*). This observation does not make antismiraculism wrong (antismiraculist critics are right to point out that supernaturalism is appealing; e.g., Frank, *Persuasion*, 222–23), but it does make it arrogant to simply dismiss all other worldviews by merely claiming that one's assumptions are self-evidently correct.

63. See, e.g., the critique in MacGaffey, "Epistemological Ethnocentrism" (cf. also idem, "Ideology"); Vansina, "Knowledge" (passim, but esp. 39–40); Chrétien, "Exchange," 77.

64. MacGaffey, "Epistemological Ethnocentrism," 43–45. See Hultkrantz, *Healing*, 163–64, on earlier anthropological dismissals of Native American supernaturalism as primitive and irrational.

65. Hume, *Miracles*, 37 (cf. 37–40); idem, "Miracles," 36; frequently noted by others, e.g., Meier, "Signs," 760; the association of religious healing with "primitive" superstition still persists in some circles at a popular level (see, e.g., the observation in Mitchem, "Healing," 222). Hume's language here resembles the early deist Toland (see Burns, *Debate*, 75; McGrew, "Argument," 653).

66. Cf. Swinburne, *Miracles*, 17; Larmer, *Water*, 106; Beckwith, *Argument*, 53. Colwell, "Miracles and History," 12, asks on what basis Hume forms this opinion, since he presents no historical evidence to substantiate it. Colwell cites our own culture as a counterexample to Hume's claim. Others observe

for example, could one dismiss the ancient civilizations of India and China as “ignorant”?⁶⁷

As one of Hume’s modern critics complains, Hume offers no reason why “ignorant and barbarous” Jews would have failed to distinguish “between a corpse and a dinner guest” (in the case of Jesus’s resurrection) more than “the wise and civilized Gentiles of Athens or Rome” that Hume would have more happily owned as his forebears.⁶⁸ Other scholars have treated Hume’s anti-Jewish prejudices.⁶⁹ Or, as Polkinghorne warns, people today might not separate “civilization” and “barbarism” so neatly as in the heyday of the Enlightenment; “it might be that other cultures provide, through their different practice and different kinds of openness, regimes more conducive than ours to certain types of experience.”⁷⁰

Hume’s Explicit Ethnocentrism

That Hume not only exalts his own culture but also neglects to evaluate critically the influence of its recent history in suppressing such phenomena reinforces the impression that his perspective was ethnocentric. But we need not settle for speculations regarding his ethnocentrism, since his work provides much more explicit evidence of it. Scholars today point to a note in his essay “Of National Characters,” which involved “the inferiority of the darker-skinned peoples.”⁷¹ Here are some of Hume’s words:⁷²

I am apt to suspect the Negroes and in general all of the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any

that Hume also readily dismissed claims from his own era (the Jansenists), further demonstrating the *ad hominem* character of his claim (Beckwith, *Argument*, 53).

67. Although African societies less often presented a united front, note also powerful African civilizations treated in, e.g., Usry and Keener, *Religion*, 27–41; Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 16; Oliver and Fage, *History*, 1–2; Du Bois, *World*, 148–75, 211–12; Oliver, “Riddle”; Atmore, Stacey, and Forman, *Kingdoms*. For one critical survey of the alarming European colonial denigration of African cultures, see Niang, *Faith*, 73–79. Native American peoples, such as Aztecs, Incas, and Mayans, also had complex and powerful civilizations.

68. Johnson, *Hume*, 80; cf. Evans and Manis, *Philosophy of Religion*, 132. For that matter, did Jerusalem’s elite not have reason to wish to expose the movement’s hoaxes or hysteria, if that were possible (Colwell, “Miracles and History,” 11)?

69. That Hume considered the Jewish people “barbarous and ignorant,” still more so in antiquity, is clear enough (see, e.g., the language of Kugel, *Bible*, 34; in our essay, cf. Hume, *Miracles*, 55; more clearly, *History of Religion*, 50–51, on their intolerance). If he did so because they believed in miracles, however, this is a circular argument (Collins, *God of Miracles*, 150) and also strangely neglects the polytheistic marvels of popular Greek and Roman belief and practice. Some early critics of Hume, by contrast, warned that Greeks (esp. among philosophers) had enough skeptics to make Christian claims difficult (W. Weston in 1746 in Burns, *Debate*, 117), but this is doubtful on a popular level.

70. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 56. I respond to the ethnocentric element in Hume’s argument more fully in Keener, “Reassessment.”

71. Fosl, “Hume,” 174.

72. Hume, *Works*, 3:252 (from his “Of National Characters,” as cited in Taliaferro and Hendrickson, “Racism,” 429; also see Ten, “Racism,” 101).

individual eminent either in action or speculation. No indigenous manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences.

By contrast, he maintains, the least sophisticated of white peoples “have all still something eminent about them,” and this difference from other peoples has been assigned by nature. He goes on:

Not to mention our colonies, there are Negro slaves dispersed all over Europe, of which none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity, tho’ low people without education will start up amongst us [whites], and distinguish themselves in every profession. In Jamaica indeed they talk of one Negro as a man of parts and learning, but ’tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly.⁷³

Borrowing language from Hume’s essay on miracles, Taliaferro and Hendrickson interpret his dismissal of “exceptions” like the Jamaican man based on Hume’s “view of the regular, uniform, exceptionless character of nature,” a nature that Hume has clearly misunderstood.⁷⁴

The Jamaican whom Hume compares with a parrot simulating speech was Francis Williams, a Cambridge graduate whose poetry in Latin was well known.⁷⁵ Nor would Williams have been the only renowned example who publicly disconfirmed Hume’s prejudice. For example, New England African-American poet Phillis Wheatley recited some of her poetry in London during Hume’s day.⁷⁶ Yet as we saw in chapter 5, Hume interpreted individual claims in light of what he believed to be patterns in nature rather than allowing individual cases to readjust his views of nature. His interest was neither in the specific social context that limited the achievements of many slaves⁷⁷ nor in the specific theological context that invited miracles more in some settings than in others.

Hume’s prestige assigned his opinions a public weight far heavier than they merited, even on issues like miracles and race that were outside his expertise. Hume’s influence in bolstering racist sentiments proved substantial; thus, for example,

73. Hume, *Works*, 3:252 (from “Of National Characters,” as cited in Taliaferro and Hendrickson, “Racism,” 429). The differentiation of races by nature has an ancient heritage; cf., e.g., Aristotle *Pol.* 1.1.4, 1252b; 1.2.18, 1255a; 3.9.3, 1285a.

74. Taliaferro and Hendrickson, “Racism,” 429 (noting on 433 that, whether the issue was race or miracles, Hume’s approach was to decide what was uniform and then to “explain away all ostensible counter-examples”). Hume’s failure to take account of clear examples available to him reveals inconsistency with his own proclaimed empirical method.

75. *Ibid.*, 431.

76. *Ibid.* Similarly, Thomas Jefferson’s racism should have been challenged more fully, for example, by a book on black achievements sent him by Henri Grégoire (433) or his own acquaintance with Benjamin Banneker. Though George Whitefield, unlike Wesley, accepted slavery, his appreciation for African Americans earned the praise of Phillis Wheatley (Noll, *History*, 109).

77. A context emphasized by James Beattie in his eighteenth-century assault on Hume’s racism (as quoted in Taliaferro and Hendrickson, “Racism,” 439–40).

philosopher Immanuel Kant declared that blacks had inferior mental capacities and “by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling.” He explicitly cites Hume’s challenge, noted above, to find any of “the hundreds of thousands of blacks,” even among those who have been freed, who became intellectually great.⁷⁸ “The blacks are very vain,” he concluded, “but in the Negro’s way, and so talkative that they must be driven apart from each other with thrashings.”⁷⁹

Lest we suppose that Hume’s misinformed approach lacked further practical consequences beyond the world of ideas, his words proved useful for the arguments of pro-slavery authors, who cited his authority on the question regularly.⁸⁰ Writers who opposed racism were forced to respond to Hume, as in the 1770 essay of James Beattie or the 1784 essay of James Ramsay that proved of crucial importance in the British abolition movement.⁸¹ Unlike Hume, who had little genuine experience with slaves, James Ramsay spent nineteen years on a Caribbean island with thousands of slaves and therefore offers a wider range of experience than the more publicly honored Hume.⁸² That Hume’s opinion carried more weight in many circles is tragic. Hume was a child of his day,⁸³ but his argument against trusting testimony for miracles based on its presence among “ignorant and barbarous nations” should never again be admitted; its origins are inseparable from his ethnocentrism.

Majority World Voices⁸⁴

The Gospels’ and Acts’ claims of signs and consequent public responsiveness (notwithstanding their complementary reports of skeptical resistance to such signs) seem much less novelistic in those parts of the world where such claims and attendant church growth occur today. If the early Christian accounts of dramatic signs make these works seem foreign and foreboding to segments of modern Western

78. Kant’s *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, as quoted at length in *ibid.*, 432; noted also in Ten, “Racism,” 101.

79. Kant, as quoted in Taliaferro and Hendrickson, “Racism,” 432–33. Such expressions of white supremacy flourished in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (often noted, e.g., Herrick, *Mythologies*, 106–8, 146–47, 160–61, 176–79), even in anthropology (see Renfrew and Bahn, *Archaeology*, 371; cf. Trigger, “Nubian,” 27), finally discredited only when the Third Reich implemented them forcibly.

80. Fosl, “Hume,” 173–74; also Taliaferro and Hendrickson, “Racism,” 432, naming several works from 1773–74 alone, including one three-volume work.

81. Taliaferro and Hendrickson, “Racism,” 432. They note (440–41) that Beattie uses the same approach to argue against Hume’s position on miracles. While even John Locke critiqued Bishop William Fleetwood’s 1701 evidentialist *Essay on Miracles in Two Discourses* as excessive (Burns, *Debate*, 66–68, 97), we might note that Fleetwood was clear-thinking enough to be one of the first British voices to attack slaveholding (in the years following 1710; Klein, “Anglicanism,” 172–73).

82. Ten, “Racism,” 103.

83. Indeed, Protestant theologians of the era had grown increasingly condescending toward miracle advocates; the well-educated theologians often associated them with the danger of destabilizing religious “enthusiasm” (Daston, “Facts,” 118, 121) and ignorance (*ibid.*, 121).

84. I advanced some of the material in this book, and especially in this chapter, in Keener, “Readings”; some of this material appears in revised form in Keener, “Comparisons.”

academia,⁸⁵ they are nevertheless welcome in many of the dynamic churches of Africa, Latin America, and Asia, which believe that they share their experiences.

The majority of Catholics, Pentecostals, Anglicans, and members of most other groups of Christians now live in the Global South, that is, in the Majority World;⁸⁶ by 2050, perhaps only 20 percent of Christians in the world will be white.⁸⁷ Thus, in contrast to the period when many of plausibility structures for modern critical NT scholarship were defined, Two-Thirds World Christians are now the majority, and expectation of healings is common among many of their churches.⁸⁸ “Signs and wonders” are among the most prominent factors drawing people to faith in Christ in the Majority World today,⁸⁹ with healings and exorcisms proving particularly effective.⁹⁰ Dramatic miracle reports tend to cluster in different regions at different times, sometimes during periods that some scholars call “revival” (using a historic Western paradigm); as a general rule, however, we may say that these claims are far more common in many regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America today than in the West.

Learning from Other Cultures

In a recent volume on global Pentecostal healing for Oxford University Press, religion scholar Candy Gunther Brown notes the massive number of healing claims and warns against a dismissive approach to them.⁹¹ “The tendency of many observers to dismiss divine healing claims as trivial or preposterous without investigating them has the unfortunate effect of increasing the suffering of those who have already suffered from illness, pain, and, in many instances, social and economic marginalization.”⁹² Fraud and credulity do appear, she notes, but these problems do not characterize most practitioners. At the outset, therefore, we need to respect the specific cultural contexts in which such narratives are embedded, as well as the personal significance they have for those who experienced them.⁹³

85. As Wink, “Write,” 4, notes was once his feeling toward Acts.

86. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 121–22.

87. *Ibid.*, 121 (following Philip Jenkins).

88. For the expectation, see, e.g., Larbi, “Healing.” Western Christians have also long observed that miracles are more common outside Western culture (Blue, *Authority*, 60); thus “Miracles of healing and deliverances from demonic possession are far more numerous on the mission fields of earth than at home” (William Christie in Fant, *Miracles*, 108, mostly providing testimonies from Christian and Missionary Alliance [C&MA] circles).

89. Yung, “Integrity,” 173–75.

90. *Ibid.*, 174. For the correlation of church growth with healing campaigns, see already McGavran, “Healing and Growth,” in 1979 (cited in more recent format in McGee, *Miracles*, 174).

91. While insisting on greater nuancing and thicker description, she notes that many of the best scholars summarize that “healing testimonials claiming recovery from every condition from headaches to cancers are too numerous to count, and that healing is in many instances cited as the primary motivator for religious conversion and church affiliation” (Brown, “Introduction,” 13).

92. *Ibid.*, 6.

93. *Ibid.* Cf. Duffin, *Miracles*, 183, answering pragmatically “rather than appealing to an abstract philosophical definition”: “these events *were* miracles for the people involved.”

Scholars are increasingly taking into account global religious experiences. When Ramsay MacMullen compares with Christian claims in the Roman Empire the healings of Simon Kimbangu (1889–1951) from 1921 in the Belgian Congo, he warns against extrapolating from anthropological parallels. Nevertheless, he believes that Kimbangu's "story might alert us to points in the evidence from antiquity which deserve special attention."⁹⁴ Kimbangu's followers affirmed that he "raised the dead, caused the paralyzed to stand upright, gave sight to the blind, cleansed lepers, and healed all the sick in the name of the Lord Jesus."⁹⁵ Not unlike Jesus, he also ran afoul of the colonial elite who were anxious about the political potential of prophetic movements.⁹⁶ Elements of Kimbangu's ministry also reflect a pattern from the indigenous Christian Antonian movement in the Kingdom of Kongo two centuries earlier.⁹⁷

Rapidly expanding movements like Kimbangu's⁹⁸ (although the movement's current form differs from its original impetus)⁹⁹ and William Wadé Harris's healing ministry in West Africa (1913–15)¹⁰⁰ can be helpful in expanding the conceptual

94. MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 7; cf. also the comparisons with Kimbangu (and their limitations) noted in Flusser, "Love," 154; Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 155–57.

95. Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, *History*, 260, quoting an early document of the Kimbanguist Church.

96. See, e.g., McClenon, "Miracles," 188. Kimbangu also drew ecclesiastical disdain, including from the British Baptists with whom he had been a catechist; they lost membership, in contrast to other groups, including American Baptists, who opposed him less (Orr, *Awakenings*, 159). Kimbangu can be understood in the context of earlier Congolese visionaries, such as the Catholic woman Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita (1684–1706), who healed the sick but was burned at the stake after denouncing corruption in the church (see McClenon, "Miracles," 185–86). For Jesus's conflict with the authorities, see sources in Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 283–329, 549–79; and various sources cited there (including, e.g., Segal, "Revolutionary," 211–12); for various political readings of Jesus, see, e.g., Borg, *Jesus*, 273–74; Hendricks, *Politics*; Herzog, *Jesus*; Horsley, "Death," 405–8.

97. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 103.

98. See further Brockman, "Kimbangu"; Martin, *Kimbangu*; Etienne, "Diangienda"; Rabey, "Prophet"; Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 49–50; Cox, *Fire*, 252–53; Yates, *Expansion*, 173; Ndofofusu, "Prayer"; Gray, "Christianity," 157–58; Coquery-Vidrovitch, "French Africa," 359; Jewsiewicki, "Belgian Africa," 482; Gondola, "Kimbangu"; Davies and Conway, *Christianity*, 117–18; specifically on healings drawing attention in AICs, including Kimbanguism, see De Wet, "Signs," 99–100. Kimbangu also influenced Daniel Ndooundou, a leader in the 1947 revival in Congo-Brazzaville (see Keener, "Ndooundou").

99. For some of Kimbangu's followers divinizing him, see Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 70, 78–79. Kimbangu's rapid imprisonment by colonial authorities prevented his further influence on his own movement; compare problems contrary to Luther's approach even during Luther's comparatively short period in the Wartburg (Bainton, *Stand*, 203–5). While early reports of healings provide an analogy, the lengthy development of current views in Kimbanguism differs starkly from the setting of the formation of the earliest Gospel tradition (see, e.g., Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 153).

100. Cited by MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 23–24; others also often view him as analogous to Kimbangu (e.g., Muzorewa, *Origins*, 128). Various "pentecostal" phenomena characterized his ministry (McGee, "Regions Beyond," 91; "healing and miracles" in Hanciles, "Conversion," 170). Harris is widely remembered and discussed; see Shank, "Prophet"; idem, *Prophet Harris*; Haliburton, *Harris*; Walker, "Harrist Church"; idem, *Revolution*; Bartels, *Roots*, 174–78; Isichei, "Soul of Fire"; Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 123–25; Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 91–93, 103–4, 204; Walls, *Movement*, 87–88, 98–99; Anderson, "Signs," 202; Southon, *Methodism*, 144–45; Barrington-Ward, "Spirit Possession," 467; Gray, "Christianity," 157; Coquery-Vidrovitch, "French Africa," 358–59; Orr, *Awakenings*, 162; Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 177–78;

parameters of Western readers unaccustomed to thinking in terms of such phenomena. Like Kimbangu, Harris was detained by hostile colonial authorities, but his ministry had swelled the ranks of Christians.¹⁰¹ With his form of Christianity ready to confront traditional religion's power claims on their own terms, some estimate that more than 100,000 people were baptized in eighteen months.¹⁰² One might analogously compare Prophet Garrick Sokari Braide, who healed the sick and caused rain to fall in the name of Israel's God, until the colonial authorities arrested him in 1916 for cutting into their liquor profits in West Africa.¹⁰³ Braide and others led indigenous African movements largely independent of Western missionaries, who typically shared their sending cultures' skepticism about their claims.¹⁰⁴

Others have compared the documented curing successes of the "mad monk" Rasputin," which affected the course of Russian history and thus cannot be omitted from historical inquiry.¹⁰⁵ Still others have compared Don Pedrito Jaramillo, a Mexican folk saint active from 1881 until 1907, who achieved more fame than did other healers of his era.¹⁰⁶ I wish to follow the lead of MacMullen and these other scholars in exploring comparative examples.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, I also

Wagner, "World," 97–98; Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 48–49; Robeck, *Mission*, 272; Yates, *Expansion*, 170; Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 20, 31, 36–38; Mullin, *History*, 275; MacCulloch, *Christianity*, 887–88.

101. Prouet, *Christianity*, 160. Some Christians in the West did celebrate the work of Harris (Noll, *Shape*, 138).

102. Hanciles, "Conversion," 170; cf. Shaw, *Kingdom*, 247; Bartels, *Roots*, 175. More conservatively, Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 123, notes that estimates "vary between 60,000 and 100,000." In Ghana and the Ivory Coast, Methodists (a background of Harris himself) in particular profited (123–25).

103. Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 181–83; Yates, *Expansion*, 170, 172; Hanciles, "Conversion," 169; Burgess, *Revolution*, 67; Brockman, "Braide"; Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, *History*, 223–26; Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 31, 36, 38–39; Amadi, "Healing," 367–68. Cf. prophetic figures in South Africa (e.g., nineteenth-century Xhosa Christian figures in Saayman, "Prophecy," 6–10); other examples in the endnotes of ch. 9. According to some, Braide may have unfortunately ended more like Dowie than Harris (Shaw, *Kingdom*, 249–50).

104. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 31, suggests that such indigenous African prophetic movements provided the strongest precursors for the character of contemporary African "Pentecostalism." For the influence of Ethiopianism on Braide and others, see Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 305; idem, "Conversion," 169. For African prophetic movements reclaiming Christianity from the missionaries by emphasizing its charismatic dimension, and for these prophetic movements' sometimes anticolonial character, see Spear, "History," 8, 16.

105. McClymond, *Stranger*, 83 (following De Jong, *Rasputin*, 136–42, and noting that the Russian court physician confirmed that when Rasputin would pray, the bleeding of the czar's hemophilic son would stop). Noting his prominence in history is not to equate him with Kimbangu; many viewed the mystic Rasputin as unscrupulous and contributing to his royal benefactors' decline (cf., e.g., Vidler, *Revolution*, 229). More positive were some Russian ascetic monks known for healing gifts (ibid., 229–30).

106. Eve, *Miracles*, 357–59 (following Romano, "Folk-Healing"; see also Eve, *Healer*, 58–62), arguing that he achieved this status especially by claiming divine authorization, offering unique cures, and (fitting cultural expectations for such healers) renouncing self. Eve, *Miracles*, 360, 379, compares aspects of Jesus's ministry. On the popularity of Don Pedrito Jaramillo and other Mexican healers, see also Espinosa, "Borderland Religion," 132.

107. Although MacMullen's primary focus is a period subsequent to Acts and a fortiori the Gospels, others also have regarded his portrayal of popular Christian expansion as appropriate in this sense to

want to cast the net a bit more widely in view of the long history of claims of such phenomena throughout the past and their pervasiveness today.¹⁰⁸

Other scholars have noted how quickly Western commentators have tended to pass over signs claims in Acts or the NT more generally, often in embarrassment.¹⁰⁹ Anthropologists reading the NT, however, are not always so reticent.¹¹⁰ One critic of this embarrassed silence in Western NT scholarship has compared literature about shamans from around the world,¹¹¹ into which he fits what he considers analogous accounts like the call and ministry of Oral Roberts.¹¹² Although there are some vast differences among some of the objects of his comparison, they do serve to highlight the contrast between beliefs about suprahuman enablement in most of the world with skepticism about such beliefs in Western academia. Global experience challenges the traditional Western prejudice against extranormal claims and often the supernatural interpretation of them.¹¹³ I will develop this contrast further below.

Historian Mark Noll observes that Western Christians working in the Majority World “consistently report that most Christian experience reflects a much stronger supernatural awareness than is characteristic of even charismatic and Pentecostal circles in the West.”¹¹⁴ Indeed, despite conventional prejudices, various Western practitioners have learned from Majority World practices.¹¹⁵ Thus, a number of Westerners who began successfully praying for others to be healed first learned the practice in the Majority World, quite often in regions where many lacked access

Acts (Alexander, *Context*, 203–4). Others have compared modern African models of witchcraft with OT examples (Dapila, “Role”).

108. Later I will cite even samples of a doctor’s evidence for extranormal healings that make ancient accounts more plausible (see esp. Gardner, “Miracles”).

109. Ashton, *Religion*, 174–75, 177, noting that MacMullen differs from most NT scholars here; Van Brenk, “Wagner,” 253.

110. Field, “Possession,” 10, has compared her observations of West African apostolic “Holy Spirit” sects with Acts. Sung-Gun Kim (“Pentecostalism,” 32) argues that “from the perspective of church history, it is true that Pentecostal Christianity within Latin America, Africa and Asia resembles the primitive Christian Church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Similarities are the urban character of their congregations, exorcism, healings, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit and so forth.”

111. Ashton, *Religion*, 32–40, including in his discussion also the sixth-century ascetic Theodore of Sykeon (34–36). For shaman analogies, cf. also, e.g., Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 196–97; Craffert, “Healer”; discussion in Porterfield, “Shamanism,” 163; for the perspective that shamanistic healing is a cross-cultural phenomenon (at its most basic level), see Winkelman and Carr, “Approach,” 171; also Winkelman, “Shamanism” (offering evolutionary explanations); cf. almost universal supernaturalism more generally in Legrand, “Miracle.” For other comparisons (and esp. contrasts) of shamans with ancient Mediterranean seers, see Brown, *Israel and Greece*, 81–117.

112. Ashton, *Religion*, 36–37. The definition of shaman in Walsh, *Shamanism*, 15–16, is broad enough to include many Christian ministers; Frank, *Persuasion*, 60, treats them as analogous. More controversially, Leek, *Story*, 46, 160–66, treats Kathryn Kuhlman alongside various psychic and occult healers and mind sciences.

113. With Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 67–73; Evans, “Judgment,” 201–2.

114. Noll, *Shape*, 34.

115. Cf. Robeck, “Charismatic Movements,” 150; examples in Poewe, “Nature,” 3. Cross-cultural influences should not surprise us; for example, even in the mid-nineteenth century, claims of miracle cures in Europe helped influence Christian ideas in the United States (see Curtis, “Character”).

to adequate medical technology.¹¹⁶ (Though I focus here on Christian healers, other Westerners have also learned from what they interpreted as suprahuman phenomena in the Majority World.¹¹⁷)

Thus, for example, one anthropologist recounts the experience of a fellow anthropologist named Jacob Loewen, who was doing Bible translation among the Choco people in Panama.¹¹⁸ The wife of his host, Aureliano, was dying from what was obviously pneumonia; Loewen sent to a nearby town for relevant medicine, only to discover that none was available. While Loewen had translated the promise of healing in Jas 5:14–15, he knew that he did not have faith to pray. Nevertheless, reading this passage, the local believers prayed with him for her healing, and she rallied slightly. By the next morning, however, she was dying again, so the local believers anointed her with oil, without inviting Loewen, and this time she rose from the bed completely well, returning immediately to her household labors. When Aureliano declared happily that God's Spirit had chased away the fever spirits, Loewen noted that they had not invited him and his Western colleague to pray this time. Aureliano apologized but noted, "It doesn't work when you and David are in the circle. You and David don't really believe." The writer remarks that he knew few Christians more consistent than Loewen, yet even Loewen found "himself unable to transcend the secular assumptions and understandings of his particular birth society."¹¹⁹

More positively, one Christian anthropologist, learning from Majority World Christians, began to overcome his traditional "rationalism" and to pray for the sick, with some attendant healings.¹²⁰ A leading missiologist, researching reports

116. Puxley, "Experience," 164–65, referring to India (for his prayers for others there, 167–71). Today the vast majority of Indian Pentecostals accept medical treatment alongside prayer (Bergunder, *Movement*, 167–70), a major reason being that it is now available to them (170). Cf. a doctor's testimony of a miracle in a setting in Pakistan, where facilities were inadequate for medical treatment (Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 60–63). At the same time, the influence has sometimes gone the other way, such as Francis MacNutt's contributions to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Nigeria in 1975 (Ikeobi, "Healing," 59; Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 93; idem, "Mission," 17; Csordas, *Language*, 32) and its spread from originally U.S. origins (Csordas, "Global Perspective," 332–33). But cf. also E. Milingo, former archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia, 1973–83 (Haar and Ellis, "Possession"; Haar and Platvoet, "Bezetenheid," 177–91; Csordas, *Language*, 33–35; idem, "Global Perspective," 345; Lagerwerf, *Witchcraft*, 3, 70–71; questioning charges of syncretism, see, e.g., Hinchliff, "Africa," 484); the Catholic charismatic movement is now truly a global phenomenon (cf., e.g., Csordas, "Global Perspective"; in Nigeria, Ajayi, "Sacrament," 55; in the Philippines, Wostyn, "Catholic Charismatics"; in Haiti, Rey, "Catholic Pentecostalism"; for a more popular reading of its recent history, see, e.g., Darling, *Restoration*, 363–89). Through Csordas's work, anthropologist Edith Turner (*Healers*, 69–75, esp. 70) became convinced that Catholic charismatics are a legitimate spiritual movement worthy of study, like others she has studied. In some places, traditional African elements have created tension with church officials (Sivalon and Comoro, "Mouvement," regarding a Marian movement in Tanzania).

117. E.g., Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 160.

118. Wilson, "Seeing," 202–4 (citing Loewen's account from 1974).

119. Wilson, "Seeing," 204. Cf. what an anthropologist learned in Prather, *Miracles*, 64–66.

120. Kraft, "Worldviews" (recounting his own story); cf. idem, *Power*, 4–6; Ball, "Professors," 109–12; Kraft, "Years," 115–17; note similarly missionary and missiologist Peter Wagner (Wagner, "Dynamics," 113, involving Bolivia). Wagner has journeyed from anti-Pentecostalism to embrace of an apostolic movement

of causes of church growth in countries around the world, was forced to relinquish his previous skepticism and acknowledge that God was performing many healings today.¹²¹ It was testimonies about miracles from Majority World students at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission that helped make the school's John Wimber, later a Western Third Wave leader, open to charismatic phenomena.¹²² A disabled minister in Malawi, unable to walk, asked prayer for healing from British Anglican Michael Green (at the time of his writing, senior research fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford). Reluctant but unable to avoid the challenge, Green prayed for him, and "the man got up and started dancing around, just as the Lystra cripple is recorded as doing."¹²³ The parallel to Acts is not coincidental; missionaries in various contexts continue to look to Acts for a model of miraculous ministry and power encounters.¹²⁴

Widespread Pentecostal Claims in the Majority World

Movements affirming continuing miracles are by no means limited to the now-flourishing Pentecostal and charismatic churches, nor are claims offered in this book by any means limited to Pentecostals or to those who share their theological predilections. Nevertheless, these movements emphasize healing consistently and virtually unanimously,¹²⁵ so I will survey their claims first.

that exceeds the comfort of even many traditional Pentecostals (cf. survey in Taylor, "Wagner"). Some writers argue that Kraft, Wagner, and others have gone too far in their spiritual warfare paradigms (overemphasizing spiritual mapping, etc.; see, e.g., Priest, Campbell, and Mullen, "Syncretism"; cf. Hiebert, *Reflections*, 200; Moreau, "Broadening," 127, 129–33; idem, "Perspective"; Lowe, *Spirits*; Liu, "Evaluation"; Tan-Chow, *Theology*, 87; for a response from Kraft, see Kraft, "Animism"; for a balanced statement, see "Warfare Report"; no one, however, is critiquing simply informed prayer, as in, e.g., Johnstone, "Intercession"). I do share some serious concerns about the exegesis underlying some currently popular spiritual warfare paradigms (cf. Keener, "Warfare"), but unless I misunderstand the debate, neither side of the argument affects the particular issue I address in this book. Neither the critics nor the advocates are antisupernaturalists, and I think that most of them do not deny that supernatural healings occur.

121. McGavran, "Seeing," 66–67 (noting that some initially resist the evidence because of concern for reputation). He does warn (68) that healing is not the *only* method God uses for church growth.

122. Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, xix; see further discussion of Wimber in ch. 11. Fuller ended up offering a signs and wonders course for a time (see Hubbard, "Hazarding"; Gibbs, "Wimber," 150–54; Wagner, "Introduction"); the seminary was not officially endorsing its views but did affirm the propriety of inquiry into such topics, especially given their presence in the NT (as noted in Smedes, *Ministry*).

123. Green, *Thirty Years*, 104 (referring to Acts 14:8–10; cf. Acts 3:7–8). For other disabled persons initially unable to walk yet healed and then jumping as in Acts 3, see Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 18; Clark, *Impartation*, 143.

124. E.g., Pettis, "Fourth Pentecost," 252–53; Green, *Thirty Years*, 9–10. I suspect that I could have multiplied the accounts in this book many times over by sending a survey to hundreds of missionaries and/or ministers in particular parts of the world, though not all would have had time to respond. Nevertheless, the book probably contains sufficient accounts to make its point without reading like a dissertation.

125. For Pentecostalism's relevance to Majority World needs for healing and deliverance, see Anderson, "Structure," 237; for the role of healing in Pentecostal missiology, see, e.g., Hodges, *Indigenous Church*, 50–51; York, *Missions*, 155. Its theology is hardly monolithic, but by definition Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs are incompatible with antisupernaturalism.

My interest in them is not new to scholarship. Pentecostals and charismatics are an object of current interest in the social sciences,¹²⁶ and anthropologists studying healing claims among various cultures have become increasingly willing to include Christian charismatics among the objects of their study.¹²⁷ Harvard theologian Harvey Cox notes that whereas observers once attributed Pentecostal cures to “mere trickery, self-deception, mass hypnosis, or evidence of the placebo effect” (which could account for some cures), most now approach Pentecostalism’s contribution to cures more positively.¹²⁸

Many observers have noted how Pentecostal and charismatic movements emphasizing power encounters have been in the forefront of Christian growth in many parts of the world.¹²⁹ Partly due to inadequate medical resources in much of the world, healing experiences are fueling much of this Pentecostal conversion growth.¹³⁰ As I shall observe more fully in chapter 8, the conversions swelling this growth often involve a costly change in lifelong religious affiliation, and hence would be undertaken only on the basis of a firm new conviction that something seriously out of the ordinary happened. Not only Pentecostals in the Majority World but also many Western Pentecostal observers report an enormous number of healing incidents taking place in the Majority World.¹³¹

126. E.g., Csordas, *Language*; Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*; Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Pentecostalism*; Maxwell, *African Gifts*; Anderson, Bergunder, Droogers, and Laan, *Studying*. Pentecostalism is also a flourishing research area in the discipline of modern religious history (e.g., Wacker, *Heaven Below*; Blumhofer, *Sister*; Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*).

127. E.g., Turner, *Healers*, 69–74, 105–7, 123, 128.

128. Cox, “Foreword,” xviii, emphasizing the increasing welcome of alternative approaches within the medical establishment.

129. Besides other sources cited here, see, e.g., Otis, *Giants*, 244. Pentecostalism has tended to adapt readily to address the supernatural interests of traditional Majority World societies (e.g., Martin, “Christianity,” 79; Richards, “Factors,” 94–96), and the pursuit of experiences like healings and tongues augment Pentecostal numerical growth (Hong, “Mission,” 301). Its initial rapid expansion in the early twentieth century was not entirely *de novo*, as it absorbed “much of the southern holiness movement” (Synan, “Churches,” 111), but conversion growth has been phenomenal nonetheless. Kidd, *Awakening*, 323, suggests that the current divide between global Pentecostalism and many noncharismatic evangelicals echoes the divide that existed between moderate and radical evangelicals already in the 1700s.

130. Ma and Anderson, “Renewalists,” 100; for emphasis on healing as possibly the primary cause “for its growth in the developing world,” see also Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 30.

131. I cite here popular works, which are far more abundant than scholarly studies surveying popular approaches to this subject, as primary witnesses to what Pentecostals believe, as in studies of popular religion or in modern church historiography. See, e.g., “Doctor Healed” (healing from leukemia); Hosack, “Church” (from a now-discontinued Assemblies of God missions magazine); Salvato, “Presence”; Johnson, “Work”; Klaus, “Miracle”; Redpath, “Change” (also reported in Harris, *Acts Today*, 92–93); “Carried but Walked.” Although means of verification are frequently more limited, some Western charismatics have offered startling claims that make the Gospels and Acts appear quite conservative (e.g., those gathered in Rutz, *Megashift*, 3–14, 21–34, 79–80, 88–92, 98, 104–9; in 25–26 Rutz mentions “hundreds of thousands” of healings in one Reinhard Bonnke crusade in Lagos in 2000; in Synan, *Voices*, 26, those healed in Bonnke’s meetings are “too numerous to count”). Christian Broadcasting Network has extensive archives, and their personnel in other countries offer reports of healings (cf. comments in Harrell, *Portrait*, 118–19; Robertson, *Miracles*, 145).

Addressing the future of global Christianity, Moonjang Lee notes, “The growing churches in the non-Western world are mostly Pentecostal-Charismatic, as seen in the Pentecostal movements in Latin America, Independent Churches in Africa, and Charismatic movements in Asia.” Observing that Christianity is losing its traditional Western forms, Lee warns that it will need to fully recover its early charismatic character to survive and flourish.¹³² Estimates of global figures for even these charismatic and Pentecostal Christians alone are in the hundreds of millions, projected by many as approaching or exceeding even half a billion.¹³³ Although the wider definition of these labels would surprise some believers so classified, according to high estimates, as of the year 2000 there were 126 million Pentecostal/charismatic Christians in Africa, 134.9 million in Asia, and 141.4 million in Latin America (with 79.6 million in North America), whereas there were almost none a century earlier.¹³⁴ The newest figures estimate some 614 million Pentecostals, charismatics, and neocharismatics for 2010 (out of roughly two billion church members, or 1.5 billion church attenders, in the world), with an estimate of nearly 800 million for 2025.¹³⁵ These estimates make the charismatic branch of Christendom, which unanimously endorses healing, second in size only to Roman Catholicism, with which it overlaps and which also embraces supernatural beliefs.

Because of fluid definitions, some of these estimates technically may be overly optimistic, or at least include an assortment of groups that would not all endorse one another’s orthodoxy.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, even if one adopted a figure of three hundred million (considerably lower than any recent estimates I have found), the numbers are enormous; if one speaks of groups that affirm prayer for miraculous

132. Lee, “Future,” 105.

133. Defining “charismatic” broadly, David Barrett estimated more than 600 million by 2000, or nearly 30 percent of world Christianity (“Statistics,” 813), though he estimated downward closer to 2000 (roughly 524 million in idem, “Renewal,” 388; cf. 460 million in Synan, *Tradition*, ix, 281, for 1995; 530 million in idem, “Streams,” 372, for 1999); Sanneh estimates almost 590 million for 2005 (and a projected nearly 800 million by 2025; *Disciples*, 275); in 1994, Harvey Cox already accepted an estimate of 410 million (Cox, *Fire*, xv) and a few years later suggested that “Pentecostals” could “equal Catholics in number by” 2030 (idem, “Miracles,” 88); cf. the breakdown of figures in Synan, *Grow*, 5–11 (though note the many inactive “postcharismatics”). The figure of “two billion” (attributed to “some estimates” in Mullin, *History*, 272) is plainly impossible.

134. Noll, *Shape*, 22, cites these figures (as “best estimates,” 23) from Barrett, *Encyclopedia*.

135. Johnson, Barrett and Crossing, “Christianity 2010,” 36. The comparable figures for evangelicals more traditionally defined are about 263 million for 2010 and 348 million for 2025 (*ibid.*). Charismatics broadly defined thus compose roughly 28 percent of global church membership (estimated as closer to 31 percent by 2025), and perhaps closer to 40 percent of regular church attenders (closer to 45 percent by 2025). Pentecostals proper account for an estimated 94,383,000; charismatics for 206,579,000; and Third Wave adherents for 313,048,000 (Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 102).

136. For a nuanced and cautious discussion of the figures, see Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 11; even the lowest estimates, however, attest remarkable growth (Davies and Conway, *Christianity*, 76). The highest statistics normally include indigenous independent churches (see, e.g., Burgess, *Revolution*, 5–6), such as Legios (an independent Catholic church with both charismatic identity and the Latin mass; see Schwartz, “Global History”). For the diversity of movements that most social scientists classify as Pentecostals, see, e.g., Droogers, “Globalisation,” 46–48, 57–59; cf. Anderson, “Varieties”; Bergunder, “Turn,” 52–56.

healing, the numbers would be far higher. Pentecostal and charismatic Christians have multiplied by more than 600 percent in three decades and by some estimates constituted 27.4 percent of world Christianity by 2006.¹³⁷ By this estimate, they may compose roughly one-twelfth of the world's population.¹³⁸ Sociologist Peter Berger contends that Pentecostalism, presumably in the broad sense, "accounts for something like 80 percent of its [evangelical Protestantism's] worldwide growth."¹³⁹ He even regards this form of Christianity as one of the most significant forces of "cultural globalization,"¹⁴⁰ though the movement's local adaptability should nuance this verdict.¹⁴¹

Emphasizing Pentecostalism's growth in the Global South, where it is especially flourishing and culturally relevant,¹⁴² historian Robert Bruce Mullin

137. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 121, citing Barrett, Johnson, and Crossing, "Missiometrics 2006." By mid-2006, these movements had grown more than eight times since 1970 (Barrett, Johnson, and Crossing, "Missiometrics 2006," 28), and were expected to reach nearly eight hundred million, an elevenfold increase, by 2025 (*ibid.*). These projections may require adjustment; these authors estimate 588,502,000 by mid-2005 (*idem*, "Missiometrics 2005," 29), thus a 7,594,000 increase by 2006; 602,792,000 by mid-2007 (*idem*, "Missiometrics 2007," 32), with a 6,696,000 annual increase; but 601,682,000 for 2008 (*idem*, "Missiometrics 2008"), thus an adjustment of 1,110,000 lower (though 1970 figures also appear nearly four million lower). By 2007 Pentecostals broadly defined may have represented 29 percent of world church attenders (Barrett, Johnson, and Crossing, "Missiometrics 2007," 32); Cox, "Foreword," xxi, similarly ranks them at a quarter of global Christendom. Tomkins, *History*, 245, notes figures between one-sixth and a quarter of global Christendom, but notes that even such figures underestimate, since Catholic figures count all baptized infants, whereas Pentecostals "tend to count only active members" (though I suspect that some "Pentecostal" figures may include many postcharismatics).

138. Satyavrata, "Globalization," 3.

139. Berger, "Faces," 425. Cf. Tomkins, *History*, 220: "the fastest-growing form of Christianity ever."

140. Berger, "Faces," 425 (the fourth of four forces of globalization that he mentions), cited also in Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 53 (as 8). Of all the forces of globalization, Berger contends, evangelicalism, again especially in its Pentecostal form, "is clearly the most dynamic" ("Faces," 425). Droogers, "Globalisation," 59, connects the spread of Pentecostalism with globalization as traditional Protestants and Catholics spread with colonialism; cf. also other essays in Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Pentecostalism*. Overemphasizing such connections risks neglecting factors like spiritual dynamics and contextualization, but Pentecostalism is both global and polycentric (see Freston, "Transnationalisation," 196–97). On Pentecostalism's globalization, see also Dempster, Klaus, and Petersen, *Globalization of Pentecostalism*; Satyavrata, "Globalization."

141. See Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 36, 53–55. Berger himself recognizes its indigenization ("Faces," 425).

142. For Pentecostalism in the Majority World, see, e.g., Yong, *Spirit Poured*, 33–80 (in Africa and the African Diaspora, see *ibid.*, 59–80; in Asia, 45–58; in Latin America, 33–45); Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, *passim*, including on Brazil (72–73); Congo (111); Kenya (112, 113); West Africa (116); the United States (117); Indonesia (130); Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 122–31; various essays in Dempster, Klaus, and Petersen, *Globalization of Pentecostalism*, including the section overview, Klaus, "Global Culture"; Robeck, "Charismatic Movements," 150–54. For its growth in much of Asia, see, e.g., Ma, "Challenges," 195–96; *idem*, "Theology"; Yung, "Pentecostalism"; Anderson, "Face"; in Latin America, e.g., Petersen, "Latin American Pentecostalism"; in Africa, e.g., Maxwell, *African Gifts*, 6–7. For the rapid expansion of Pentecostal missionaries from the Majority World, see, e.g., Pate, "Missions," 244–46; for one favorable perspective on the movement's growth, see Wagner, "Perspective," 266–68.

observes that already by the end of the twentieth century there were “more Pentecostals worldwide” than mainline Protestants.¹⁴³ While miracle claims also proliferate far beyond Pentecostal and charismatic circles, especially in the Majority World, Pentecostals and charismatics alone would offer sufficient numbers of miracle claims to illustrate the pervasiveness of the claims that some modern scholars have doubted that eyewitnesses would make. (A large proportion of mainline Christians in the Majority World fit the broad Western definition of charismatic.¹⁴⁴)

Most of these Christians are economically poor, and they are thus not yet as widely represented among academicians as their numbers might otherwise suggest, but they do offer a significant voice within world Christianity. Popular sentiments cannot define scientific or historical plausibility,¹⁴⁵ but charity toward others’ worldviews can invite us to at least reevaluate the primacy of old philosophic assumptions that we have often simply taken for granted without consideration. These Christians do not represent a single theological approach to the miraculous, but the vast majority of them do affirm miraculous phenomena. As in past revival movements (and other kinds of movements), extremes occur; for example, a number unfortunately tend toward imbalanced prosperity teaching.¹⁴⁶ Yet the

143. Mullin, *History*, 211 (cf. 276); cf. similarly Noll, *Shape*, 32. Sweeney, *Story*, 153, calls “Holiness-Pentecostalism” (encompassing also charismatics) “perhaps the fastest-growing movement that the church has ever seen.” They constitute a significant proportion of world Christianity (see figures in Noll, *Shape*, 22, citing Barrett, *Encyclopedia*).

144. Noll, *Shape*, 34 (claiming “almost all” but admitting “some hyperbole”).

145. At the same time, it is elitist for scholars to consider only the views of scholars as those that “count” when our ideas on this particular topic are largely inherited, rather than argued, no less than the views of popular religion are. Both groups cite arguments, but few members of either group have critically explored the reasons for their views.

146. Some Western commentators have noted with very understandable concern the proliferation of “health and wealth” teaching in Africa (e.g., Phiri and Maxwell, “Riches”), though we should keep in mind that definitions of “prosperity” employed in an African context are fluid (some focus simply on necessary provision—see Alexander, *Signs*, 65–66; Smith, *Thinking*, 43n70; cf. Gifford, “Healing,” 251–52; see also the nuanced indigenous understanding in Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 255–63; Byaruhanga-Akiiki and Kealotswe, *Healing*, 100–102; the contextual motivational factor noted in Gifford, “Miracles,” 24; Born, “Churches,” 128; a balanced African approach to the issues in Ndyabahika, “Attitude”; Asamoah-Gyadu, “Leadership,” 152–54; Folarin, “State,” 89–90; similar counsel from Danny McCain, personal correspondence, Sept. 21, 22, 27, 2010; most of it then posted at <http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/conversations/detail/10942>; accessed Oct. 2, 2010); Asian observations in Ma, “Theology,” 66, 70–72 (cited by Brown, “Introduction,” 11); for complexity and local variation, see Brown, “Introduction,” 17–18; for African-Americans, Harrison, *Riches*. Definitions matter; I have observed even some “prosperity” churches that really focus on economic empowerment for the poor—but also others that simply exploit their followers (and even more frequently biblical texts) to prosper the teachers. For exploitation, cf. Newell, “Witchcraft,” 477–84; for a mixture of Western and African influences in prosperity teachings, see Gifford, “Developments,” 516; idem, “Healing,” 256–57, 262–63; cf. idem, *Pentecostalism*. Elsewhere in the world, cf. studies in, e.g., Bowler, “Bodies”; Coleman, “Wealth”; Sánchez Walsh, “Santidad”; teachings analogous to Word of Faith doctrine (which I believe misunderstands and misapplies biblical texts) among many African migrants in Germany in Währisch-Oblau, “Healing in Migrant Churches,” 68–69.

strong majority of particular examples I have cited do not,¹⁴⁷ and many others are much more socially engaged.¹⁴⁸

The Pew Forum conducted a ten-country survey of Pentecostals and charismatics and in October 2006 issued a 231-page report. I summarize the following information from the executive summary of that report to offer a basic sense of the percentages of Pentecostal and charismatic Christians who claim to have experienced or witnessed healings.¹⁴⁹ Some of the figures below do not seem to correspond with one another closely, but they may function as rough estimates, which is sufficient to establish my point. While it is certain that many claims would

147. For problems with this overemphasis in Nigerian Pentecostalism (and for some of its Pentecostal critics there), see Burgess, *Revolution*, 238–41; for non-prosperity Pentecostals, see, e.g., Numbere, *Vision*, 236, 280, 433–34, 469–77, 487; Olaiya, “Praying,” 103; cf. Csordas, “Global Perspective,” 339, viewing the Nigerian charismatic emphasis on restitution as antimaterialistic. For most Brazilian Pentecostals not being prosperity-oriented, except the IURD, see Shaw, *Awakening*, 145; for the disappointments created by faulty prosperity teaching, see Gómez, *Mission*, 155. Historically, prosperity teaching was not part of early Pentecostalism (and remained rare before Oral Roberts), though the ideas are rooted in some streams of nineteenth-century U.S. evangelicalism (Synan, “Streams,” 358; cf. Barron, *Gospel*, 62–63; McGee, *Miracles*, 47–48; on Roberts and other influences, Hedges, “Prosperity Theology”; also on the secular side, cf. atheist Andrew Carnegie’s *The Gospel of Wealth*); see Coleman, *Globalisation*, 41. From its Holiness background, Pentecostalism valued austerity before its more recent emphasis on prosperity, the pursuit of which African culture traditionally linked with witchcraft (Stabell, “Modernity,” 469). After Roberts’s emphasis, prosperity teaching spread, e.g., to the Brazilian IURD movement (Greenfield, *Spirits*, 142; cf. Oro and Semán, “Pentecostalism,” 183). Although most major Pentecostal denominations like the Assemblies of God today (along with the vast majority of their scholars and teachers) officially reject the teaching that sufficient faith always cures, more than a third of adherents in Assemblies churches accept it, even in the United States (Poloma, *Assemblies*, 62), although these earlier figures may have declined after the televangelist scandals. For critiques of prosperity theology from charismatic biblical scholars, see, e.g., Fee, “Disease”; Witherington, *Money*; from charismatic theologians, e.g., Alexander, *Signs*, 61–78; Farah, *Pinnacle*; I have heard similar criticisms from Mikael Stenhammar, who was trained within the movement (personal correspondence, Oct. 4, 2010; <http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/resources/detail/10240>, noting also damage in Africa); and even the teacher usually credited with founding the modern “faith movement” has criticized some of its current extremes (Hagin, *Midas Touch*, esp. 131–204). The link between healing and prosperity does not appear “until well into the twentieth century” (Curtis, *Faith*, 206). Any concerns about theologies construed as promoting selfish acquisition of wealth are appropriate (whether through “faith” or other means), so I pause here to note the denominational and theological diversity of the following examples, the strong majority of which are *not* associated with that perspective.

148. Cf. discussion of other more socially engaged streams of Pentecostalism in Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*; Shaull, “Reconstruction,” 132–33, 150–59, 174–78, 194, 207, esp. 211–12; Petersen, *Might*, passim; Abraham, “Spirit,” 88, 97, 100–102; César, “Life,” 25, 31; Hong, “Mission,” 300; Hollenweger, “Azusa Street,” 7–8; Westmeier, *Pentecostalism*, 84–85, 88; Baker, *Enough*, passim; Kamsteeg, *Pentecostalism*, 229–48 (a minority in tension with traditional Pentecostals); Mariz, “Pentecostalism” (on social effects rather than goal); Campos M., “Power” (on the potential); cf. also Cox, “Miracles,” 95; helpfully and more prescriptively, Elizondo, “Response”; some in Pentecostal AICs in Mwaura, “Spirituality,” 131–32. Work for structural justice is not incompatible with personal transformation and healing, which can contribute to it; biblically based liberation paradigms and charismatic experience can be mutually supportive.

149. “Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals,” Pew Forum Survey (2006), at <http://pewforum.org/surveys/pentecostal> (accessed Jan. 4, 2009). This survey came to my attention through Menzies, “Paradigm,” 217n30, who notes his informal estimate that most Chinese Christians would also claim to have witnessed healings; statistics below indicate that if anything the percentages are higher in China than in the Christian populations of most countries included in the survey. The U.S. figures reflect a significant increase over a poll three decades earlier (Llewellyn, “Events,” 241).

not pass others’ scrutiny, one should not simply assume that this would always be the case. Those who are ready to dismiss all miracle claims should keep in mind that they are dismissing hundreds of millions of miracle claims—usually without having examined any of them.

Moreover, while the survey summary provides only the proportion of Protestants who are “renewalist” (Pentecostal or charismatic), renewal movements also exist among Catholics and Orthodox, who, unlike Protestants, lack a theological tradition claiming that miracles ceased.¹⁵⁰ By broad definitions, in fact, the largest contingent of “renewalists” today are Latin-rite Catholics, with 133,130,000 adherents.¹⁵¹ (In one U.S. study, 86 percent of charismatics involved with Catholic charismatic healing services claim to have experienced divine healing,¹⁵² although figures in some other studies are lower.¹⁵³) Figures below thus come nowhere close to summarizing all of the people who believe they have experienced or witnessed supernatural phenomena, even within Christendom.

Country and Estimated Population*

% of the population that claims to be Pentecostal, charismatic, and the total (Pentecostals + charismatics)[†]
% of Protestants who are Pentecostal or charismatic (counted exclusively), and those who are neither[‡]
% of Pentecostals, charismatics, and other Christians who claim to have “witnessed divine healings”

United States: 305,199,101	5% Pentecostal; 18% charismatic; 23% total	10% Pentecostal; 18% charismatic; 72% neither	62% of Pentecostals; [§] 46% of charismatics; 28% of other Christians
LATIN AMERICA			
Brazil: 197,577,861	15% Pentecostal; 34% charismatic; 49% total	72% Pentecostal; 6% charismatic; 22% neither	77% of Pentecostals; 31% of charismatics; 32% of other Christians
Chile: 16,454,143	9% Pentecostal; 21% charismatic; 30% total	59% Pentecostal; 19% charismatic; 22% neither	77% of Pentecostals; 37% of charismatics; 24% of other Christians
Guatemala: 13,002,206	20% Pentecostal; 40% charismatic; 60% total	58% Pentecostal; 27% charismatic; 15% neither	79% of Pentecostals; 63% of charismatics; 47% of other Christians
AFRICA			
Kenya: 37,953,840	33% Pentecostal; 23% charismatic; 56% total	50% Pentecostal; 23% charismatic; 27% neither	87% of Pentecostals; 78% of charismatics; 47% of other Christians

150. As Sabourin, *Miracles*, 151, notes, most of the NT scholars denying continuing miracles have traditionally been Protestant.

151. Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 102 (noting that this composes 22.7 percent of Catholics).

152. Csordas, *Self*, 31. In DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 97–98, more than 93 percent of (157) respondents claimed to have witnessed physical healings (including blindness, brain damage, many cases of cancer, diabetes, etc.), although witnesses may have been more apt to respond than those who had not witnessed such healings.

153. Rogge, “Relationship,” 376–77, notes that 70 to 75 percent of the Catholic charismatics he surveyed were involved in prayer groups with the ministry of healing, and that (377) “three out of four of these testify that healing has actually taken place following prayer in their groups.” Another survey (377n6) suggested that “only 37% had witnessed physical healing,” but this would probably be higher in charismatic communities. The higher figure in Csordas, *Self*, 31, are respondents to a questionnaire.

Nigeria: 146,255,312	18% Pentecostal; 8% charismatic; 26% total	48% Pentecostal; 12% charismatic; 40% neither	79% of Pentecostals; 75% of other Christians
South Africa: 48,782,756	10% Pentecostal; 24% charismatic; 34% total	14% Pentecostal; 29% charismatic; 57% neither	73% of Pentecostals; 47% of charismatics; 32% of other Christians
ASIA			
India (parts): 1,157,276,932	1% Pentecostal; 4% charismatic; 5% total	Figures not calculated	74% of Pentecostals; 61% of charismatics; 55% of other Christians
Philippines: 96,061,680	4% Pentecostal; 40% charismatic; [‡] 44% total	37% Pentecostal; 30% charismatic; 33% neither	72% of Pentecostals; 44% of charismatics; 30% of other Christians
South Korea: 48,379,392	2% Pentecostal; 9% charismatic; 11% total	9% Pentecostal; 29% charismatic; 63% neither	56% of Pentecostals; 61% of charismatics; 20% of other Christians

*Population estimates from GeoHive, <http://www.geohive.com/default1.aspx> (accessed Jan. 4, 2009).

†Defining Pentecostal by membership in Pentecostal denominations and “charismatics” as those who describe themselves as such, who call themselves “pentecostal” but do not belong to Pentecostal denominations, or who “speak in tongues at least several times a year.”

‡The executive summary includes the figures for Protestants, but, as I have noted, many Catholics are also charismatic. The survey counted African Independent Churches as Protestants, which may have influenced some African figures.

§This figure corresponds quite closely to figures from a survey of 1,275 adherents of Assemblies of God churches, where 61 percent affirmed certainty that they had been miraculously healed and 12 percent were uncertain (Poloma, *Assemblies*, 60).

||In another survey, 84 percent of all people in the United States believe in miracles, and nearly half (48 percent) claimed to have witnessed at least one (Woodward, “Miracles,” cited in Kub, “Miracles,” 1275).

#The higher proportion of charismatics in this column than in the Protestant column undoubtedly includes large numbers of Catholic charismatics.

For these countries alone, and for Pentecostals and charismatics in these countries alone, the estimated total of people claiming to have “witnessed divine healings” comes out to somewhere around 202,141,082, that is, about two hundred million. Among Pentecostals, an average of 73.6 percent claim to have witnessed or experienced divine healing, and among charismatics the proportion is 52 percent; given estimates of possibly half a billion Pentecostals and charismatics worldwide, we might be looking at claims of closer to three hundred million among them alone.¹⁵⁴ My estimates extrapolate on the assumption that numbers and percentages above are roughly accurate; in fact, all such figures are merely estimates, but they give us the best current ballpark figure to work from. Even if for some reason we later estimated only one-third of these figures (a much greater margin of error than seems likely), the numbers are already enormous even before we add (below) the noncharismatic claims.

Lest I be misunderstood, I must emphasize that in noting the prevalence of healing claims, I am not offering a blanket endorsement of all the beliefs on all issues that command majorities among these groups (elsewhere in the same survey), including beliefs about healings. I am also not suggesting that all claims of cures are authentic; still less am I suggesting that none of the claims could have alternative

154. Alexander, *Signs*, 17, using the same survey, extrapolates to “about 390 million people who claim to have been healed or to have seen a miracle with their own eyes.” One single ministry that has tracked phone requests for prayer that they have received reports receiving more than a million testimonies of healings (Robertson, *Miracles*, 145).

explanations,¹⁵⁵ though from my research I suspect that the majority of those who claim to have witnessed some miracles could specify some fairly substantive claims.¹⁵⁶ My point here is simply to invite attention to what this survey indicates about the vast numbers of people worldwide who claim to have *witnessed* supernaturally effected healings. The examples that I offer in the following chapters may make this observation more concrete, but my examples obviously pale before the statistics.

Such Claims Not Limited to Pentecostals

What may be more interesting in this survey, however, is the category of “other Christians,” with somewhere around 39 percent in these countries claiming to have “witnessed divine healings.” That is, more than one-third of Christians worldwide who do *not* identify themselves as Pentecostal or charismatic claim to have “witnessed divine healings.” Presumably many of these claimants believe that they have witnessed more than a single case. Note that these are not simply people who say that they *believe* that supernatural healing occurs; these are people who say that they believe that they have *witnessed* or experienced it.¹⁵⁷

Of course many of these claims would not withstand critical scrutiny, and presumably an even higher percentage would fail to persuade others predisposed not to believe. But those who would simply reject all healing claims today because Hume argued that such claims are too rare to be believable should keep in mind that they are dismissing, almost without argument, the claimed experiences of at least a few hundred million people. (Even if one were to err extremely on the side of modesty, one could easily speak boldly of “tens of millions” of claims.)

155. Some leaders may fabricate or exaggerate miracle claims to promote their ministries; other believers may enthusiastically and in a well-meaning way circulate stories uncritically to promote their movements. At the same time, my interviews suggest to me that the proportion of those who believe that they have seen miracles in their lives or those of people directly known to them (i.e., not just claims of persons they do not know in public meetings) is fairly high and that many of these cures involve serious health issues (esp. in poorer countries).

156. Still, even such a vast number by itself invites attention; cf. B., “Challenge,” 267, who contends that Alcoholics Anonymous never could have grown to two million members unless it has “produced success.”

157. That is, one cannot simply dismiss the value of the claims by saying that many people believe in space aliens (more respectably called extraterrestrial intelligence). Those who claim to have *seen* aliens or even UFOs are far fewer (cf. Prather, *Miracles*, 47). Although researchers estimated 3.7 million alien abductees from one survey, the number of actual claims is probably much lower, though plausibly “many thousands” (Appelle, Lynn, and Newman, “Experiences,” 255–56, esp. 256), whereas more than 80 million Christians alone claim to have witnessed healings in the same country. Alien abduction experiences fit altered state of consciousness experience, and much of the “evidence” derives from memories recalled through hypnosis, which can create or adapt “memories” (Walsh, *Shamanism*, 169; for comparison with shamans and their spirit guides in ASCs, see Mack, *Abduction*, 8, an often baffling work cited in Herrick, *Mythologies*, 187). Perhaps 22 percent of the U.S. population believes that space aliens have visited earth (Appelle, Lynn, and Newman, “Experiences,” 258), but even if most of this group also were among those believing in divine miracles (which is questionable; paranormal beliefs seem less common among the religiously committed [McClenon, *Events*, 21; cf. Greeley, *Sociology*, 15]), perhaps half the U.S. population (some 150 million people) would remain as believing in miracles who did not believe in space aliens. Lumping all unusual claims together (e.g., UFO experiences with typical religious experiences) is uncritical (see rightly Kwan, “Argument,” 548; on the cultural evolution of beliefs about extraterrestrials, see Herrick, *Mythologies*, 42–73).

In contrast to starting assumptions on which Hume built his case, it is no longer feasible to consider such claims *rare*.

As noted above, the greatest concentration of these claims is in Africa, Asia, and Latin America rather than in the West, though in chapter 11 I shall note abundant examples from the West as well. Non-Pentecostal Western Christian workers active in such areas often report dramatic phenomena similar to those reported by Pentecostals.¹⁵⁸ Worldview is probably one important factor in generating more faith recoveries in many non-Western regions;¹⁵⁹ for example, nearly a decade ago one of my students, a sincere Baptist pastor from India, complained that Americans he prayed for were rarely healed, but almost everyone he prayed for in north India was healed.¹⁶⁰

Accurate or inaccurate, reports of prophetism, dreams, visions, and healings (sometimes of incurable, terminal illnesses) on a massive scale characterize many areas where Christianity is expanding rapidly and with intense religious fervor among non-Christian populations.¹⁶¹ Although some¹⁶² Westerners historically used cultural dominance from colonial cultures or (especially in Latin America) force to spread Christianization, many indigenous evangelists today instead embrace the missiological model they encounter in Acts and believe that they are following Paul's model.¹⁶³ One Western charismatic missiologist argues that whereas some

158. E.g., in reports of the *Jesus Film* Project, such as a spontaneous healing of a woman in Botswana, blind for twenty-seven years, when she overheard Jesus healing a blind beggar in the film (Dec. 2, 1997, report); the healing of a paralytic in Madagascar (May 17, 1999); or the instant healing of a "deathly ill" man in a restricted access location (Jan. 15, 2010). When I gave a lecture for some *Jesus Film* workers in Yaounde, Cameroon, in 2001, some told me that many miracles were taking place; I was startled when some other workers who did not see as many miracles expressed concern about whether their own ministry was normal.

159. See, e.g., Kraft, "Worldviews"; Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 66–90; cf. Kraft, *Power*, 37–49 (esp. 39–40, comparing Western Christendom's "Enlightenment" approach with practicing deism, at least on this point). Evangelistic context (that is, healings functioning as signs of the gospel) seems relevant as well. Need may be another factor (cf. Petersen, *Might*, 98–99; for the massive need in the Majority World, see, e.g., Vries, "Situation"; Grange, "Globalization"); where medical treatment is widely available, believers are naturally more apt to simply trust God's activity through these means. Thus a physician attests a miracle in rural Pakistan, in a case where inadequate medical means were available (Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 60–63).

160. I noted Pastor Israel briefly earlier in Keener, *Gift*, 61. Despite my strong reticence to imagine it, he was convinced that even if I came to his city and prayed for the sick, the same sort of healings would occur.

161. Moreland, *Triangle*, 166–67, cites sources regarding a dramatic growth of evangelical (in the etymological, not the recent Western "political" sense) Christianity around the world (possibly even a 1,000 percent increase in three decades), up to 70 percent of it "intimately connected to signs and wonders," citing examples in China and elsewhere. He offers some specific examples (167–71).

162. For Western missions' frequent earlier link to colonialism, see Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 163–66; but colonial authorities also often worked to suppress missionaries (e.g., the British East India Company suppressing William Carey's early work); in Africa, see, e.g., Turaki, "Legacy"; Isichei, *History*, 233; Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 104, 170; Usry and Keener, *Religion*, 26. In fact, free church missionaries (e.g., in British colonies, those not aligned with the Anglican church) were usually not closely tied to colonialism (Bebbington, *Dominance*, 113–14); for further challenges to traditional historical assumptions linking missions with colonialism, see Mullin, *History*, 214–15, 225 (e.g., noting early indigenous missionaries); some of the qualifications in Noll, *Shape*, 174.

163. See, e.g., the numerous reports in *Christian History* 79 (2003), including Isichei, "Soul of Fire"; Rabey, "Prophet." Christianity spread most quickly through indigenous evangelism once the constraints of colonial rule were discarded; see, e.g., Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 55–56.

Asian Christians appreciated Western missionaries bringing teaching about God, many Asian missionaries are now demonstrating God's power through miracles.¹⁶⁴ Another writer recounts that missionaries to one region in Africa who merely left behind Gospels returned to find a flourishing church with NT-like miracles happening daily, "because there had been no missionaries to teach that such things were not to be taken literally."¹⁶⁵ Indigenous readings of Scripture often noticed patterns there "that the missionaries did not want [local believers] to see."¹⁶⁶

Although the most visible growth has occurred in the last three decades,¹⁶⁷ already in 1981, at one large U.S. seminary with students from many nations, Christiaan De Wet of South Africa wrote a thesis on signs involved in church growth around the world. He surveyed more than 350 theses representing most of the world and interviewed countless missionaries. He complained, "My research has turned up so much material on signs and wonders that are happening and churches that are growing, that it is impossible to use all of it."¹⁶⁸ He noted that miracle claims help drive Christian growth in many parts of the world.

Limitations in My Approach

Before turning to specific examples, I must articulate some limitations in my approach (limitations that I shall reiterate at some points where needed). I do so at some length because readers from various perspectives will bring various sorts of concerns. Among my limitations, first, I am addressing only in passing non-Christian supernatural claims, which are also fairly numerous, especially at the popular level.

Second, at this point my primary interest will be in listing a range of supernatural claims, not in arguing that these claims must reflect supernatural causation. Nevertheless, I will leave a number of these claims open to that explanation. Later in the book I will argue that at least some very likely do involve supernatural causation, but I lack the means to evaluate all the claims adequately, and do not believe that that is the only possible or even the best explanation for a number of the reports I note. Some might prefer that I cite only the best-attested testimonies, rather than

164. Wagner, *Acts*, 438. Although reticent to overemphasize them, Hiebert, "Power Encounter," 56, recognizes the value of such demonstrations, including healing, in reaching supernaturalist non-Christians such as folk Muslims; others (Musk, "Popular Islam," 214–15; Parshall, "Lessons," 255–56) have underlined the importance of this approach even more emphatically. Fernando, "God," 193, notes that from their context Western evangelicals have sometimes emphasized the rational to the exclusion of God's power.

165. Gardner, "Miracles," 1929, quoting Finlay, *Columba*.

166. Noll, *Shape*, 24.

167. With, e.g., Moreland, *Triangle*, 166–67.

168. De Wet, "Signs," 92. On healings and church growth more generally, see Kwon, "Foundations," 187–90 (based on positive responses from all 562 healing claimants among 604 respondents to his survey). For signs and wonders as a major factor in Majority World evangelism, see also Yung, "Integrity," 173–75. Wagner, "Wonders," 875, notes that signs often bring growth in areas with supernaturalist worldviews. Hausfeld, "Understanding," 74–75, notes (following J. D. Woodberry) that it is a major catalyst for members of another religious tradition deciding to follow Jesus.

a range of claims that merely include these. Nevertheless, because I have noted that the numbers of claims are abundant today, it is important to provide a range of samples reflecting the *kinds* of testimonies that people offer.

Third, I have not necessarily collected the strongest cases—just those that were available to me. I have screened out some of the least relevant cases and highlighted some of the more relevant ones among the sample available to me, but I have also tried to preserve samples of the entire range of sorts of claims offered today (samples of what some of the “hundreds of millions” of claims may involve). Fourth, I provide examples, not theological explanations for them. I want to invite those who might differ with the theological perspectives of the claimants to nevertheless consider the plausibility of the claims about their experiences.

Studies of Extraordinary Claims in Non-Christian Movements

While I focus on Christian movements, with greater attention to those most often considered mainstream, as I have noted, we must also observe that claims about extranormal experiences are not by any means restricted to Christian movements.¹⁶⁹ Most non-Western worldviews accept a variety of suprahuman phenomena.¹⁷⁰ John Pilch suggests that 90 percent of the world today accepts both “ordinary reality and non-ordinary reality,” the latter including God and spirits.¹⁷¹ A comparative study more complete than mine would thus also examine the massive number of modern non-Christian supernatural activity claims and beliefs around the world,¹⁷² includ-

169. Cardena, Lynn, and Krippner, “Experiences,” 17–18, note that associations between “anomalous healing experiences” and health improvements would invite reevaluation of some traditional academic assumptions.

170. E.g., Wright, *Process*, 74–114, esp. 85–88, 95–98; Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, passim. For example, spirit experience is a normal part of life among the Iñupiat people of northern Alaska (Turner, *Hands*, 224).

171. Pilch, *Visions*, 17; cf. Walsh, *Shamanism*, 179. Indeed, complementary use of spiritual therapies is fairly common even in more secular regions (Molassiotis et al., “Medicine”; among immigrants, Moodley and Sutherland, “Healers”).

172. E.g., Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 51–53, 61, 63, 65–68 (though cf. the shaman’s selective reservations in 73–74); West, *Sorcery*, 90 (and cf. 42; healing claims); Foster, “Etiologies,” 778–79; Castro, “Practices” (e.g., 374); Filson, “Analysis,” 77; Narayanan, “Shanti”; Winkelman and Carr, “Approach”; Arai, “Spirituality”; Hobart, *Performance* (esp. regarding spirit mediums and sorcerers; summary in Bhatti, “Review”); Connor and Samuel, *Healing Powers* (review in Anderson, “Review”); Arakelova, “Practices”; Crawford, “Healing,” 34–35; Finkler, “Religion,” 51 (and sources cited there); Umeh, *Dibia*, 203–27; Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, passim; idem, *Healers*, 39–50 (Africa), 60–69 (Hindu healing), 76–82, 93–96 (Native American healing), 96–100 (a rabbi in Morocco), 142–46 (Sufism); Accoroni, “Healing Practices,” 5–11 (on a Senegalese Muslim mystic); Evans-Pritchard, *Religion*, 308; Eliade, *Shamanism*, 215–58, 300–308, 326–32; Uyanga, “Characteristics”; Firth, “Foreword,” xiii–xiv (supposing its efficacy to involve reassurance and esp. help for the mentally ill); Beals, *Culture*, 241 (as cited in Burnett, *Clash*, 57); Wright, *Process*, 85–88, 95–98; Chin, “Practices,” 4–17; Allison and Malony, “Surgery” (evaluating the phenomenon from a Western scientific perspective); Mercado, “Power”; Forsberg, “Medicine”; Droegge, *Faith Factor*, 85–87; Grundmann, “Healing,” 27 (noting Umbando, voodoo, “spirit-healers in the Philippines,” “miracle working gurus in India,” and “most of the 400 plus new religions” in Japan); Bergunder, “Miracle Healing,” 295 (gurus); Katz, “Healing” (note laying on hands to draw out sickness on 214); Singh, “Prophet,” 106 (recovery after sacrifice to a spirit), 108 (after a call experience); cf. Adeyemi, “Healing Systems,” 143–44; Sax, Weinhold, and Schweitzer, “Healing”; Ashe, *Miracles*, 26–27 (attributing such phenomena to anything

ing in North America.¹⁷³ This is not even to mention the more naturalistic claims of traditional herbalists (noted in ch. 13).

Some other NT scholars have rightly pointed out that some utterly paranormal events occur that cannot be attributed to the Christian God. Thus Eduard Schweizer notes,

There was an Indian in Zürich some decades ago who had a dagger driven through his heart, a feat that he had demonstrated before in other places. My colleagues in the medical faculty controlled and x-rayed everything. There was not the slightest doubt that a miracle had happened; he should have been dead, but he did not follow suit and remained alive. The experiment was even repeated afterwards. Yet we did not believe in that man and he did not want to lead us to believe in his god.¹⁷⁴

If this report is accurate, many Christians in a number of cultures might explain such an occurrence in superhuman but not divine terms, based on biblical precedents (cf., e.g., Exod 7:12; Acts 13:6–10);¹⁷⁵ others might prefer various different explana-

“Other,” not necessarily deities); Ritchie, *Spirit*, 24–25, 66 (though noting lack of success). For some other cultural traditions (the elements of which are not all supernatural or in some cases even strictly “religious” in Western terms), see, e.g., Vargas-O’Bryan, “Balance”; Mosher and Jacobs, “Seminar,” 270–71; Pui-lan, “Spirituality”; Rosny, *Healers*; for the kinds of ailments treated by African traditional healers, see Byaruhanga-Akiiki and Kealotswe, *Healing*, 154–60; Accoroni, “Healing Practices,” 4; McClenon, *Events*, 87–88 (a Thai shamanic healer), 89–90 (a Japanese man cured through meditation, who became a shaman). From a purely medical standpoint, relaxation and meditation techniques may help humans regardless of religious particularities (Benson, *Healing*, 212–16); most of us (in the majority of religions) would, however, argue that there is more to religion than this. In Christianity’s twin faith, cf. the Jewish healing movement (Winston, *Faith*, 109–19).

173. See, e.g., Turner, “Religious Healing”; Barnes, “Chinese Healing”; Desai, “Health”; Hermansen, “Healing”; Jacobs, “Rituals”; Numrich, “Medicine”; Xiong, “Shamanism”; Krippner, Friedman, and Johnson, “Spirituality,” 135–37; Talamantez, “Teaching”; Hernández-Ávila, “Dance Tradition”; idem, “Ometeotl Moyocoyatzin”; Hultkrantz, *Healing*; Medina, “Religion” (including some Christian as well as earlier traditional elements); Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 14–15, 80–86, 275–88; Wilmore, *Religion*, 18–27; Mitchem, *Folk Healing*, 15–24 (for continuing influences today, 141–62; for some overlap with Christian healers, 129–37); Chireau, *Magic*; idem, “Natural”; Payne-Jackson, “Illness” (again including mixed elements); Bowler, “Bodies,” 91–93 (noting overlap but emphasizing competition); Fauset, *Gods*, 55 (Father Divine; cf. also Bowler, “Bodies,” 84–85); Harris, “Healing in Wicca”; Klassen, “Healing” (also including some Christian perspectives among others); Wakefield, *Miracle*, passim. Cf. earlier positive academic responses to New Thought and “mind cure” (e.g., James, *Varieties*, 94–126, based on a naturalistic dualism rather than divine power); spiritualism in Britain (esp. 1850–1910) in Barrow, “Spiritualism.”

174. Schweizer, *Parable*, 44. While I do not question Schweizer’s integrity or careful scholarship, I am shocked that doctors would have allowed anyone to drive a dagger into someone’s heart during an experiment, even if he were willing, as this appears to violate traditional medical ethics. I do not, however, have access to the larger context that might have made sense of such a claim, so allow Schweizer the benefit of the doubt that something like this occurred. Charpak and Broch, *Debunked*, 28–29, note a mechanical means to disguise one’s pulse for purposes of deception, but this sort of technique would not have fooled the doctors.

175. Though most Christians would also deny that the sphere of God’s love and activity is limited to Christians, probably most would also regard the above feat as exhibitionistic rather than as a demonstration of divine love.

tions. The minimal point on which there should be agreement here, however, is that extranormal events do occur in reality and not merely in fiction.

Examples could be multiplied, and are not limited to large “world religions.” Anthropologists, in fact, have traditionally tended to focus more attention on traditional societies, and hence have tended to provide more examples from traditional religions than from the sources on which this book focuses (despite many more recent exceptions).¹⁷⁶ A professor of social anthropology in Berlin observes that hospitals recognized the efficacy of *masabe* spirit healers.¹⁷⁷ A journalist reports the complete and paranormal curing of burns through experimental, metaphysical “energy techniques.”¹⁷⁸ A pair of academic researchers report a gradual healing of a young woman after a dramatic revelation by a Native American shaman¹⁷⁹ and that many patients of Brazilian Spiritist surgeons feel no pain despite the lack of anesthesia.¹⁸⁰ They very cautiously note one study in which “80% of asthma patients treated by psychic healers reported some degree of improvement,” though also another study in which only 11 percent of those so treated were acknowledged as improved by their physicians (as opposed to 61 percent self-reporting improvement).¹⁸¹

Although Brazilian Spiritist healers usually accept modern concepts like germs, medicine, and the like,¹⁸² and some patients die despite extensive treatments,¹⁸³ the healers sometimes operate with no anesthesia. Thus one researcher observed a saw cut into a wound, with blood spurting up, and then the wound being sutured, while the patient remained conscious and without obvious pain.¹⁸⁴ Although at least some fraud has been demonstrated among Filipino psychic healers,¹⁸⁵ some nonfraudulent cases might exist;¹⁸⁶ here, too, healers “operate” without anesthesia or pain,¹⁸⁷ with patients

176. In some anthropological circles it has been common to focus on traditional healers to the neglect of parallel phenomena among Western Christians (note the observations of Wilson, “Seeing,” 207). It should also be noted that while people sometimes recover after traditional treatments, some treatments have no effect, including in traditional religions (Wilson, “Seeing,” 205–6).

177. Luigi, “Worlds,” 132–33, noting the opposition of Christian leaders and competing spirit mediums.

178. Wakefield, *Miracle*, 77.

179. Krippner and Achterberg, “Experiences,” 353–54.

180. *Ibid.*, 362. They cite also Christian examples on 363, 369, 379.

181. *Ibid.*, 379, and the studies cited there. They warn about “the lack of a control group in both studies.”

182. Greenfield, *Spirits*, 75 (noting that the spirit doctors must address spirit illnesses lest they remain at reincarnation).

183. *Ibid.*, 71.

184. *Ibid.*, 51–52. Their shared demeanor suggests to Greenfield that they, no less than the medium, had entered a sort of trance state. I am grateful to John Pilch for bringing Greenfield to my attention.

185. Allison and Malony, “Surgery,” 56–57, 60. Frank, *Persuasion*, 44–45, notes that some shamans practiced more fraud in healing than others. Cf. some ancient doctors in Toner, *Culture*, 40.

186. Licaucó, “Psychic Healing,” 96 (although Licaucó began skeptically, 94).

187. *Ibid.*, 96, noting a case where bleeding stopped and the wound healed quickly; more dramatically, his own eyeball being removed and his molar being extracted in five seconds without anesthesia. He notes (94–95) that items removed after incisions have been analyzed, and they sometimes include human tissues (sometimes of the appropriate blood type) but sometimes animal tissues. He admits, however (97–98), that no testing occurred under “controlled conditions,” which are difficult to achieve. Substances removed include “hair, glass, . . . egg or sea shells”; in one case where hospitals discovered no organic problem, a healer diagnosed witchcraft “and removed a dead cockroach” (95).

conscious and not hypnotized.¹⁸⁸ Both before and in the course of collecting eyewitness claims of extranormal healings associated with Christian movements, I have also come across other eyewitness accounts of extranormal phenomena associated with various movements such as Santeria and some traditional African religions.¹⁸⁹

Paul Eddy of Bethel University brought to my attention some further anthropological sources noting field experiences with paranormal healing and the like.¹⁹⁰ These studies do not employ the traditional nomenclature of theology or biblical studies, but neither do they fit easily within conventional Western academic frameworks that reject all approaches except impersonal, materialistic ones. Several of the sources are from anthropologist Edith Turner, known also for her earlier fieldwork in Africa with her husband, Victor Turner.¹⁹¹ Author of a number of works and lecturer in anthropology at the University of Virginia, Turner is editor of the journal *Anthropology and Humanism*.

In two works, Turner notes her ethnographic research among indigenous healers from the Iñupiat people in northern Alaska.¹⁹² There she witnessed, experienced, and even learned how to become an agent of healings.¹⁹³ While the treatments were often therapeutic, not all were dramatic. In one of her more notable examples, as she watched, the swelling in a three-year-old's knee subsided as the healer massaged it.¹⁹⁴ In another case, she saw finger swelling disappear as the traditional healer drew out the "bad spirit";¹⁹⁵ on another occasion, a woman who seemed to be

188. *Ibid.*, 94.

189. E.g., a report about Santeria from my colleague Bonnie Ortiz (interview, Jan. 10, 2009), who is not a practitioner; reports in Alamino, *Footsteps*, 36; a possible linkage in Leonel Camejo Tazé (interview, Aug. 11, 2010); and elsewhere; I, my wife's family, and other Christian observers have had unexpected encounters with paranormal phenomena in traditional African religions. Cf. Christian claims in Indonesia about traditional religions, e.g., in Tari, *Wind*, 67, 107.

190. Paul Eddy, personal correspondence, Oct. 26, 2009. Paul generously shared these sources and comments about them; I have merely expanded my discussion somewhat after reading the sources he noted. Paul noted (personal correspondence, Oct. 25, 2009) that he learned of a number of these sources, as well as numerous others, through his correspondence with Edith Turner. I have added some other interesting sources that I found cited often in the sources he recommended.

191. Victor Turner had been influenced by an Anglican priest teaching him about historic mysticism (Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist), and an experience of a bright light visiting him when, he learned afterward, the priest had died (Turner, "Advances," 35–36). Edith Turner is a communicant Catholic, though demurring from her church's teaching that Christianity has exclusive truth (*idem*, "Actuality," 2).

192. Turner, "Actuality" (in a journal published by the American Anthropological Association); *idem*, *Hands*; *idem*, *Healers*, 83–89.

193. She said that she was learning to do healings by viewing illness as a "spirit substance" beyond mere physical germs observable under a microscope (*idem*, *Hands*, 227–28; cf. *idem*, "Actuality," 5).

194. *Idem*, *Hands*, 136. This is perhaps her most "empirical" case in that book (in *idem*, "Field," 9, she speaks of trance yielding "frequent non-empirical cures"); elsewhere Turner helped a woman's backache with such a "spiritual" massage (*Hands*, 87–88). She warns that while herbs and massage are part of the treatments, there is also a more clearly spiritual component ("Actuality," 3).

195. Turner, "Actuality," 3. Turner describes the traditional Iñupiaq healers as following a "post-missionary version of Christianity" (*ibid.*), but the particular techniques here seem more characteristic of practitioners in traditional religion than of most of the examples cited later in the book and probably reflect some pre-Christian patterns. For both Christian and pre-Christian elements, synthesized together, see *ibid.*, 4 (some pre-Christian elements have disappeared, such as drums and shamans; vicarious extraction of bad

dying was revived and thus was able to endure a successful operation.¹⁹⁶ Using the same techniques, Turner herself drew out the severe headaches of two other women,¹⁹⁷ and a healer diagnosed and massaged away Turner's abdominal pain.¹⁹⁸ She observed forty-six cures in all and received reports of 105 others, the vast majority successful.¹⁹⁹ She also reports being cured of sickness, including vomiting, as another social scientist touched her for healing during a professional meeting.²⁰⁰

In another work, Turner has collected various experiences of healings.²⁰¹ Finally, in a journal published by the American Anthropological Association, she notes developments in the area of anthropological research dealing with shamanism. These involve "spirit" experiences or "spirit energy," again based on anthropologists' fieldwork. She documents clearly that the increase in recognition of this area in recent decades has been exponential.²⁰² She even cites at length one anthropologist who became a spiritual healer.²⁰³ While some evidence has been collected suggesting paranormal healings, however, some other scholars observe that the scale and replicability are so far inadequate to command "mainstream scientific

spirits is a primary element of traditional practice, along with probably less controversial use of massage and herbs). These healers pray and "always ascribe their ability to God" (ibid., 5; idem, *Healers*, 86, 88).

196. Turner, "Actuality," 5.

197. Ibid., 4. I myself have had experiences of praying concisely for persons with long-lasting headaches and their headaches instantly disappearing, much to their astonishment; I have not chosen to recount them in this book because of the abundance of more dramatic claims available.

198. Ibid. (noting a relationship between the pain and her stress).

199. Ibid., 3, noting that 54 percent of the cases involved injuries; 23 percent digestive problems; that various cases involved pneumonia, broken bones, and so forth. Lake, *Healer*, 116, notes a wide range of problems cured in his practice, most cured "temporarily, partially, or completely."

200. Turner, *Healers*, 26–27. Several years ago, at a meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Emmanuel Itapson and I prayed by the exhibit hall for an African professor who, on account of sickness from his potentially fatal illness, was going to have to cancel reading his paper the next day; later I learned that Emmanuel had attended his paper, which had gone well. He reported that he had recovered when we prayed, and in subsequent correspondence I learned that he had remained well, with no recurrence of the disease. I have not included this, like many other incidents, in this book because the professor had also received medical treatment and I was unable to secure all the information that might be relevant for consideration in this book.

201. Turner, *Healers*. In Iñupiat practice, the healer feels the sickness with one's hands and draws this bad spirit substance out thereby (idem, *Hands*, 71, 74–75); she finds this closer to the Zambian practice she witnessed than "to Christian laying on of hands" or Brazilian Spiritists waving their hand over the afflicted part (*Hands*, 137), though she recognizes Pentecostals' spirit experience as genuine (ibid., 224; cf. 9 for a "true Christian," as an informant described her, who witnessed dangerous spirit substance and prayed successfully against it). Outside Jewish and Christian tradition, laying on hands for healing appears in ancient Egypt (1550 B.C.E.); among Indonesian Muslims, Soviet folk healers, and Brazilian Spiritists (Krippner, "Medicine," 198–99). In early Judaism, see 1Qap Gen^a XX, 22, 29 (Fitzmyer, *Apocryphon*, 65, 67; Flusser, "Laying on of Hands"; Driver, *Scrolls*, 461); cf. LXX 2 Kgs 5:11; in Jesus's ministry, e.g., Mark 5:23; 8:23 (Vermees, *Jesus the Jew*, 240n35; see Keener, *Acts*, at Acts 6:6).

202. Turner, "Advances," especially 45–51, with the chronological annotated bibliography on 56–61. Ritual healing narratives that she cites include (on 48–49) Willis et al., *Spirits*, 94–96; (on 50) an anthropologist's own role as a shamanic healer (of hepatitis) in Earle, "Borders." Already in 1975, Greeley, *Sociology*, 9, observed that some of his "social science colleagues . . . have had paranormal experiences."

203. Turner, *Healers*, 117–23, citing Willis et al., *Spirits*; and other sources. He claimed that his gift was effective 85 percent of the time, on a range of afflictions including "arthritis, sinusitis, eczema, asthma, hypertension, migraine," various pains and the like (Willis, as quoted in Turner, *Healers*, 119).

attention.”²⁰⁴ The catch-22 of such studies is that what is always replicable will be explained by natural processes, whereas genuine activity by intelligent personal entities, whether superhuman or not, would not be so predictable.

In one recent journal article, a Cambridge anthropologist attests that she experienced healing through alleged “spirit helpers” during a shamanic ritual among the Makushi, an indigenous people in Guyana.²⁰⁵ She had injured her leg the day before, but the shaman not only mysteriously told her the circumstances in which she had injured it but also about her severe back injury some years earlier that no one should have known about.²⁰⁶ The shaman and others sought to drive out the bad spirit from her leg, and when they finished and inquired if she felt better, “I could only respond with a simple, stupefied, ‘Yes.’”²⁰⁷ Whether or not this was a genuinely organic cure, it effectively reduced pain and persuaded the participants.²⁰⁸ In one study, six of ten psoriasis patients treated by a Cree healer improved significantly (one recovering fully).²⁰⁹

One collection of new essays by Western-trained anthropologists focused on their experiences that were extraordinary by Western standards (though often normal for local persons).²¹⁰ The interpretive grids of the experiencers range from adopting native interpretations (Turner) to explaining the experiences in purely neurological terms.²¹¹ When anthropologists suspend their own worldview to learn from indigenous informants, they “consistently report extraordinary experiences that are consistent with the ones described by the people they ‘study.’”²¹² These experiences also provide bonding with the host culture.²¹³ Thus some note their experiences of unusually autonomous images²¹⁴ and vivid dreams.²¹⁵ “Native informants” often feel that observers’ refusal to participate forgoes experience,²¹⁶ and conditions of maximal participation have given anthropologists “dreams and visions that reflect their absorption of the

204. McClenon, *Healing*, 67 (citing as giving some evidence, Benor, “Survey”).

205. Scherberger, “Shaman,” 59–64.

206. *Ibid.*, 60.

207. *Ibid.*, 62.

208. *Ibid.*, 66, defends her participation on the grounds that one can learn people’s customs only by sympathetic engagement, not detached analysis.

209. A study cited in Goulet and Young, “Issues,” 326–27; they note that dermatological treatments had not helped, but emotion can constitute a factor in psoriasis; they also note (327) that the healer insisted that results were usually better in an indigenous context.

210. Young and Goulet, “Introduction,” 7. As Young, “Visitors,” 167, notes, anthropologists record as data when local people claim visions, but normally do not report when they themselves experience these events in the same setting.

211. Young and Goulet, “Introduction,” 10.

212. Goulet, “Dreams,” 33.

213. E.g., Guédon, “Ways,” 56–57.

214. Goulet, “Dreams,” especially 31. In meditation, see, e.g., Laughlin, “Energy,” 109–10.

215. Guédon, “Ways,” 53–54. An anthropologist might even participate while a local figure successfully reclaimed a hurting child, putatively injured by hostile spirits, by the healer calling on Jesus (*ibid.*, 55–56).

216. Goulet and Young, “Issues,” 313.

local realities.”²¹⁷ Worldview boundaries also may shift; in a work published by the University of Chicago, one anthropologist narrates his journey into Songhay shamanism, including his eventual fear that in warding off one sorcery attack he had diverted the death meant for him onto some innocent victims.²¹⁸

Another article notes some forty “anomalous experiences,” including healings, apparitions, and the like, reported by sixteen anthropologists, all highly educated persons from and trained in the West. Their reports display significant consistency despite the great variation in cultures and independence of the reports;²¹⁹ independent evaluators of the material drew identical conclusions.²²⁰ They compared with the anthropologists especially one study of “1446 anomalous experience narratives” collected in rural North Carolina from 1988 to 1996.²²¹ Whereas both anthropologists and others reported comparable anomalous experiences, the level of skepticism in anthropologists’ reports of their own experiences (38 percent) was considerably higher than that in the other samples (7 percent).²²² Nevertheless, the experiences transformed the belief structures of some anthropologists as well as others.²²³ Some anthropologists rationalized their experiences to reduce cognitive dissonance with their worldview;²²⁴ others accepted some elements of the experience as paranormal while questioning indigenous explanations;²²⁵ still others, who had multiple paranormal experiences, changed their worldviews and embraced explanations closer to the indigenous worldviews.²²⁶

217. *Ibid.*, 313–14. They reckon (315) these experiences useful as data if they reflect absorption in the local worldview.

218. Stoller and Olkes, *Shadow*, 225–27 (fearing other victims of his practice in 117–19). When he rose to confront the thumping and roaring heard by no one else, it vanished (132–33); locals interpreted this as a bad spirit sent to scare him away (135). He practiced divination and recited incantations but resisted going so far that he could never publish his findings (229); yet Stoller’s fever and diarrhea (225–26) could have purely natural causes, and he seems to describe here his sharing of the indigenous perspective. He may view some of the indigenous perspective as metaphor (229).

219. McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 46–48, citing for common features from a variety of cultures also McClenon, “Analysis”; *idem*, *Events*; *idem*, *Healing*; *idem*, “Shamanic Healing”; for the lack of close ties with cultural variables, see *idem*, “Shamanic Healing”; Fox, “Structure.” The journal in which McClenon and Nooney’s article appears is published by the American Anthropological Association. See also McClenon, “Miracles,” 190–93.

220. See McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 50.

221. *Ibid.*, 49 (noting that 71.2 percent of respondents were African-American).

222. *Ibid.*, 54.

223. *Ibid.* Immersion in another culture sometimes transforms core beliefs (*ibid.*, citing McCall, “Peace,” 56; on others’ belief transformations through paranormal experiences, see, e.g., McClenon, *Events*, 229).

224. McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 55, offering as examples Grindal, “Heart,” 75; Goulet, “Ways of Knowing,” 132; Young, “Visitors,” 171–72 (see further the compromise solution in Young, “Visitors,” 178).

225. McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 56, offering as examples Desjardlais, *Body*, 23; Salamone, “Bori,” 18 (though Salamone seems to me fairly open to indigenous interpretations). Cf. perhaps Emmons, *Ghosts*, 197 (losing some objectivity during fieldwork but regaining more later), 249–55 (remaining epistemically open to various possible explanations, but particularly parapsychological ones); Swarz, “Changed,” 211–35 (adapting and reinterpreting in terms of “energy,” a Native American practice).

226. McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 56–57, offering as examples Edith Turner (whom I cite above and in appendix B); Favret-Saada, *Witchcraft*, 125–27. In fact, while Favret-Saada subscribed to the

Other anthropologists have been reluctant to publish their experiences because of professional suspicion of any data that challenge traditional paradigms.²²⁷ This problem, too, has received some discussion; for example, the argument that anthropologists do experiential fieldwork and thus should not fear to publish some of that experience as well as acceptable objective data extracted from it.²²⁸ Since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, Western intellectuals have played down the value of visions, dreams, and the like, so that anthropologists have traditionally explored not the phenomena themselves but whatever putative factors may have caused such claims.²²⁹ Some anthropologists now complain, however, that this approach fails to treat informants seriously, reflecting the historic complicity of anthropology in Western imperialism.²³⁰ The shift toward experiential rather than rationalist approaches concerning extraordinary experiences is yielding a much greater sensitivity to indigenous perspectives and genuine experiences today.²³¹

In my opinion, some of these sorts of examples, as well as a number of the ones that I focus on in this book, could be used to challenge Western Enlightenment skepticism about extranormal events (however, again, one chooses to explain them in terms of causes). I have already suggested in chapter 6 that, against Hume, the appearance of apparently supernatural claims in some differing religions need not in itself invalidate any of the claims. Lest I stray further outside my areas of training and ready access to sources, however, I believe that the material that I have included should be sufficient to flesh out the basic analogy that I am making. I have noted that others have collected reports from various religious cultures; the sources most available to me facilitate me offering Christian sources in greater abundance. Many of the non-Christian claims are also less analogous to those in the Gospels and Acts (though also less potentially derivative). Like anthropologists above, I will cite some people's reports of their experiences, although my focus (in contrast to that of most anthropologists above) will be on Christian sources.

Limitations of Reports

Having noted that tens of millions of Christians in the Majority World claim to have witnessed miracles, I will turn in the next two chapters to a comparatively small

witchcraft belief during observation (*Witchcraft*, 133, 175), she later suggests a less witch-related solution involving hostile familial relationships (135–36; cf. 122). The differing options also appear in Young and Goulet, "Introduction," 8.

227. McClenon and Nooney, "Experiences," 50, noting fear of "stigmatization" (citing Salamone, "Bori," 15). See similarly Young and Goulet, "Introduction," 8; Wilson, "Seeing," 206.

228. See Tedlock, "Observation," 71–73, 76–78. For examples of ethnographies including personal elements, see Tedlock, "Observation," 73–76 (besides those using pseudonyms, e.g., 72); for open observations about participation in more recent literature, see 78–80; and especially "native" ethnographic perspectives on 80–82. Goulet and Young, "Issues," 305–10, treat the experiential approach to anthropology (cf. 303–4) as an empirical method; for experience allowing deeper ingress into a culture, see Stoller and Olkes, *Shadow*, 228–29.

229. Young and Goulet, "Introduction," 9.

230. *Ibid.*, 10.

231. *Ibid.*

number of specific examples. Even should volumes of such claims be collected by researchers (which would not be difficult), the collection would not prove that any given claims to miracles in the past were authentic (we have evidence and other reasons to affirm that many claims, in fact, have been inauthentic). What such research would contribute, however, is an empirical challenge to the assumption that such phenomena cannot be sincerely reported by eyewitnesses.²³²

As noted in the introduction, my primary purpose is to attest that eyewitness claims to healings are widespread; nevertheless, I hope that the survey contributes to my secondary purpose as well. I hope that the number and geographic range of claims presented here will give pause to those who think that by challenging the authenticity of a few miracle claims they can readily dismiss all of them. I also hope to show that the Humean assumption that miracle reports are isolated and quite rare is open to serious challenge and should no longer be regarded as tenable.

I must also remind the reader here and reiterate occasionally hereafter that by including a range of claims in chapters 8–12 I am not endorsing all of them or granting all of them equal weight. Anthropologists and sociologists report a range of claims to illustrate popular belief; the issue of evidential weight becomes important only when we return to questions of causation more explicitly later in the book. When we do so, how much evidential value one attaches to a given claim will depend on the nature of the burden of proof one demands, reflecting one's presuppositions about divine activity in the world. Even by open yet cautious standards, many reported recoveries bear too little evidential value for me to cite as evidence, since most illnesses for which people need healing are also known to vanish on occasion without prayer, though I cite a number of such cases to illustrate the breadth of claims that are often accepted on supernaturalist assumptions.²³³ In many cases, medical evidence cannot render a conclusive verdict, since with many illnesses, remissions do sometimes occur without documented prayer.

Further, many charlatans around the world have taken advantage of the success of others' sincere claims with self-aggrandizing fakery or quackery, though it is illegitimate to generalize from such cases to indict all claims.²³⁴ I have tried to screen

232. Modernist antisupernaturalists can question the interpretation of such reports but even in this case do not attempt to demonstrate the claim that genuine miracles do not happen. I am raising here not so much an objection as an observation, since it is impossible to inductively prove a negative. But as noted earlier, the traditional antisupernaturalist deductive assumptions no longer fit many of our contemporary worldviews, including in the physical sciences.

233. Thus, e.g., I have been present on a number of occasions when headaches vanished immediately after prayer. While this result was beneficial to the recipient, I cannot cite it as strong evidence to someone inclined to attribute many headaches to psychosomatic causes and thus the cure to the placebo effect. The Gospels and Acts also select more dramatic examples than these for their narratives.

234. One is forced to dismiss the sincerity (a matter beyond disagreeing with their interpretation) of all such claimants only if one's philosophic presuppositions require this. But such certainty of one's own presuppositions as to dismiss without investigation the sincerity of such a large number of other people's purported testimony may lack self-critique to the point of hubris. Such *a priori* dismissal functions more effectively in polemic than in dialogue. Most admit that miracle claims are usually at least subjectively real to individual interpreters (Brownell, "Experience," 226).

out claims that were obviously fabricated (e.g., another researcher who shared cases with me discovered two to be fraudulent), without passing judgment in the larger number of cases where I lacked grounds (other than philosophic assumptions) to assert that a testimony must be false. When I have offered judgments that some reports are likely authentic or inauthentic (perhaps based on my training as a biblical critic), I have offered opinions based on where I think evidence points, but often the evidence at my disposal is quite limited, and inevitably my judgments will sometimes be wrong. Nevertheless, I believe that in many cases there remains fairly compelling evidence one way or the other.

Rumor tends to shape and exaggerate stories,²³⁵ so it is desirable to come as close to eyewitness accounts or other firsthand sources as possible.²³⁶ The nature of narrativization and testimony is such that successful cures are remembered disproportionately.²³⁷ Some such cures involve ailments that sometimes go away naturally; while one cannot rule out special divine action in such cases, neither can one prove it. Other cures, such as the instant, visible disappearance of cataracts, are not known to occur naturally. In illustrating the range of testimony, I include samples of both sorts of cures.

I could not personally investigate all these reports with interviews and certainly not with medical examinations; I am not qualified to conduct the latter. Still, as I will note later, I have a closer association with some of the sources, and I have good reason to trust the veracity of a number of the informants, in particular those whom I know well.²³⁸ Some reports are highly statistically improbable by chance given the sample size involved. I include a larger number of such illustrations than some might prefer partly to preclude the argument that anomalies are rare enough that chance readily accounts for all of them. Nevertheless, it may account for some of them, and no sample size would be large enough to persuade everyone.

Some reports that I will note appear in works by anthropologists and physicians; a larger number derive more generally from persons who claim to be eyewitnesses or who claim to report the claims of eyewitnesses. Some sources summarize claims made by healed persons spontaneously at healing meetings, without citing

235. Bremback and Howell, *Persuasion*, 188–89. Even firsthand reports (from people with dramatic personality types wanting to be involved) immediately after alleged events may be fictitious (as in Tacitus *Hist.* 1.34; my wife notes this phenomenon of some false reports during war, when she was a refugee), but true eyewitnesses who were actually present will maintain their testimony more forcefully, even in the absence of rumor, momentary excitement, and peer support, and long after the initial report (so, contrasting with the fictitious cases just noted, most of Tacitus's or my wife's sources).

236. Cf. Emmons, *Ghosts*, 266n1: "It is easier to remember one's own experience accurately than someone else's report." Already in the fourth century, Augustine lamented the inattention of many who experienced miracles to documenting them (*City of God* 22.8).

237. Hume is among those who raise the question of memory (*Miracles*, 27). It is a limiting factor, though not an absolute one (otherwise most historiography would become impossible, not to mention some examinations I have assigned to my students).

238. As Alexander, *Signs*, 17, puts it (in the context of Pentecostal miracle claims), "Eyewitness testimony from someone you know is the next best thing to seeing it yourself." On the value of interviews for research (in this case, in psychology), see Pekala and Cardena, "Issues," 62.

subsequent medical confirmation (sometimes in regions where medical consultation was not available in any case); others, by contrast, are of persons whose immediate recoveries after prayer are medically attested and long-standing. At times I am limited to published accounts. In some other cases I have interviewed persons, questioning details I would not otherwise have had available; I have hoped by such means to offset the potential biases of sources derived from public meetings. (In cases where fraud does exist, some large ministries have more funds to produce it convincingly than one would expect with typical individuals—although false accounts in exceptionally large ministries would normally seem to require the collusion of greater numbers of people.)

One cannot avoid noting claims involving public meetings, especially in establishing beliefs about healing, but these sorts of claims, while particularly abundant, are among the most difficult to follow up, and on average spontaneous public claims would tend to be less reliable (hence easier to debunk) than individual claims after healings. A large proportion of on-the-spot healing testimonies in public meetings, at least in the West, involve matters that are not immediately visible to onlookers,²³⁹ although I am convinced that critics too readily dismiss many of the more substantial claims such as a number of cases of blindness or deafness. One investigator asked healers to provide their best cases for evaluation,²⁴⁰ but such ministers are rarely doctors themselves and can offer only the most dramatic cures claimed by those willing to provide them. Even healing ministers of the highest personal integrity could not be certain that all claims in their meetings would be regarded as such by examining physicians; some deceptive or self-deceived attention seekers may pass the tests meant to screen them out (see further discussion in ch. 13).²⁴¹ In such cases, follow-up reports are valuable for evidence to be weighed more fully, though most who testify in public meetings do not remain available for follow-up. Because many ailments might feel better temporarily, many believe themselves cured in public meetings but no long-term change results.²⁴² For this reason, I believe that

239. A complaint of Randi, *Faith Healers*, 269, 287, regarding evidence. Even regarding more serious cures, one earlier critic aptly pointed out, "Crutches only . . . are hung on the walls of the 'miraculous' grottoes, never a wooden leg" (Wright, *Miracle*, 167, summarizing the argument of Anatole France). Some claims of miracles of such magnitude do exist, but they are so unusual that we normally tend not to believe them (perhaps in those cases defeating their purpose).

240. May, "Miracles," 147.

241. On attention seekers, see, e.g., Bishop, *Healing*, 64; Prather, *Miracles*, 90; cf. also mere attention seekers that Charles Wesley discerned in his meetings (White, *Spirit*, 62–63); for self-deception, see the case in May, "Miracles," 145. Bishop, *Healing*, 72–73, apparently objects to Kuhlman's agents screening who would come onstage, but this very process was apparently meant to screen out those who were not genuinely cured (including those who wrongly thought they were). In large gatherings, others also have used ushers to verify claims and screen out "those with spurious claims or looking only for attention" (Daniel, "Labour," 160, on his own meetings; Währisch-Oblau, "Healing in Migrant Churches," 70, on African charismatic churches). Dr. W. L. Jacob, a psychiatrist, noted that some apparent healings were mere "histrionics," but that this does not detract from genuine healings (Jacob, "Introduction," xiv).

242. Cf. Prather, *Miracles*, 90. Hiebert, *Reflections*, 245, notes that most who claim healings at meetings return to their doctors a week or two later. His source (Pattison, Lapins, and Doerr, "Faith Healing") is

interviews with those who claim to have been healed in the past may be more useful than those who claim to be healed on the spot in public meetings.

Although I cite some reports from public meetings, I seek to balance them with other kinds of reports. Some observers suggest that most individuals who experience healing probably do so in less public settings than healing crusades or Marian shrines, receiving prayer in local churches or Bible studies.²⁴³ For example, of U.S. Pentecostals claiming that they have experienced long-term healings, more than one-third (35.5 percent) attribute the healing to private prayer²⁴⁴ and nearly a third (29.8 percent) to “prayer with friends or family members.”²⁴⁵ While slightly more than half (51.3 percent) received prayer during a worship service, less than a quarter (24.9 percent) attributed their healing claims to “prayer during a special service by a healing evangelist.”²⁴⁶ The official magazine of the Assemblies of God, though long including healing testimonies, “does not feature healing evangelists.”²⁴⁷ I thus seek to provide a range of sources.

In cases of interviews, where I could ask questions, I believed nearly all my interviewees to be sincere (though I did not believe that all of their cures necessarily demanded supernatural explanations). I borrow here the remark of Father René Laurentin, a French journalist and theologian, regarding the interviews that he undertook: “I have reported in good faith testimonies told in good faith, told in the honest, artless manner one does not find with the calculating witness.”²⁴⁸ Or I could borrow the sentiment of medical historian Jacalyn Duffin regarding most Catholic healing dossiers of recent centuries: “I believe in the goodwill and honesty of these witnesses, be they educated or illiterate, religious or atheist.”²⁴⁹ These interviewer impressions do not guarantee the authenticity of every case (compare examples of fraud noted above), but on the whole we are dealing with sincere claimants, in some cases claimants whom I know fairly well.

limited in its scope and not free of bias, but the point remains: the cures that count evidentially must outlast the emotion of the moment.

243. With McKenzie, “Miracles,” 82. Kay, *Networks*, 205, suggests that the percentage of those healed through prayer in local congregations is probably no lower than in larger crusades, at least in the West. Testimonies of individuals include many claiming conversion through direct encounters with Christ, despite ensuing persecution. For some other examples, see, e.g., the summary report in Clark, *Impartation*, 212.

244. Poloma, *Assemblies*, 60 (the study included 1,275 Assemblies of God adherents). Again, Kay, *Networks*, 205, suggests that the percentage of those healed through prayer in local congregations is probably no lower than in larger crusades, at least in the West.

245. Poloma, *Assemblies*, 61.

246. *Ibid.*

247. *Ibid.*, 57, noting the historic schism between the more institutionalized denomination and prominent charismatic evangelists.

248. Laurentin, *Miracles*, 89. He does allow for the sort of variations always encountered “in independent testimonies and perhaps an occasional embroidering of enthusiasm.” Though a respected scholar, Laurentin has been criticized especially for his later work on Medjugorje (see Laurentin, *Medjugorje*).

249. Duffin, *Miracles*, 183; Prather, *Miracles*, 47. One need not always agree with the interpretation; while I am personally skeptical of psychic claims, for example, I acknowledge Einstein’s confidence in Upton Sinclair’s “good faith and dependability” about his psychic experiences (Herrick, *Mythologies*, 116).

Needless to say, some of the healing reports seem to me better documented and with a greater claim to academic authenticity than others.²⁵⁰ While at times these distinctions will surface, however, and at other times I have simply screened out some reports, my primary purpose with most claims at *this* point is to illustrate widespread belief. I believe that many cases support the possibility of supernatural involvement, but without medical examination (and often without even interviews) my ability to evaluate a number of the reports more critically is limited. In most cases where I am aware of serious controversy I seek to maintain neutrality at least at present, pending further investigation, unless I believe the evidence inclines sufficiently strongly in one direction for me to render a clearer verdict.

I reiterate that theology is not the point of the book and that mentioning these claims does not serve as a blanket endorsement of any claimant's theology; the claimants in fact represent a range of theological positions. There is some unity: to my knowledge, no circles claim that miracles happen every time that one prays or seeks them, a point perhaps relevant for evaluating the evidence as a whole. But to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding concerning my own perspective, I affirm that in places where medical technology is available people should make grateful use of it (and I do so myself on a regular basis); for many illnesses, medical resources offer consistent cures and are, in the theology of many, including myself, a gift from God.

Nevertheless, as I explain elsewhere in this book, it is a logical fallacy to rule out the extranormal authenticity of all miracle claims based on any of these above points. Despite the above caveats, many of the following phenomena I cannot explain on naturalistic terms; I believe that some readers who, unlike me, reject the possibility of all nonnaturalistic explanations will likewise have difficulty explaining some of them.²⁵¹

Admittedly, explanations, whether philosophic, psychological, or theological, are not the primary issue in this or the immediately following chapters; I will turn to my suggestions (and often arguments) regarding explanations in chapters 13–15. What is most critical from the standpoint of NT studies, or at least the historical aspect of it, is to note that such phenomena are widely claimed by firsthand sources and thus that it is not necessary, whatever the proposed explanations at this point, to deny the possibility of firsthand claims for such phenomena in the first century. After reporting Majority World and Western claims, however, I will also consider

250. Merely being in print cannot guarantee a claim's veracity, although it grants readers reader access to it (often helpfully, since I have abbreviated most of the accounts, many down to summary statements).

251. I am not implying that all claims to answered prayer must be construed naturalistically unless no naturalistic explanation (or even plausible naturalistic explanation) is available; many claims of divine action in the Bible in fact suggest divine activity through natural agency, albeit at a supernatural level (e.g., Exod 14:21; Num 11:31; 2 Chr 36:22–23); I merely note that those that are more readily explained on supernatural than natural grounds offer stronger positive evidence for the thesis that supernatural factors are sometimes at work. (Even 2 Kgs 3:17, 20, may involve dry wadi beds flooded with rainwater from the mountains [Gordon, *Near East*, 204; Konkel, *Kings*, 395–96] or perhaps underground sources [cf. Glueck, *Side*, 14–15].)

proposed explanations for the claims, even though these explanations do not belong to the most narrowly historical aspect of my inquiry.

Even if only a fraction of the following reports from various regions were to prove genuine, they would testify that belief that the Christian God miraculously heals is widespread and that this belief often helps propel the peaceful growth of Christian movements. That such phenomena did the same in the first century is therefore not implausible. Relevant for my later return to the book's secondary thesis, if some kinds of these reports proved genuine, especially the dramatic sort collected in chapter 12, probably most observers would also regard them as significant evidence for supernatural causation.

The Use of Examples

Before turning to examples in following chapters, I must explain the way that I use examples in the argument of this book, since examples are not always used in ways that make the point for which people offer them. Whereas one cannot inductively prove a negative (hence Hume could not inductively demonstrate that miracles do not happen), one can make inductive arguments for positive claims. Individual examples in isolation do not establish new scientific laws, and those arguing for genuine miracles would not argue for laws here in any case, since they argue for a personal deity, and personal agents are not predictable the way that basic-level physics is. Having said that, examples can readily refute misinformed claims that people do not experience many highly unusual recoveries that they attribute to prayer. In particularly extraordinary cases (or an accumulation of mildly extraordinary ones), they may also shift the probability toward supernatural explanations, if one's starting assumptions do not rule out such explanations.

Though millions of claims are made²⁵² and a minority are being addressed more thoroughly in missiological literature,²⁵³ it is unfortunate for academic purposes that most collections of available claims today, as throughout most of history, remain popular (i.e., nonacademic),²⁵⁴ anecdotal, or limited in scope.²⁵⁵ While

252. Extrapolating from the numbers of churches that make such claims and the percentage of people who offer them in surveys noted earlier, "hundreds of millions" seems a more accurate estimate. How many claims are difficult to explain naturalistically is much harder to estimate.

253. E.g., Wagner, *Acts*, 475–76, summarizes by category many extraordinary miracles that he or the ministers he works with can attest firsthand, in Argentina and Brazil (cf. also 202). He acknowledges that his records reveal that though many claim complete healing, many others do not (Wagner, *Acts*, 126–27, 213–14). Cf. also summaries in Jackson, *Quest*, 54–56.

254. E.g., the eyewitness observations in the multivolume diaries of T. L. Osborn (available in several Pentecostal research libraries), *passim*; Stewart, *Only Believe*, *passim*; reports from Chinese Christians (cf. Feaver, "Delegation," 34, in Wagner, *Acts*, 312). By observing that such sources are nonacademic I am not denigrating their value; they are closer to the events than most academicians are and are the best sources for academic study of popular religion. I am simply observing the difficulty of satisfying academic expectations in such cases.

255. Lamenting the lack of solid documentation, see, e.g., Lucas, *Healing*, 197 (in the "consensus statement" in appendix 1, pp. 193–201). One wider academic collection that is taking note of a number of miracle claims in Africa (where relevant to the subjects) is the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*

these limitations are a drawback for academic purposes, mentioning them is not intended as a criticism of those offering the accounts. Most of those involved in the healings are not academicians and understandably are not primarily interested in documentation for posterity.²⁵⁶ Likewise, most who work within the traditional Western academic paradigm in some disciplines would face severe pressure from their academic peers for professionally documenting healing claims in any way that seemed to grant them credence. Because peer-reviewed scientific journals rarely publish nonreplicable events, anomalies like miracles are virtually excluded from documentation except for individual cases.²⁵⁷

Firsthand data in such research would necessarily constitute case studies, which by their nature are “anecdotal” until compiled and compared.²⁵⁸ Nevertheless, various disciplines make significant use of case studies.²⁵⁹ Like most historiography, anthropology depends on testimony; as one anthropologist notes, “The more reliable the witness the better, the greater number of witnesses the better. Nevertheless, judgments concerning ‘truth’ rely always upon the experience of another.”²⁶⁰ Since the events being studied are by definition extranormal rather than in the usual course of events, they appear particularly amenable to a case-study approach of individual claims.²⁶¹ Moreover, popular accounts are the sorts of primary sources most useful to church historians and scholars analyzing popular religion, hence can provide useful analogies for early Christianity here.

(e.g., Keener, “Ndoundou”; Akinwumi, “Idahosa”; Dayhoff, “Marais”; Menberu, “Mekonnen Negera”; Negash, “Demelash”; Millard, “Duma”; Odili, “Osaele” [citing in further detail, *idem*, “Agents”]; further examples above).

256. A point also noted by Moreland, *Triangle*, 185. As Christiaan de Wet noted to me in correspondence (March 25, 2008), large numbers of miracles are being reported in Africa today, but few are “verified and recorded” to Western satisfaction “because of the nature and context of the miracles.” In the cases I will mention later, where I was a witness (and not yet considering writing on the subject), I myself did not think to obtain medical documentation, did not know how to obtain it, and might well not have been granted access to it. In some cases, no doctor had been consulted, and in others it seemed too intrusive for me to ask or to press persons who were busy to go to the trouble of obtaining it after I had asked.

257. See Llewellyn, “Events,” 253. Ellens, “Conclusion,” 301–2, argues for changing this by collecting anecdotal reports and then (303) evaluating the samples together.

258. Cf. this observation by Southall, “Possession,” 232, on anthropological studies of spirit possession. Wink, “Stories,” 212, complains that “materialists” dismiss as “anecdotal” all supramaterial healing claims “however well documented.”

259. See Pekala and Cardena, “Issues,” 63 (noting also their value in studying anomalous experiences); Krippner and Achterberg, “Experiences,” 383 (noting the use of interviews and case studies regarding anomalous healing, though desiring fuller controls); cf. even a study using a hundred examples from newspaper clippings in research on sudden death from emotive traumas (Engel, “Death,” reported in Benson, *Healing*, 42).

260. Straight, *Miracles*, 6; for personal experience as a form of evidence in sociology, see Wuthnow, “Teaching,” 187. Smith, *Thinking*, 48–85, compares the “affective, narrative epistemology” of charismatics with that of postmodernists (see esp. 51, 59), both respecting particularities rather than cultural hegemony (55–57). “Narrative knowledge” functions affectively as well as cognitively (65).

261. Cf. similarly Ashe, *Miracles*, 165, 178–79; McClenon, *Events*, xi. For the study of popular beliefs about the supernatural, what is most important is what is *sociologically* real for those reporting their experiences (*ibid.*, xi, 3, 6; cf. Duffin, *Miracles*, 183). A “chief medical expert” for the Vatican has emphasized that miracles are exceptional and particular, hence cannot be resolved by statistics (noted in Duffin, *Miracles*, 187).

Demands for specifically medical documentation help control unwarranted and often dangerous claims (what we would call “practicing medicine without a license”). Nevertheless, such demands also stem partly from professional specialization, and nineteenth-century competition between various forms of alternative medicine in a period in which what is now conventional medicine was striving to be recognized as the only scientific form of treatment.²⁶² Thus, for example, mainstream medicine once struggled with financial competitors such as medical botany and homeopathy,²⁶³ although some historians warn that in that period orthodox medicine’s “remedies were no better than the homeopaths.”²⁶⁴ Today some of the alternatives have improved and become respectable therapies that can be employed in complementary ways for treating particular sorts of disorders;²⁶⁵ some, like osteopathic medicine, are now part of conventional medicine. Ideally, we would demand medical evidence for the effectiveness of any kind of recovery, and larger controlled studies protect against the dangers of merely anecdotal evidence. In a case like supernatural healing claims, however, where genuinely extraordinary cures cannot be predicted in advance because (if explained theistically) they involve an intelligent agent rather than purely natural processes, case studies seem better adapted to the nature of the claim.²⁶⁶

Diverse Christian Supernatural Claims

Individual healing reports are probably more often analogous to NT accounts than mass healing claims in public healing meetings and especially reports of cures at shrines. Nevertheless, I include at least some samples from all of these kinds of sources, since these are the range that presents itself today. The further boundaries of my primary examples, however, invite special comment.

Readers from some vantage points might prefer me to draw from a narrower range of sources; others might prefer a wider range of sources. To prevent the book from burgeoning beyond its present size, I have limited the scope of my research largely to claims in movements closely related to Christianity (apart from endnotes in the earlier section of this chapter suggesting some sources concerning other religious movements that researchers can pursue). For the main point of the book, namely, that eyewitnesses claim such phenomena in religious contexts, I would not need to limit the sources to Christian ones. Having decided on that limitation, which some scholars will already consider arbitrary, I will not limit my

262. On medical professionalization in the nineteenth century, see, e.g., Williams, “Healing,” 273; relevant to the matters at hand, see also Mullin, *Miracles*, 103–4, 246–47. Specialization and professionalization have obvious benefits but also can restrict the bounds of evidence considered (Kuhn, *Structure*, 64).

263. Pickstone, “Systems,” 175–89.

264. *Ibid.*, 185.

265. The use of diet and nutrition is of course highly valuable and has come quite a long way from the period when graham crackers were considered the ideal food (once used as health food at Oberlin College).

266. Medicine also uses case studies, and when patients report symptoms, doctors use these subjective reports to determine what tests to run. But medicine has access to a larger and more consistent pool of studies and norms, whereas supernatural healing claims by their nature involve abnormal and sporadic events.

material further by seeking to arbitrate competing claims of what is “Christian.” I include examples from various Christian movements, including not only many in the mainstream of Catholic, Protestant, or Pentecostal Christianity but also a much smaller minority of others that have often been regarded as extreme by the mainstream.²⁶⁷

Publications on miracles do vary in the religious range of their samples, but as chapter 10 will illustrate, many have rejected miracle claims in competitors’ religious contexts for theological reasons. I thus pause to address here any readers who may disapprove of the theological diversity of contexts in which cures are attested. Protestants may not endorse the theology of Marian shrines, and Catholics may not endorse that of evangelical evangelists; both may charge some new religious movements with syncretism; those skeptical of miracles more generally will question causal relationships between documented extranormal cures and specifically religious contexts. For the point of this book, the issue is cures in theologically or religiously pregnant contexts rather than more particular theological claims. For the sake of space I have often omitted elements in the larger theological contexts of claims that claimants would consider important, for example, (often) Christ’s compassion, the agents’ suffering for their faith in or ministry for Christ, and so forth. I do so not because I devalue these theological contexts or discussions about them but to maintain focus on the book’s key agendas.

In including examples that some readers would regard as more controversial, I am not minimizing the value of some scholars undertaking theological critiques or of dialogue between different movements in other contexts. It is simply not the purpose of this academic study to draw such distinctions. For those interested in the question of competing theological approaches, however, while a theist need not attribute all extranormal claims to God (e.g., most theists in the world today acknowledge other spirits subordinate to God), she also could affirm that God might sometimes meet those with genuine faith even where other theological details (e.g., dependence on a holy site, prosperity teaching, saints’ relics, or even a fraudulent evangelist) might differ from what she believes ideal or even appropriate. To acknowledge this limitation is not to endorse a particular theology or to reject the value of theological knowledge.²⁶⁸ I am not seeking to resolve such theological issues here but to explain my decision to remain focused on the question at hand.

The claims I include related to Christianity reflect a range of theological positions, including views regarding healing. That range might not have surprised some early Christians, who did distinguish ministries of healing from ministries of teaching (1 Cor 12:28–29), not presuming that all who served in the former ministries

267. I have not included older movements like Christian Science or other mind sciences, whose healing claims others have addressed at length in other works.

268. If God would act only where faith and knowledge were perfect, we should not expect divine action. As a scholar I value knowledge; as a Christian I also value faith, which can occur in a context of limited knowledge. Readers are, of course, free to demur on any of my judgments here.

must also serve in the latter. From controversial methods and questionable exegesis to outright charlatans, there have been enough concerns to make many a scholar, including many a committed Christian scholar, cringe.²⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it is a logical fallacy to dismiss evidence for all genuine extranormal recoveries based on some claims not proving genuine, and it seems disingenuous to dismiss evidence because some claimants do not share the evaluators' theological positions. Many would view healings as vindicating God's mercy toward the afflicted rather than an intermediary's theological acumen.

I note examples of eyewitness claims to events that the eyewitnesses consider supernaturally caused without implying full analogy with all of those that appear in the Gospels and Acts, or with one another. I do not argue that every detail reported in the Gospels, Acts, or subsequent history must have clear parallels today before we can treat it as plausible; my argument is much more general, simply seeking to challenge antisupernaturalism's traditional analogy argument.

Some modern examples from which I draw differ in some significant respects from examples in Acts. Thus, for instance, Jesus and his followers in the Gospels and Acts are not associated with particular healing shrines (a Christian mode that presumably arose later, in competition with non-Christian shrines like those of Asclepius). Likewise, while some of the examples I give in following chapters come from those known for focusing on miracles (because they circulate the most reports), miracles were not the primary focus or "specialty" of Jesus and his first movement, although they were probably what most interested some outsiders. Evangelical Church of West Africa pastor Gideon Achi articulates a perspective consistent with the NT witness. He notes that he has witnessed some miracles himself, but that "God uses miracles to authenticate his message, not just to promote whoever is performing the miracles."²⁷⁰ While his perspective probably reflects the dominant approach in Christian movements, some groups do use miracle claims to promote their own ministries. Nevertheless, only a small minority of my examples could fairly be accused of coming from groups that appear to use miracles in this way. To reduce distractions, I focus especially on the mainstream of Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Pentecostal, and Third Wave movements. Miracle claims do not occur in equal proportions among all these groups, and the numbers of my examples unfortunately do not reflect the proportions in which they occur in some of these groups: for the most part, my sampling simply reflects the sources

269. I have noted that I do not find any proposed biblical arguments for hard cessationism remotely plausible. Extreme charismatics and false claims, however, have sometimes tempted me toward cessationism and certainly helped me understand its appeal. Nevertheless, I know other kinds of charismatics, and (as I will note later) have some firsthand "charismatic" experiences myself. Even among sound charismatics, however, the best of human agents remains fallible.

270. Gideon Achi, interview, May 25, 2009 (now a PhD student at Asbury). He warns against focusing on miracles more than on Jesus. Cf. also others, e.g., Yancey, "Miracle Worker"; Nigerian Pentecostal pastor Okwudili Ononugbo (in Burgess, *Revolution*, 301); Okonkwo, "Sustaining," 75 (emphasizing integrity above signs). More than a century ago, Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 200: healing miracles are to further the gospel; "Miracles are the signs and not the substance of Christianity."

most readily available to me.²⁷¹ The sampling should, however, be more than adequate for our purposes.

One Theological Caveat

Because I am now turning to postbiblical examples of healing claims, and some of my Western readers may find many of the healing claims in this book astonishing for a particular sort of theological reason, I digress at this point also to address an objection that may arise for some of them (although not for myself, and certainly not for antsupernaturalists). This objection involves the doctrine, held by a minority of conservative Protestants, known as “cessationism,” the belief that extraordinary supernatural manifestations through individuals have ceased. Later I will treat the rise of a form of Protestant cessationism in the West that accommodated Enlightenment antsupernaturalism, allowing God’s (visible) activity exclusively (or at least almost exclusively) through natural means.²⁷² I must digress here, however, to observe that modern cessationism is not all of one kind.²⁷³

Many modern cessationists do not exclude God’s supernatural activity in the present but simply argue that it does not occur to the same degree or in the same form as in the NT (in which case “cessationist” might not be the best term for it, but I defer to the preferred usage of some of the view’s advocates). This position would not need to exclude from consideration, even with regard to the question of supernatural causation, most examples offered later in this book. It would not regard them as normative, but the issue of normativity is not important for establishing the main points of this book: that eyewitnesses can claim to have seen healings and that some healings may involve supernatural causation.

From an apparent diminution in the magnitude of miracles in many parts of the world today a historian working from analogy could argue that NT miracles were exaggerated. A moderate cessationist (again, not my approach) could counter that if any of Jesus’s miracles (or other miracles in his name) are granted as genuine

271. E.g., Catholics, Pentecostal Methodists, and Pentecostals all far outnumber Baptists in Chile, but my primary sources for Chile happen to be Baptist. Funded interviewers doing a more thorough study in Chile would thus have found far more healing claims by going to these other groups.

272. See, e.g., Mullin, *Miracles*, 30. This position eventually mostly collapsed (Mullin, *Miracles*, 265–66) under the weight of its philosophic inconsistency (see Ruthven, *Cessationism*, 64–71 [esp. 70]; Mullin, *Miracles*, 265–66). Thus by the late twentieth century even many conservative evangelical leaders publicly affirmed continuing gifts of healings (e.g., Harold Lindsell, as cited in Synan, *Tradition*, 273; Billy Graham in Graham, *Spirit*, 162).

273. See, e.g., moderate cessationism in many essays in Sawyer and Wallace, *Afraid*; also in Saucy, “View”; and some other sources noted above. Following the same line of thought as in Conyers Middleton (Warfield, *Miracles*, 28–31; Young, “Miracles in History,” 106), Benjamin Warfield’s harder cessationism rejected all miracles past the apostolic period (Barnes, “Miracles,” 228–29), but on criteria that would have refuted biblical miracles as well (Barnes, “Miracles,” 229–30; Brown, *Miracles*, vi, 198–202). Some (e.g., Pearl, “Miracles,” 492) contend that miracles were needed early on to justify theism but no longer remain necessary (an approach criticized, e.g., in Otte, “Schlesinger,” 96); this approach seems especially vulnerable to challenge in missiological settings. Some detractors of modern miracles have even associated them, including those associated with committed Christians, with Satan (cf. Whitcomb, “Miracles”).

miracles, then God acted in Jesus's ministry and confirmed his distinctive claims; these claims in turn allow us to set Jesus apart. This approach, if taken, would not weaken my argument from analogy even for genuinely supernatural miracles in the Gospels and Acts, since the point is not the quantity or degree but the existence of genuine miracles. As I noted in chapter 5, a single genuine miracle would be sufficient to refute Hume's claim against miracles from experience, and I will suggest later in the book that we have far more than a single case (though I do not argue that all the claims I narrate in following chapters need be understood in those terms).

For most Christians, especially in the West, this idea of a change in the character of the miraculous could fit our experience. If Jesus healed everyone who came to him, as some hold,²⁷⁴ matters are different today (and indeed, not only in the West). If healing was normally instant in the NT (at least in cases where we are informed, apart from Mark 8:24–25), many or most recoveries attributed to divine help today differ from those in the NT era (though I will cite some claims of instant healings today as well). Yet I believe that it is difficult to find a solid NT rationale for the change (the texts cited for this perspective rely heavily on theological inference, sometimes, as in the case of 1 Cor 13:8–12, apparently in the direct face of what the text says),²⁷⁵ unless it would be that God lavishes miracles more freely in particular points in salvation history than in others (a perspective many noncessationists would share). While in historic Christian teaching Jesus is unique, the same cannot be said for signs workers like Stephen in Acts (or among some biblical figures preceding Jesus).

My purpose in this book is not to offer a theological or biblical response to cessationism, which I have offered in other works (primarily responding there to “hard” rather than moderate cessationism).²⁷⁶ But I respond here briefly with respect to the matter at hand: if God lavishes miracles more freely at some particularly significant points in salvation history (a reasonable observation from Scripture), one still cannot conclude from the NT that no such significant points

274. The view that many readers hold concerning Matt 4:24; 8:16; Acts 5:16; but others might cite against this understanding Luke 14:13; Acts 3:2 (or at least allow for exceptions); cf. also Luke 4:26–27.

275. On that text, see, e.g., Carson, *Spirit*, 66–72; Fee, *Presence*, 204–14; Schatzmann, *Charismata*, 77–79.

276. My agenda in this book is not to challenge cessationism, or I would dedicate space to making an argument against it, but I have offered some comments that could be used that way elsewhere (including Keener, *Acts*, and in various earlier works such as Keener, *Matthew*, 312–13, 316–17; on a popular level, Keener, *Gift*, 89–112, to which I refer the interested reader for my own views). I regard full-scale (hard) cessationism as so difficult to defend biblically as to require little response on that level, yet understandable both in the context of its historical origins and, today, in reaction against the claims of some common “charismatic” extremes. For the cessationist approach in general, see, e.g., Robertson, *Word*; Gaffin, *Perspectives*; idem, “View”; Jeffries, “Healing”; MacArthur, *Chaos*; Derickson, “Cessation”; MacLeod, “Surprised”; for noncessationist responses besides my own, see, e.g., Fee, *Gospel*, 75–77; idem, *Paul, Spirit, and People*, passim; Turner, *Gifts*, 286–302; Ruthven, *Cessation*; Grudem, *Theology*, 355–75; Deere, *Power of Spirit*; Elbert, “Themes”; Morpheu, *Breakthrough*, 169–82; Snyder, *Renewal*, 140–41 (and idem, *Problem*, 130–31; “Gifts,” 332–34); Green, *Holy Spirit*; Shogren, “Prophecy”; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 130–54. For a more moderate, modern cessationism, see Sawyer and Wallace, *Afraid*; for multiple views, see Grudem, *Gifts*.

would continue to occur.²⁷⁷ Although miracles appear particularly dramatic in Jesus's ministry, these echo (as we have noted) signs narrated in earlier significant eras, such as those of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha, and are in turn echoed in ministries in Acts (not, incidentally, limited to the Twelve plus Paul, as some suggest; see Acts 6:8; 8:6). They are not limited to a single phase in biblical history but appear at various significant points; the time of Elijah and Elisha was a case of a biblical revival to reverse, at least temporarily, national apostasy. They are not, then, limited to Jesus's ministry or to the events of "salvation" as most narrowly construed; they apply also to the expansion of God's message. The evangelization of previously unevangelized people groups, where we encounter many miracle reports today, seems analogous to the kinds of settings we have in Acts.²⁷⁸

The apparently consistent NT perspective is that Christians live in an eschatologically significant time, what NT theologians often describe as the "already/not yet" of the kingdom.²⁷⁹ Early Christians did not expect that era to last for centuries, but the point is that they defined the period between Christ's first and second comings as eschatological, a period in which many of God's promises were being fulfilled. One could also argue that when God stirs the hearts of believers to live in this reality, that is also a significant time when God may act in dramatic ways. I can empathize with even a fairly conservative cessationist perspective on a level of some of my experience and as an understandable reaction against some widespread charismatic abuses, but I do not believe that this is the solution most compatible with the theology that we find in the NT. I believe that such theology should lead us to expect and weigh more heavily continuity rather than discontinuity. In the case of some moderate cessationists, the difference might be one of degree.

In any case, while hard cessationists might find some reports in this book as shocking as full-scale antsupernaturalists would, I believe that even in the West moderate cessationists probably constitute the majority of cessationists today. I would thus invite those committed to this theological perspective to join non-cessationist theists, including myself, in recognizing the better-founded among modern miracle claims (normally those supported by trustworthy witnesses) as a legitimate argument in support of the plausibility of biblical miracle claims.

277. They are not limited to particular periods even in Scripture; see one thorough survey in Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 253–66. Yet it does appear that signs *as* signs flourish especially in circumstances of extending the message.

278. Already noted by Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 194–95 (citing also Theodore Christlieb). I believe that some modern cessationists would concede this point, but many noncessationists who hold the same perspective would consider the label "cessationist" a misnomer for this position.

279. E.g., Mark 4:31–32; Matt 13:33//Luke 13:21; Rom 8:22; 12:2; Gal 1:4; 1 Tim 4:1 (in context); 2 Tim 3:1 (in context); Heb 1:2; Jas 5:3; 1 Pet 1:20; 2 Pet 3:3; Jude 18; Rev 12:5–6; specifically with regard to the Spirit, Acts 2:17; Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13–14; Heb 6:4–5. For discussion of the already/not yet character of the kingdom, see, e.g., Stein, *Method and Message*, 60–79; Ladd, *Theology*, 70–80; Witherington, *End*, 51–74; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:10, 289–506; Stanton, "Message and Miracles," 57–61; Thielman, *Theology*, 176.

Conclusion

What the radical Enlightenment excluded as implausible based on the principle of analogy, much of today's world can accept on the same principle of analogy. Hundreds of millions of people worldwide claim to have experienced or witnessed what they believe are miracles. Eyewitness claims to dramatic recoveries appear in a wide variety of cultures, among Christians often successfully emulating models of healings found in the Gospels and Acts. Granted, such healings do not occur on every occasion and are fairly unpredictable in their occurrence; yet they seem to appear with special frequency in cultures and circles that welcome them. Radical Enlightenment antisupernaturalism is far from the majority view in the world and thus henceforth ought to argue rather than presuppose its case.

I have merely introduced Majority World perspectives in this chapter. In the following two chapters, I turn to a number of concrete examples.

Examples from Asia

Western theology invariably asks the question: Are miracles possible? This of course addresses the Enlightenment problem of a closed universe. In much of Asia that is a non-question because the miraculous is assumed and fairly regularly experienced. —Hwa Yung¹

From the perspective of church history, it is true that Pentecostal Christianity within Latin America, Africa and Asia resembles the primitive Christian Church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Similarities are the urban character of their congregations, exorcism, healings, . . . and so forth. —Sung-Gun Kim²

All Christian churches in China practice some form of healing, including Three-Self churches. In fact, according to some surveys, 90% of new believers cite healing as a reason for their conversion. This is especially true in the countryside where medical facilities are often inadequate or non-existent. —Edmond Tang³

In Gujarat and Maharashtra, many tangible miracles have happened such as the healing of the deaf and dumb and incurable diseases which strengthened the ministry in its initial stage.—Abraham Pothen⁴

In the previous chapter, I introduced and surveyed some Majority World perspectives. In this chapter and the next I offer some concrete examples of these perspectives. I begin with Asia in this chapter; in the next chapter, I turn more briefly to Africa (my wife's continent) and Latin America. I have devoted more space to Asia because, with nearly half the world's population, it supplies many examples, and more written sources were available to me in English from that continent.

1. Yung, *Quest*, 230; cf. 15 (rejecting antsupernaturalist elements in Western theology). Then principal of Malaysia Theological Seminary in Kuala Lumpur, he became (as noted in the previous chapter) bishop of the Methodist Church in Malaysia.

2. Kim, "Pentecostalism," 32.

3. Tang, "Healers," 481.

4. Pothen, "Missions," 189.

In the postmodern West, as in much of the world, we often reason by telling stories; and in this case, there is no shortage of stories, though some are more sincere and compelling than others. I noted in the last chapter that hundreds of millions of people claim to have witnessed miraculous healings. What I offer in these two chapters now is merely an embarrassingly small sample of what is available regarding these claims. Scholars beginning their careers in relevant disciplines could easily spend the rest of their lives collecting healing claims. I reiterate that the evidential value of the following testimonies regarding genuine supernatural activity varies, but all illustrate the point that eyewitnesses can claim healings and that the experiences behind these claims are widespread. One could undoubtedly document even larger numbers of people who are not healed, but since that observation is not a matter of controversy, at least not among the vast majority of this book's audience, it does not require much special documentation.

Although not by any means the cause of all church growth, it is widely documented that reported miraculous healings have abetted church growth in much of Asia.⁵ My reasons for mentioning church growth or conversions with respect to healings here and elsewhere in the book is to point out that those who witness or are close to those who witness such reports take them quite seriously. Often these are people reared in entirely different religious traditions, for whom changing their faith tradition is socially costly, sometimes even leading to ostracism or persecution. Nevertheless, they act as if they fully regard the cures as qualitatively or quantitatively strongly different from the sorts of recoveries to which they are accustomed.

These cures are reported also in regions not covered in my examples below; for example, many healings in the nation of Mongolia have reportedly contributed to church growth there.⁶ My focus, however, will be on areas where I have greater documentation. After treating the Philippines at some length, because I have many sources from there, I will survey examples in Southeast Asia, South Asia (especially

5. Yung, "Integrity," 173–75. De Wet, "Signs," treats Asia on 108–23, including (in addition to the samples I have noted) Malaysia (115), South Korea (115–17), and China (117–19); for the frequency of healings in Asian Christianity, see also Ma, "Encounter," 131, 132, 134–38. For sources (mostly in De Wet), see Daniel, "Signs and Wonders," 103–7; idem, "Dynamics and Strategy," 105–8; Stock, "People Movements," 288; Musk, "Strategy," 114; Thomas, "Growth," 195; Nelson, "Study," 49–51; Skivington, "Strategy," 126–27; Shinde, "Assemblies," 179 (cf. idem, "Animism," 261–62); Hminga, "Life," 254–255; Cornelius, "Growth," 16–18 (South India); Cunville, "Evangelization," 153–59; Zechariah, "Strategy," 273–76; Longkumer, "Study," 29–85; George, "Growth," 30–69; Montgomery, "Fire," 148–81; Spruth, "Mission," 433–34; more recently, see Clark, *Impartation*, 166, 172; for narratives in Indonesia (employing pseudonyms), see Knapstad, "Power," 79–92.

6. Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 62–63. (Bush, one of these authors, is a leader in global Protestantism and missiology; see, e.g., Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 194.) For example, a man very sick with congested lungs was healed fully after prayer, as X-rays revealed, and became a Christian (Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 63); cf. a raising in Seibert, *Church*, 135–36. Vincentian priest Augustine Mundackatt, from South India, reports witnessing healings of paralysis in Mongolia (McGee, *Miracles*, 201). (This Mongolia differs from Inner Mongolia, an autonomous region in China noted below.) John Koehler, a long-term friend who now works in Mongolia, notes that he is not seeing such miracles or growth now but that miracles are widely known to have occurred a few years earlier, producing explosive church growth (interview, May 22, 2009).

in India), Indonesia, South Korea, the Pacific, and then, at length, China. Afterward I will turn to a well-known example from early twentieth-century China, Shang-chieh Song (John Sung), an indigenous Chinese church leader often respected today by both the Three-Self and house churches.

Limitations of My Examples

Before proceeding, I must again note some limitations in my treatment (supplementing my comments regarding other sorts of limitations in ch. 7). Although I have tried to offer geographic diversity in this chapter and the next one, I explore four countries at greater length and with more direct interviews than most others: two in Asia, one of them currently the world's most populous country; the third a very small country in Africa; and the fourth a fairly small country in Latin America. The example of Chinese Christianity presents itself forcefully because of the size of that nation and the many published reports about the perspectives of Chinese Christians regarding healing. The other three examples are selected more randomly: I simply had opportunity to travel to the Philippines, Congo, and Cuba, but was not able at the time to travel to Brazil and Mozambique, where I had also hoped to collect information.

My explorations in this and the immediately following chapters are merely samples, given the limited range of data I have immediately available.⁷ I am not medically qualified to evaluate the claims that I have found,⁸ though in some cases medical evaluations accompanied the claims, or doctors have offered feedback on the reports available to me. Nor have I followed up all the available written reports with personal interviews, though I did conduct perhaps a hundred interviews and have personal correspondence from well over a hundred other persons. Nor for that matter have I surveyed even a notable fraction of the massive number of claims being made, including of those potentially available to me. I offer these explorations with the expectation that other scholars with fuller resources, expertise, and interest in the relevant specialized research will develop them more fully.⁹ That is, I offer concrete examples for my claim that many eyewitnesses affirm that they

7. Not to mention my limited training in this kind of research; in NT studies, for example, we do not ordinarily try to interview eyewitnesses. Unfortunately, many of the works in NT scholarship to which I have looked for further models or data, while often helpful, provided even fewer sources than I have offered here.

8. The opinion of Lilian Yeomans, a medical doctor and early twentieth-century advocate of divine healing, is relevant here. She rightly points out that some testimonies, where one cannot ascertain objectively that the person was truly sick, "are quite valueless from a scientific standpoint" (Yeomans, *Healing*, 9).

9. Because I am working outside my immediate area of historical expertise in the following chapters, for initial leads on published sources I am indebted to Christian philosopher J. P. Moreland of Talbot School of Theology of Biola University; missiologist Warren Newberry and historian Gary McGee, of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary; and, from a different approach, historian Candy Gunther Brown of Indiana University, who is publishing sociological and historical studies on healing figures and movements.

have seen miracles; only later in the book will I seek to cull some of those that I believe provide stronger evidential value for supernatural causation.

I also acknowledge regretfully that my examples do not span the full range of churches where miracles are being reported. Thus, for example, my sources for some countries are disproportionately Baptist or Methodist, for some periods disproportionately Anglican, and the like. Not least, though I have included a number of examples from the Catholic Church and some other large bodies, I have failed to represent them in a way proportionate to their size, especially with respect to some continents (Catholics may be better represented in ch. 11, regarding the West, and material specifically dedicated to Lourdes in ch. 14). I obtained even fewer accounts from the Eastern Orthodox churches. This deficiency reflects the nature of the sources I had available in my connections (often because of where I teach and the eyewitnesses therefore most available to me), and I recognize that many other stories would be available had I been able to cast the net more widely. Likewise, I regret not being able to treat more widely some particular regions that are reporting many miracles, due to my geographic and linguistic limitations (for example, much of Latin America is underrepresented, considering the number of claims offered there). In some cases I sought many more sources to redress the imbalance, but potential correspondents, busy with their own work, proved unable to facilitate my quest. Nevertheless, I am confident that the examples cited in this work should prove sufficient to illustrate the book's point.

Because the book's primary thesis is that eyewitnesses claim miracles, I seek to illustrate that point at greater length. A number of the cases below will not contribute as strongly to my secondary argument that divine causation may stand behind some miracle claims. I will extract some of the following cases more useful for that argument in a later chapter (ch. 15; one may also note ch. 12, where I gather more specific claims to have witnessed blindness healed and the dead raised). A number of stories that I recount, such as gradual recoveries that are known to occur spontaneously in other settings, do not require a specifically supernatural explanation. Some other accounts, by contrast, like the resuscitation during prayer of a person dead for two or three hours, seem less credible without one. Still others do not make full sense to me, but I recount them as they were related to me. All illustrate that eyewitnesses offer healing claims, whatever their explanation.

Despite diversity of some other elements, most of those whom I interviewed struck me as deeply sincere; some people wept as they shared from their hearts how grateful they felt that God had helped them. As for theology, most whom I queried on the point responded that they believe that God is sovereign and do not expect healing on every occasion. None stood a chance of profiting financially from their story, yet they sacrificed their time and, for many individuals particularly in one cultural setting, had to overcome some cultural barriers to talk openly with me about these matters. Whereas some healing ministries might have self-serving reasons to exaggerate, and I have only their published reports, interviews with more random eyewitnesses afforded me little impression of such motives.

The Philippines

The Philippines offer abundant miracle claims, of which I narrate a sample here. One Western researcher in the Philippines interviewed people who were prayed for to see if any of them felt better and was astonished to learn “that 83% of them actually reported that they had experienced some dramatic healing from God in their bodies.” The complaints healed in their reports “ranged from cancer to tuberculosis, ulcers, heart trouble, tonsillitis, wounds and punctures and a dislocated shoulder.”¹⁰

Dr. Julie Ma, a Korean missiologist at the Oxford Center for Mission Studies, notes that Pentecostal Christians in northern Luzon in the Philippines, where she previously worked, experience healings as in the book of Acts.¹¹ Others also note that experiencing or learning of healings has been a major cause of Pentecostal church growth in the Philippines.¹² Most converts among the Kankana-eyes in the northern Philippines, Ma reports, “have come to Christ through the experience of miraculous healing.”¹³ She points out that healings are a regular phenomenon in charismatic and Pentecostal churches and home meetings in the Philippines.¹⁴

Ma goes on to illustrate her claims with a number of more specific examples. One of these is a church elder whom she knew who had medically incurable cancer; the pastor regularly visited and prayed for him until he was healed, greatly affecting those who knew him.¹⁵ The pastor of Cathedral of Praise notes that during a church service his wife was fully healed from tuberculosis in both lungs; another member recounts that during a crusade his dying wife, who had a toxic goiter, was healed.¹⁶ A sympathetic popular writer who observed healing meetings in the Philippines reports how a doctor attending one of the meetings confirmed that one of his own deaf patients had just been healed.¹⁷ A close friend of mine from

10. De Wet, “Signs,” 119–21, citing Montgomery, “Fire,” 148, 177 (also in Devadason, “Missionary Societies,” 188–89). Even a single individual’s healing led to churches being planted, with hundreds of converts (Montgomery, “Fire,” 177). For other claims of healed tuberculosis in the Philippines, see, e.g., Domingo Pasamonte (a bishop in the Church of God World Mission, Philippines), transcription of Rose Engcoy’s March 2, 2005, interview; Angela Salazar Aragona, transcription of Rose Engcoy’s April 14, 2002, interview. Jenkins, *New Faces*, 114, cites a new convert in the Philippines who prayed for a neighbor’s dying baby. According to his source, the baby was healed, so others then asked for prayer and most were healed; by about a decade and a half later, everyone in this village had turned to the healing God.

11. Ma, “Manifestations.”

12. Maggay, “Issues,” 34, noting “at least 80% of converts” in the Foursquare movement. Evangelism is a major purpose of healing ministry in the Philippines (Suico, “Pentecostalism,” 356).

13. Ma, “Encounter,” 136; cf. also Cole, “Model,” 263.

14. Ma, “Encounter,” 135–36.

15. *Ibid.*, 135.

16. *Ibid.*, 136; cf. *idem*, *Mission*, 65–66. *Idem*, *Mission*, 66, further recounts how a young girl, bedridden, blind and often unconscious from a brain tumor, experienced progressive recovery, first being able to stand and walk, then regaining her vision.

17. Doug Wead in Stewart, *Only Believe*, 146. Don Stewart notes that he has observed many miraculous healings in his meetings and received numerous letters from those so healed (personal correspondence, Aug. 10, 2005).

college also reports to me witnessing numerous instant and obvious healings in the Philippines.¹⁸

Ma tells of events surrounding the beginning of the Christian movement among the Kankana-eyes through Elva Vanderbout, a single woman missionary in the 1940s and 1950s. (Ma's dissertation involves the history of this movement.¹⁹) Vanderbout helped the needy get medical help where possible²⁰ but also prayed for the sick. Ma notes the account of "an old man who had such a critical spinal problem that he could only crawl on his hands and knees like an animal." In 1958, the man's friends carried him to a revival meeting conducted by Vanderbout; at the close of the service, he was "instantly healed and he stood up and walked away," testifying of God's works.²¹ Among the many persons healed of deafness and muteness was a young woman deaf and mute for twelve years,²² and on another occasion "an old man who had been deaf in both ears since he was a young man was instantly healed."²³ Instant healing through prayer also came to a twenty-eight-year-old who had been deaf and mute all his life and was instantly healed.²⁴ People were healed of blindness²⁵ and tuberculosis,²⁶ and "one famous woman in the city [Baguio] was healed of a very large goiter," which shrank when people prayed and was entirely gone by the next morning.²⁷

Other sources reveal that healing claims contributed to churches' growth elsewhere in the Philippines as well. In 1951, Rev. Manuel Gonzales was very weak and appeared close to death; people prayed for hours for his restoration. He suddenly began to stir and soon jumped out of the bed, fully recovered; the funeral was canceled, word spread, and he eventually became a more prominent Christian leader.²⁸ In July 1954, a man unable to walk proved able to walk immediately after prayer; the healing of a blind man drew widespread attention in and around his barrio; and other reported healings drew many people into churches.²⁹

18. Bruce Kinabrew informed me that when he and his children prayed for people in the Philippines, they personally witnessed visible miracles like the healing of those unable to walk and the blind, and the instant disappearance of a goiter, though with absolutely no way to predict who would be healed and who would not (personal correspondence, June 24, 2008; Feb. 10, 2011).

19. Ma, "Encounter," 136–37; the dissertation is Ma, "Ministry" (the testimonies are from 89–90). She also treats Vanderbout in "Planting," 332, and (in revised form) "Church Planting," 219–20, in the context of power encounter and at length in "Vanderbout" (for power encounter, esp. 136).

20. E.g., Ma, "Vanderbout," 133. I also learned about this aspect of Elva Vanderbout's ministry from Sharon Lapisac, who was cared for by her. When Sharon was born in the mountains in Bakun Benguet in 1956, the folk tradition was that when the mother dies in childbirth, the baby should be buried with her (the less healthy of twins would also be abandoned). After lying in the coffin three days, Sharon was taken by a pastor to the orphanage in Baguio (Sharon Lapisac, interview, Jan. 31, 2009; on the orphanage, see also Ma, "Vanderbout," 132–34, 139; noting also the danger to twin boys and their rescue [134]).

21. Ma, "Encounter," 136–37; idem, *Mission*, 62–63.

22. Ma, "Vanderbout," 130 (among "deaf-mutes" healed "by the scores"); idem, *Mission*, 63–64.

23. Ma, "Encounter," 137; idem, "Vanderbout," 132; idem, *Mission*, 64.

24. Ma, "Vanderbout," 130.

25. Ibid.; idem, "Encounter," 137.

26. Ma, "Vanderbout," 130.

27. Ibid.; idem, *Mission*, 64. For a summary of many other healings, see idem, "Vanderbout," 131–32.

28. Benavidez, "Church of God," 259.

29. Lumahan, "Fact and Figures," 41. He notes that in 1954 "reports of healings" were very common (19).

One seminarian in the Philippines, Ryan Hortizuela, told me that he saw his uncle pray for a girl of about nine, who could not speak or walk. After they had prayed for a few minutes in Jesus's name, he attested, the girl suddenly jumped "up and began to talk."³⁰ Dwight Palmquist, a Western missionary and pastor in Cebu City, shared with me a number of testimonies, such as the restoration of speech and facial movement in a stroke victim immediately after prayer (which is normally unexpected),³¹ and the instant disappearance of a small but visible goiter on a woman's neck during prayer. He also prayed for a twenty-two-year-old person with epilepsy who had been suffering seizures for most of his life; six years later he learned that the man had suffered no seizures from the day that the prayer had been offered.³²

Another seminarian I interviewed, Chester Allan Tesoro from Mindanao, was visiting a pastor friend in Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat, in 2005.³³ Many miracles had been taking place there, he noted, and he saw a blind woman visibly healed and a dead baby raised (I recount these reports in greater detail in ch. 12). On another occasion elsewhere, Chester and others were inviting people in the community to send children to a vacation Bible school, when a woman asked for prayer for her son, who was about thirty. Chester readily agreed, but when he heard the son's story, he wished that he had not consented, because this case seemed to require of him exceptional faith. The son had been sick and in great pain for months; the family kept the bedridden son just outside the bathroom so they could carry him there when necessary. Chester was the associate pastor, so his pastor asked him to lead the prayer. Although he prayed, he secretly feared that the son would die, so he left as quickly as possible. The next day, however, the mother found him and insisted that he come to their home. Once he got there, she pointed to a man fixing their roof and pressed, "Do you recognize that guy?" Chester asked if this was the brother of the young man he had prayed for. The mother declared that this was her son for whom Chester had prayed the previous day. Initially unable to believe it, Chester went and checked the room where the son had been lying, as the healed man smiled at him. Now healed, the young man immediately went back to his former line of work.³⁴

Dom Bustria, a rural pastor who is now sixty-one years old, told me that he had epilepsy from 1964 until November 24, 1988, often with seizures once a week; in

30. Ryan Hortizuela, interview, Jan. 24, 2009. He also provided me a photo of the now very happy, healed girl, with corresponding caption, in an article on his uncle's ministry. The girl remained well.

31. Dr. Nicole Matthews (personal correspondence, April 1, 2009) explained to me that minor strokes typically "resolve within 24 hours," but "residual deficits beyond a few days are less likely to reverse." Any progress is normally "gradual and with intense physical activity."

32. Dwight Palmquist, personal correspondence, Feb. 2, 2009, with a Feb. 8 response to my follow-up question regarding the person with epilepsy. Dwight was the person praying for the stroke victim, who also could now open his right hand for the first time in six months. Dwight reports the healing of the goiter based on the eyewitness testimony of his coworkers.

33. Chester Allan Tesoro, interview, Jan. 30, 2009; he named the pastor for my notes, but because I did not have a way to secure the pastor's permission to use his name, I omit that here.

34. *Ibid.*; this last incident happened in Malandag, Malungon, in the province of Sarangani.

his despair he developed various addictions, particularly to alcohol. On November 24, 1988, at the naval base on Diego Garcia, he accepted Christ at a “party” that turned out to be a Christian fellowship meeting. From that day forward, he never had another epileptic attack, nor did he have any desire for his previous addictions. That has lasted more than two decades. He began sharing Christ in villages and finally left his well-paying work to become a pastor.³⁵ Medically, a long-term case of serious epilepsy usually cannot be “permanently cured, even with continuing medication.”³⁶

At age thirty-three, Len Mina was having trouble breathing and would faint if she even tried to walk to the door; she learned that she had congenital heart disease. The doctor warned that she would likely die within a year if not operated on, so her husband, Wilfred, determined to sell the house to pay for the operation. To the physician’s dismay, Len insisted that her husband not sell the house and that she would simply pray. For three months, she continued to take the four kinds of medicines prescribed for her, but her breathing was just getting worse, so she stopped the medicine and trusted God alone. She got better and has not needed medicine for the past twenty years. Witnessing her recovery, her husband became a believer; he now leads a Bible school.³⁷ They told me that they have since seen other healings in response to their ministry and prayers.³⁸

Eleanor Sebian, a pastor who works among the poor in the mountains, had numerous testimonies but shared with me only a sample. She told me of how a serious lump on a potentially dangerous part of her body disappeared immediately after a dramatic experience during prayer.³⁹ She also shared her most recent experience, less than a week before our interview. She was working with a guest evangelist who prayed for a woman with a lump on her neck roughly a couple inches in diameter. As the evangelist touched it, Eleanor witnessed the lump disappear.⁴⁰ At different times and in different locations, two people she knew were electrocuted on a high-tension wire. Eleanor and others had to find funding to help

35. Dom Bustria, interview, Jan. 29, 2009, who, like some others, wept as he recounted what God had done in his life.

36. Heron, *Channels*, 132, after recounting the healing of someone with epilepsy on 131–32 (for another long-term healing of epilepsy after fourteen years of seizures, see DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 94, 100; a long-term healing in Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 20–21; see also *ibid.*, 54–55; another in Brooks, *Moments*, 233). By contrast, May, “Healings,” 154, contends that roughly 30 percent of cases of epilepsy “will disappear after a few years” (perhaps not addressing so much long-term cases). Attributing to coincidence a disappearance on the day of conversion could seem strained, however.

37. Len Mina and Wilfred Mina, interview, Jan. 24, 2009.

38. Wilfred Mina notes that they often see healings in their rural evangelism ministry in northern Luzon, Philippines. They gave the example of a woman dying of terminal breast cancer, whose doctor had given up on her, for whom they prayed in 1995 or 1996. In 2008, they saw the woman again, who told them that she was healed when they prayed for her (Len Mina and Wilfred Mina, interview, Jan. 24, 2009).

39. Eleanor Sebian (interview, Jan. 29, 2009; personal correspondence, Feb. 8, 2009); since her sister died of cancer, this was a serious concern.

40. Eleanor Sebian, interview, Jan. 29, 2009 (this lump disappeared Jan. 24, 2009; she identified the guest evangelist as Ken Krivolavech). She also mentioned the healing of breast lumps on a woman the night before our interview (Jan. 28).

one, a boy, to get medical treatment. The other, however, was instantly healed at a church meeting. After she told me about that healing, she wanted to know if I wanted to meet that man, and I assured her that I did.⁴¹

Two days later, she introduced me to David Dominong, the man who had been electrocuted.⁴² David, a welder, showed me the ghastly scars on his arms and torso, indicating the severity of his electrocution. After his electrocution in October 2002, he had been hospitalized one month and ten days, with third- to fourth-degree burns, and the doctor told him that it might be three to five years before he would be able to walk. After he left the hospital, no longer able to afford the fees, he remained home in a wheelchair. Although he was considering amputation, his sister convinced him to attend an evangelistic crusade at a community hall; this occurred in December of the same year. At about 11 p.m., some men carried him from the car in which he had been brought and took him to the stage. After the preacher prayed for him, the preacher told him to walk. David had no assurance that this would be possible, but after walking about twenty meters with no crutch, he was astonished to realize that he could in fact now walk. The people there knew him, and they gathered around him to discern whether this experience was genuine.

The next day, various people, including some who had not been healed at the crusade, visited his home to see if he was still whole. They found him walking outside his house. He embraced the Christian faith of his wife and sister, and "from then on, I attended church every Sunday," he told me, "because I have proved that God is a miracle-working God." Relatives from distant mountains came to visit and see him, because they had already witnessed his suffering in the hospital and mourned for him; consequently, two more of his sisters were converted. He has remained whole; yet he also emphasizes the wholeness of his heart, because, he says, he now loves God and has forgiven his enemies who once exploited him.⁴³

Historical archives at Asia Pacific Research Center in Baguio, Philippines, provide abundant earlier testimonies, a few of which I mention here. One eyewitness source lists among miracle claims the instant disappearance of a goiter during prayer,⁴⁴ an experience I have also heard and read about from other sources.⁴⁵ Another notes, among various healings, three boys from one family, all of whom were deaf and mute, healed together after prayer in Bacolod City.⁴⁶ An eyewitness participant claimed the instant healing during prayer of a doctor from a cancer that was expected to kill him in two months; the doctor then joined in the crusades.⁴⁷

41. Eleanor Sebian, interview, Jan. 29, 2009.

42. David Dominong, interview, Jan. 31, 2009, with Eleanor Sebian interpreting at points, though he was also speaking to me in English much of the time.

43. Ibid.

44. Gervacio Tovera, July 6, 2001 (interviewed by Rose Engcoy).

45. E.g., Ma, *Mission*, 65–66; Stewart, *Only Believe*, 143–44, 153; Bruce Kinabrew, personal correspondence, June 24, 2008; Dwight Palmquist, personal correspondence, Feb. 2, 2009.

46. Angela Salazar Aragona, April 14, 2002 (among other healings she notes were those of some paralytics).

47. Paul Klahr, transcription, April 2006.

Doctors gave up hope for a boy and told the parents to call for a priest instead; after the minister prayed, the boy started breathing and asking for food. He went on to become an important worker in their ministry.⁴⁸ Others described public healings of deafness, such as a deaf seventeen-year-old who was then able to begin forming sounds, and a man completely deaf since World War II who now could hear everything and converse.⁴⁹ Another source describes the immediate disappearance of a growth on an older man's back; the growth, just larger than a U.S. quarter "and about one inch high," shrank and disappeared.⁵⁰

Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia also provides reports of healings. Most of the residents of a village in Thailand became Christians after a chronically ill boy was instantly healed.⁵¹ The healing of a child in Laos reportedly brought a village to believe in Yesu (Jesus), of whom one villager had heard, as a powerful "spirit" before any outsiders brought teaching about Jesus.⁵² Churches in Vietnam often have been growing through signs and healings.⁵³

Others note that healings also occur in urban churches in Singapore and Malaysia.⁵⁴ These healings have occurred, among other places and in other circles, in the Anglican Church in Singapore. Some traditional Anglicans were suspicious when the charismatic movement came to Singapore in the early 1970s, partly due to unhealthy experiences in the past.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, that movement caught on, with attendant spiritual gifts including healings.⁵⁶ In 1972, Bishop Chiu Ban It, Singapore's first indigenous Anglican bishop, experienced a dramatic encounter with God through this movement⁵⁷ and unexpectedly found himself gifted in praying for healing.⁵⁸ The Reverend Dr. Michael Green, now adviser in evangelism to the archbishops of Canterbury and York, and senior research fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, notes what he witnessed firsthand there in 1973. As the bishop prayed, Green

48. Marcelo Arangote, transcription, April 23, 2003. Cf. the healing of acute appendicitis reported in Roque Cagas, transcription, April 11, 2002.

49. Sobrepeña, "Miracles," 8, 14. I infer that deaf persons were being healed also in Aragona (April 14, 2002).

50. Guevara, "Campaign," 13 (noting that the man, crying, accepted the Lord).

51. Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 63–64. For some earlier healings in Thailand, see Hosack, "Arrival," 113.

52. Stearns, *Vision*, 87.

53. Joshua, "Pentecostalism in Vietnam," 307; earlier, Prather, *Miracles*, 203.

54. Ma, "Encounter," 137. Cf. the earlier revival among the Kelabits in Sarawak (East Malaysia) in 1873, accompanied by healings, exorcisms, and vocal spiritual gifts (idem, "Mission," 31–32).

55. Green, *Asian Tigers*, 5–6. This book is of interest not only to Anglicans; though difficult to obtain in the United States, it was brought to my attention by U.S. Presbyterian minister Jim DiRaddo, who gave me one of his copies.

56. *Ibid.*, 6. For the spread of charismatic Christianity (in both Protestant and Catholic forms) in Singapore and Malaysia, see Martin, "Expansion," 286–87.

57. Green, *Asian Tigers*, 7–8.

58. *Ibid.*, 8.

saw “physical healings of an incontrovertible nature—I think of a man throwing away his crutches, and another whose hearing was restored.”⁵⁹ The healing services became the catalyst for a new commitment to evangelism, with signs and wonders accompanying the evangelism,⁶⁰ and healings also continued as part of church life.⁶¹ Such factors eventually contributed to the young Anglican Province of South East Asia being “one of the fastest growing parts of the Anglican Communion.”⁶²

John Savarimuthu, the Indian bishop of the Anglican Church in largely Muslim West Malaysia, initially delayed a medically necessary, triple-bypass heart operation due to his heavy ministry schedule. His condition deteriorated, however, and the operation was finally scheduled. The night before the scheduled operation, he committed his condition to God and suddenly felt heat in his chest. The next day, testing confirmed that he had been healed, and after this experience many others were healed through his prayers. He even conducted a healing mission in Kuala Lumpur’s stadium, with government permission.⁶³

An Anglican convert from a non-Christian background, Soh Chye Ann faced significant opposition from his family. His sister, however, was dying, and neither hospitals nor temples proved able to help her. The family finally asked if the Christians could help; they prayed fervently, “and a miraculous, complete and instantaneous healing took place” in front of the family, who immediately became Christians. Singapore’s Anglican Church sent Chye Ann and his wife as missionaries to South Africa, where they worked successfully for ethnic and social reconciliation in Durban. He is now the Asia director for the Anglican Church Mission Society in London.⁶⁴

A researcher in Myanmar found numerous firsthand reports of miracles contributing to church growth.⁶⁵ These include reports of many sorts of healings (including cancer, tonsillitis, blindness, and deafness)⁶⁶ and miraculous protection that led to the conversion of many of the assailants.⁶⁷ (Incidentally, reports of extraordinary protection, while not the subject of this book, abound elsewhere.⁶⁸)

59. Ibid. Later, in the bishop’s house, Bishop Chiu prayed for Michael Green to receive the gift of tongues, which began to happen to Green in the middle of the night. Thus began Green’s own “charismatic experience” in that sense.

60. Ibid., 9, quoting participant observer Canon James Wong (apparently from Wong, *Singapore*).

61. Ibid., 56, 90, 104, 110.

62. Ibid., 1. Bishop Chiu sought to keep the local charismatic movement in biblical bounds and also welcomed the Lambeth Conference resolution that affirmed healing the sick (11).

63. Ibid., 97–98. Green adds his personal observations from having witnessed this bishop’s ministry firsthand, including some who received prayer testifying of having been healed somehow.

64. Ibid., 100, noting that Chye Ann is his personal friend.

65. Khai, “Pentecostalism,” 268–70. For summaries of earlier healings, see idem, *Cross*, 93–94, 136, 148; Kham, “Story,” 220; for Pentecostalism in Myanmar more generally, see Khai’s article, “Overview”; cf. also idem, “Legacy.”

66. Idem, “Pentecostalism,” 268.

67. Ibid., 269; on divine protection, see also idem, *Cross*, 143.

68. These include, e.g., Numbere, *Vision*, 83 (a car stalling when the driver tried to run over the preacher), 97 (a cocked gun refusing to fire), 111 (massive numbers of army ants burrowing beneath the evangelists’ mats, sparing their lives, while swarming on top of everything else), 225 (a boat miraculously and abruptly

One village priest near death was healed and converted;⁶⁹ one woman paralyzed for twenty years was dramatically healed.⁷⁰ One Baptist, Lang Do Khup, challenged by the village priest about the powerlessness of Christians to heal in contrast to the traditional spirits, began to pray for the gift of healing. He prayed for a lame girl, to no avail, but once home felt moved to return and pray again. As he did so, she “stood up and walked with no help.”⁷¹ Such reports do not begin in this region only in the twentieth century; in the nineteenth century, a local Karen believer reported that his apparently dying son, who was roughly fifteen but had never been able to walk, was healed and walking after prayer. He said he had confidence to pray because in a previous generation he had often seen healings when a missionary prayed.⁷²

I asked one of my Baptist students from Myanmar, Thang Sum, if he had any firsthand stories of healings from Myanmar. He briefly recounted to me his brother's recovery and subsequently provided me some additional information,⁷³ as well as facilitated my conversation with his brother, Suan Sian Tung Nung.⁷⁴ About two months after birth in Kalaymyo town, Nung began running a constant fever of 101 to 105° F; as it continued, doctors tried their best to treat him but finally reluctantly advised the mother to just entrust the child to God. Possibly the largest hospital in the capital could have helped him, but the family lacked the money to

thrusting forward to evade an oncoming vessel), 328–30 (on the road), 345–46 (fire); Ising, *Blumhardt*, 266 (among armed assailants); Anderson, *Pelendo*, 78–79 (at least two guns failing to fire when used against Pelendo); Ran, “Experiences,” 4–6 (various experiences); Eshleman, *Jesus*, 113 (a bus in Myanmar hurtling off a cliff and rolling repeatedly, sparing the ministry team from injury), 114 (robbers in Thailand), 151 (other hostility); Otis, *Giants*, 245 (an Ethiopian evangelist, ordered by guards to insert his finger into a live socket, cried out Jesus's name as he did so, and the power instantly went out throughout the district); Ten Boom, *Hiding Place*, 66–67, 110–12, 154, 191–92; idem, *Tramp*, 15–16, 19, 21; Kure, “Light,” 177, 184; Taylor, *Secret*, 142; Crandall, *Raising*, 28–29 (minefields), 42–43 (stoning); Bredesen, *Miracle*, 65–70, 75–77; Huyssen, *Saw*, 55, 100–101 (an airplane about to crash); Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 59–63 (the apparently miraculous survival of one soldier, now a psychologist and minister); Koch, *Revival*, 146 (in Indonesia, protection from soldiers); idem, *Zulus*, 263–70; Carothers, *Prison*, 63–67 (war settings); Finlay, “Miracles,” 449 (a Catholic chaplain's claim during World War I); Marszalek, *Miracles*, 12–13 (during a glass explosion), 36–38 (on the road), 239 (an accident in Kenya); Alamino, *Footsteps*, 44 (two hands seen as a car was kept from crashing); mailing, Filadelfia Bible College, India, Oct. 18, 2009; also often earlier (e.g., accounts in Goforth, *Goforth*, 140–42, 157–58, 207). Naturally, only those so protected live to report such protection, but some accounts (such as power going out through the district, even if blackouts were common there) seem extraordinary nonetheless. Particularly remarkable are contemporary accounts of Harriet Tubman, the “Moses of her people,” who led three hundred slaves to freedom during numerous nocturnal trips and also led Union reconnaissance missions in Confederate territory, without losing even one person (see, e.g., Sterling, *Sisters*, 259–60; cf. Num 31:49).

69. Khai, “Pentecostalism,” 269.

70. Ibid., 270 (Khup Dim in Suangpi village). Long-term paralysis is typically irreversible (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009).

71. Khai, “Pentecostalism,” 270.

72. Gordon, “Ministry of Healing,” 198–99.

73. Thang Sum, personal correspondence, Sept. 5 and 11, 2009, and also the written response to my inquiry through him from the Reverend Dr. Simon P. K. En, principal of the Myanmar Institute of Theology in Yangon, who provided many of the specific details here.

74. Phone interview, Sept. 9, 2009.

go there, and Nung was too weak from not eating to survive the trip. At the time, the doctors where he was lacked adequate medicines and could not even be certain what was causing the fever. Nung kept vomiting, and others also acknowledged that, barring a miracle, Nung would die. The mother refused to give up.

Funerals are family obligations in Myanmar, and the family had to travel to Tedim for the funeral of the mother's brother or it would effectively break ties with the mother's family. They could only pray; as they began climbing the mountain, Nung suddenly went from crying to laughing, and his temperature remained normal during their entire week in Tedim. This was the beginning of his unexpected recovery, and all the family members praised God for helping them. His grandfather added "Sian" to Nung's name to praise God. Nung is now about twenty-nine and has a degree in music from Samford University.

Another of my former students, John Coats, is a Christian worker in Cambodia along with his wife, Debbie, supported by Baptist and Mennonite churches. He notes that he could convey a number of miracle reports to me but chose a recent occasion that they had learned about. Villagers thought one widow in her fifties was insane; she would shake, sometimes she could not recognize her mother, and often she would lie flat on the ground. She was also deaf. Some local Christians, however, led her to faith in Christ, and as she was confessing her sins "she said it suddenly felt like something ejected from her ears, and from that moment on, she has been able to hear normally." John and Debbie did not know her before this incident, but the people in her village and nearby villages attest that she was deaf, and Debbie spoke with the woman and confirmed that she is no longer deaf. She also discovered no trace of the other symptoms.⁷⁵

South Asia

Healings have been a major factor in the growth of the Christian movement in India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

India

Indian popular culture, in contrast to modern Western academic culture, looks for supernatural help with sicknesses and spirits.⁷⁶ Thus, not surprisingly, sources often report healings also through faith in Christ in India,⁷⁷ leading to many con-

75. John Coats, personal correspondence, Oct. 23, 2009; follow-up correspondence, Oct. 24, 25. He knows some other miracle accounts more directly, but they were less dramatic than this one (Nov. 6, 2009).

76. Hiebert, "Excluded Middle," 36–39. Thus healers have risen like Sardar Birsa (Dube, "Formations," 77; Singh, "Prophet," 108), who believed himself commissioned by his people's supreme deity (Singh, "Prophet," 107) and had some influence from Christianity (114).

77. See, e.g., Yohannan, *Revolution*, 21. A significant proportion of Christians in South India, which has a larger historic church than North India, is Pentecostal (Bergunder, "Healing," 103, focusing on Tamil Nadu and estimating at least 20 percent; also idem, "Miracle Healing," 287; others praise Bergunder's research, e.g., Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, 466–67). Note also healing claims at shrines for a deceased

verts⁷⁸ and the planting of many churches.⁷⁹ Two sociologists of religion studying such phenomena observe that “in India, in particular, healing was viewed as commonplace among the Christians we interviewed.”⁸⁰ In one study conducted in 1981, a tenth of *non*-Christians in Madras “had experienced an important cure through prayer to Jesus” and more than twice that number knew about such cures.⁸¹

One of my institution’s doctoral students just over a decade ago, Pastor Suppogu Israel from the Telegu Baptist Church, noted that nearly everyone he prayed for in North India was healed. Before coming to our seminary, his church had grown from six members to about six hundred in just over a year through such healings.⁸²

Healing and exorcism offer the primary appeal of Pentecostalism there,⁸³ and statistics show that the majority of new converts to Pentecostalism in South India come in response to healings and exorcisms.⁸⁴ Reported healings usually follow a brief prayer, often simply, “In the name of Jesus, be healed!”⁸⁵ One new pastor with no members prayed for a woman with cancer, on whom doctors had apparently given up; “within a few days, when she began to recover,” people began attending his new church, which grew and became very successful.⁸⁶ Another new pastor with no members just felt impressed to lay hands on a visitor and pray; the man left, saying nothing. The man, however, had felt heat and found himself healed of a nervous breakdown that had incapacitated him for more than four years; the next day the doctor cleared the man to work, and that Sunday thirty-five people attended the church, which eventually became a prominent church in Madras.⁸⁷

Healings are by no means limited to Pentecostals, however. For example, some Presbyterian healing meetings led to hundreds of healings and thousands of conversions.⁸⁸ The Evangelical Church of India in Tamil Nadu grew from several hundred to fifteen thousand in sixteen years, the growth driven partly through firsthand

Syrian Orthodox saint (Dempsey, “Lessons,” 154–60, a pre-Christian saint) and a Roman Catholic figure (167–73), though some of these shrines are controversial with church hierarchies.

78. Bergunder, *Movement*, 163–65. Examples abound (e.g., Braun, *Way*, 249).

79. Bergunder, “Healing,” 109–11. Cf. considerations in Devadason, “Band,” 111.

80. Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 152. Churches emphasizing healing and exorcism compose “a large proportion” of South India’s Christian population (Martin, “Expansion,” 288).

81. Bergunder, *Movement*, 233. Many non-Christians come to churches only for healings and do not remain (idem, “Miracle Healing,” 298; cf. John 6:26), but the conversion of some in spite of social obstacles is significant.

82. Noted briefly earlier in Keener, *Gift*, 61; from discussion with him on Nov. 2, 1997; also some further discussion on May 6, 1998 (when I read some of his reports), and other dates.

83. Bergunder, *Movement*, 146–47; idem, “Miracle Healing,” 297. On Pentecostalism in India more generally, see Burgess, “Pentecostalism in India” (including discussion of Catholic charismatics, 94–95). Desperate people try multiple solutions for health, whatever can help (Bergunder, *Movement*, 162). Some come only for healing and, in the absence of follow-up, eventually leave (165).

84. Bergunder, *Movement*, 232–33.

85. Idem, “Healing,” 103. On prayers for healing being simple, see Bergunder, “Miracle Healing,” 292.

86. Bergunder, “Miracle Healing,” 297–98.

87. *Ibid.*, 298.

88. McGavran, “Healing,” 72–73.

experiences of healings and exorcisms.⁸⁹ Catholic charismatic healing meetings lasting a full day draw five to ten thousand people, including many non-Christians; an estimated 60 percent come with need for healing.⁹⁰

I offer just a few concrete examples of claimed healings. It is said that church growth among the Nishi tribals began when an important official's son died. Neither medicine nor sacrifices had helped the boy, but a pharmacist had suggested prayer to Jesus, the Christian God. The official laid his hand on his boy's head and promised to worship this Christian God if he would heal his son; the child's eyes opened, and he recovered, resulting in hundreds of conversions in this region.⁹¹ When the son of a woman named Lakshmi was apparently dying of hepatitis, she took him to a Christian woman, who prayed; the child was healed, and Lakshmi became a believer.⁹² (This was not the only report of cured hepatitis I encountered in Asia.⁹³) In North India, some visiting Christians prayed for a baby who was not expected to live through the night; when they checked in the morning, they noted, the baby had completely recovered.⁹⁴ A boy close to death recovered gradually over the few days following prayer.⁹⁵ After a dying woman was completely healed, the entire family decided to follow Christ.⁹⁶ Others report healings from hernia or microstenosis of the heart.⁹⁷

Many were healed in South India in the 1950s through the evangelistic healing campaigns of a Christian but formerly Hindu woman named Sesharatnam. When she came to his town, an academically trained eyewitness observed that while she was not a good speaker, her healing ministry proved highly effective. "She used to pray for the sick and demon-possessed by laying on her hands throughout the night since they came in thousands. Many were healed."⁹⁸ More recently, Thomas

89. *Ibid.*, 74–75, noting on 74 that in 1983 they expected to plant a new church every week.

90. Csordas, "Global Perspective," 334.

91. De Wet, "Signs," 110–11, following Cunville, "Evangelization," 156–57. Far from being anomalous, mass people movements have often characterized the spread of Christianity (Neill, *History of Missions*, 31, 235, 257, 364, 405, 446, 479–81; Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 365, 371; Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 87–89; Noll, *Shape*, 34–35; for examples, see, e.g., Khai, *Cross*, 130–31; Devadason, "Missionary Societies," 224–30 [esp. 228; cf. 22–23]; Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 276; among the Nagas, Philip, "Growth," 162–64; Longkumer, "Study"; among Karens, Say, "History"; for some other rapidly growing religious movements, cf., e.g., Hesselgrave, *Movements*).

92. Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 53.

93. In addition to the case of Huang in Wesley, *Stories*, 5–7. Eveline Susanto Lewis told me of a friend who was healed of hepatitis B so thoroughly that testing showed that she was not even a carrier (interview, Jan. 23, 2009); Chester Allan Tesoro in the Philippines tells of his own healing from severe hepatitis (interview, Jan. 30, 2009): over the course of months, his skin was yellow, his urine reddish, his sleep was disturbed by pain. One night he surrendered to Christ and received prayer; the next day, he went to a checkup to see if the medicine was having any effect, and the technologist could not find any trace of hepatitis in his blood. "Are you sure you had it?" she asked.

94. Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 55–56. They note the report that an Indian evangelist who was stabbed could forgo hospitalization "because Jesus healed him" (60).

95. *Ibid.*, 47–49 (though gradual, the healing was well documented by witnesses).

96. Yohannan, *Revolution*, 122.

97. Bergunder, *Movement*, 152 (on accounts from 1964 and 1968, respectively).

98. Devadason, "Missionary Societies," 189, who himself witnessed the occurrences, also noting that "demons were cast out. Even the demons who confessed that they were Hindu gods were cast out

Mathews of Kerala (now deceased) and his coworkers in the Filadelfia movement have seen significant church growth in Rajasthan in North India through healings and other signs.⁹⁹ Likewise, one worker in North India notes that many began to be converted after training and healings began to accompany the preaching.¹⁰⁰ Another minister reported to me that healings regularly occur when he and his coworkers evangelize.¹⁰¹ Other healings reportedly led to many conversions in Madras;¹⁰² in one church with sixty-five members there, nearly two-thirds claimed to have been converted through being healed.¹⁰³ Scholars today sometimes note that no ecumenical evangelistic resource has ever proliferated before on the scale of the *Jesus Film*;¹⁰⁴ in India itself, more than four hundred thousand villages have reportedly been exposed to the film in fifty-one different languages.¹⁰⁵ *Jesus Film* workers often report miracles; for example, when one mother refused to come to the showing because her daughter had been suffering on the ground for days from dysentery, the worker prayed for the daughter. The child was instantly healed, and thirty friends and relatives accompanied her to the film that night, most of them becoming believers.¹⁰⁶

Though I have not been able to confirm the long-range status of the claim, one interesting source claims the partial healing of deafness in India. It claims that Jenifer was born completely deaf, with total sensorineural hearing loss in both ears; she could not hear even at 130 dB (the maximum intensity tested); she was able to get slight hearing with a hearing aid. In 2002, however, her mother was praying daily that she would be healed at an upcoming meeting, and on the fourth day she was suddenly able to hear for the first time in her life, at the age of five. Audiograms confirm a minimum threshold of 50 to 70 decibels, which remains a moderate to severe hearing impairment but is a remarkable change from her original condition

in Jesus's name." De Wet, "Signs," 89, also notes Devadason's report. Devadason, "Missionary Societies," 190, cites another Hindu convert associated with healings, Subba Rao in Andhra, but with some concern for his theological direction.

99. E.g., Thollander, *Mathews*, 84, 87–90; cf. other signs in 3, 125, 128–30; beyond Rajasthan, see Pothen, "Missions," 189–90; testimonies of public healings in the movement's periodical *Cross and Crown*, e.g., 36 (2, July 2007): 6, 21; 37 (5, May 2008): 9; cf. 37 (1, Sept. 2007): 4, 19; a circular letter for the Filadelfia Bible Institute sent to me by Finny Philip, June 19, 2009. The revival movement grew 3,000 percent in one two-year period (Pothen, "Missions," 187); rapid growth appears elsewhere as well (note examples in Keener, "Plausibility"). I know personally Thomas Mathews's son-in-law, Finny Philip, an Indian NT scholar who affirms the veracity of Thollander's book (personal correspondence, Aug. 14, 2008).

100. Francis, "Conflict," 157 (depicting the author's ministry and offering an example on 158).

101. Vasanth Edward (e.g., during ministry in February to early March 2006; again in this period in 2007; again in April 2007, including blindness and deafness cured). I learned of him through his American in-law who is also a NT professor (Dr. Jeff Hubing). Again, my contacts represent but a tiny sampling of the claims being offered.

102. Sargunam, "Churches," 194, cited in De Wet, and in Devadason, "Missionary Societies," 189.

103. Devadason, "Missionary Societies," 189.

104. Noll, *Shape*, 86. The sponsors claim that nearly six billion have seen it (87), a figure that I presume counts some repeat viewers multiple times.

105. *Ibid.*, 87.

106. Eshleman, *Jesus*, 128–29.

of profound deafness. The night of that prayer is said to have been the first night that she had been able to hear anything without a hearing aid.¹⁰⁷

Even in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, indigenous Indian revival movements included claims of supernatural phenomena. (These movements often challenged the control of Western missionaries, who proved more skeptical of supernatural claims.¹⁰⁸) For example, traditional Christians in the West expressed amazement at the array of phenomena, such as visions and prayer for the sick, in the revival among traditional Christians in India in the 1850s.¹⁰⁹ Much of the emphasis on healings and exorcisms in India is thus indigenous, sometimes arising from reading Scripture in an Indian context in contrast to the Enlightenment perspectives of many Western missionaries.¹¹⁰

Such phenomena also resurfaced in the revival in India at the beginning of the twentieth century, associated with Pandita Ramabai, who is more often remembered for her advocacy of women's rights in India.¹¹¹ Early twentieth-century supernatural claims also surround the famous Christian mystic and evangelist Sadhu Sundar Singh, though even some of his friends, notably those from the West, thought that his deprivations sometimes blurred the distinction between his objective experiences and his trance imagination regarding them.¹¹² Among

107. Case study from WCDN website, including the audiograms and certification from the doctor (Oct. 15, 2002), her parents, and others (http://www.wcdn.org/wcdn_eng/case/case_content.asp?id=23&page=4; accessed May 6, 2009). The mother and others were praying, in addition to the visiting evangelist, who is controversial in parts of Asia. My letter to the parents requesting confirmation (May 15, 2009) has not received reply, but linguistic and other factors may be involved.

108. McGee, "Revivals in India" (esp. on 1860–ca. 1881 and 1905–7); idem, *Miracles*, 35–36; Satyavrata, "Perspectives," 205 (on 1860); Ma, "Mission," 24. Later, Sadhu Sundar Singh affirmed the value of the West sending missionaries to India—for the sake of a connection to keep alive some spiritual sense in the West, which was too materialistic (Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 157–58).

109. McGee, "Radical Strategy," 72 (noting Lang, *History*; and Dibb, "Revival"); see also McGee, "Regions Beyond," 83–84; idem, "Radical Strategy," 72 (noting also prophecies and tongues); for an indigenous Tamil Christian outpouring in 1860, see Satyavrata, "Perspectives," 205.

110. Bergunder, *Movement*, 125–26 (referring esp. to issues surrounding demons).

111. E.g., Burgess, "Pandita Ramabai," 194–95; for her association with Pentecostals, see also "Life of Ramabai" (esp. 16); Jones, "Fire," 212–14. Those at Azusa Street reported the phenomena in India (*Apostolic Faith* 1 [3, Nov. 1906]: 1, cited in Alexander, *Healing*, 79; Anderson, "Signs," 201; cf. also McGee, *People of Spirit*, 74; Bartleman, *Azusa Street*, 35; Blumhofer, "Restoration," 152). Ramabai associated with the new Pentecostal movement but never accepted tongues as a necessary sign of baptism in the Spirit (Burgess, "Evidence," 33–34; McGee, "Hermeneutics," 107–8; Hudson, "Strange Words," 67; Burgess, "Pandita Ramabai," 195; cf. briefly Frykenberg, "Introduction," 22; Hyatt, *Years*, 169–71). Many others have written on Ramabai, e.g., Arles, "Study"; idem, "Appraisal"; Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, 382–410.

112. Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 69–70; Andrews, *Singh*, 115, 128; Davey, *Robe*, 77; critics like O. Pfister were even harsher (Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 204, 227; Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 139). Variations in his accounts especially involve omissions in some, which are not troubling (Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 85–86), especially if he had some human benefactors whom he needed to keep secret for their safety's sake with respect to his escape stories. The stranger experiences seem to come toward the end, after his extended fast, when his private, spiritual experience of reality may have sometimes differed from common experience (as sometimes accompanies extreme deprivation, societal alienation, and so forth). Some of his reports about the Tibetan Maharishi seem particularly curious (Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 67–70, 93–94; Andrews, *Singh*, 121–22), although, given his apparently sincere attempts to take other witnesses there (Lynch-Watson,

secure information about him was an event in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where he prayed for a twelve-year-old, who was expected to require months for recovery, if he might recover at all; instead, the boy recovered fully within three days after the prayer.¹¹³ Concerned about the notoriety this healing generated for himself, however, Singh thereafter shied away from praying for the sick.¹¹⁴ Such reports are not limited to well-known individuals, however. Many healings were occurring in India in 1914.¹¹⁵ A publication of the London Missionary Society in the early 1920s reported that a poor woman of low caste was converted through a vision of Jesus “and soon found that she was able to heal the sick,” and she used this gift abundantly in evangelizing.¹¹⁶

I met Jacob Beera many years ago at High Mill Church of the Resurrection (Canton, Ohio), a church that helps support Jacob’s children’s homes and health ministries in India. Jacob kindly sent me reports of a few healings that had occurred in recent years.¹¹⁷ In one recent account of an earlier cure, a Christian woman introduced herself to him, noting that he had prayed for her twenty-five years earlier, when she had been a Hindu. At the time she had been suffering severe angina from a serious heart problem. To her surprise, the angina and heart problems never returned after he prayed; she had eventually become a Christian and only now had opportunity to inform him.¹¹⁸ I include more of Jacob’s

Robe, 91–92, 111, 113–15), it seems reasonably probable that he met a hermit in Tibet whom he respected spiritually (Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 90–91; Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 70). Conversely, he revealed great wisdom in challenging denominational (e.g., Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 159–60) and caste (Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 111) distinctions. In view of his unquestionable lifestyle, his integrity and deep devotion are not normally questioned today (see, e.g., Moore, “Introduction”; Andrews, *Singh*).

113. Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 107–8 (citing the eyewitness); Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 106 (cf. 102–3); Streeter and Appasamy, *Message*, 32–33 (in this source reporting that the child was dying and had been given up on by doctors). The boy, from a Christian household, was named Williams (Davey, *Robe*, 74, where the healing sounds more rapid). An eyewitness also described how a leopard submitted to Singh (Andrews, *Singh*, 125–27). Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 108, contends that healing also occurred on some other occasions (noting also a healing of insanity on 109–10).

114. Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 108–9 (regretfully); Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 108; Streeter and Appasamy, *Message*, 32–33; cf. Andrews, *Singh*, 123. One reason seems to have been the impossibly large crowds that would be drawn (Davey, *Robe*, 74), a danger he could have learned from reading the Gospels (cf., e.g., Mark 1:37, 45; 2:2; 3:7–10; 5:31; 6:31) as well as from his own context. His prayer ministry for the sick in Sri Lanka deeply impacted Christian practice there (Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 128).

115. George, “Beginnings,” 235. Early Pentecostals also claimed healings in Indian villages in this period (McGee, *Miracles*, 136).

116. “Healings in India,” citing “The Miracle Worker” in *The Chronicle* (published by LMS), which indicates that the healings were known to be genuine. She worked in connection with Baptists there. The London Missionary Society was founded in 1795, shortly after that of the English Baptists (1792; Neill, *History of Missions*, 252). A similar account in greater detail, probably about the same person, appears in “Healeth: in India,” where the *Sunday School Times* is quoted with reference to a Telegu woman named Rangamma, and citing a Mr. Stanton from the American Baptist mission. On a much larger scale of evangelism, Indian Protestants grew by an average of twelve thousand every month from 1921 to 1931, increasing their numbers by 41 percent (Shaw, *Awakening*, 73).

117. Jacob Beera, personal correspondence, Nov. 2, 2009, enclosing reports from Hope Ministries for August and November 2006.

118. “A Miracle Shared After Twenty-five Years,” *Hope Ministries Update*, Aug. 2006, 2.

accounts in chapter 12, where I discuss healing claims regarding blindness and inability to walk.

Dr. Ivan Satyavrata, leader of the Assemblies of God church and ministries (a hospital, schools, and the like) in Kolkata, holds a PhD from the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies and has been visiting professor at the Assemblies of God Seminary in the United States. When I asked if he had accounts from his church or immediate circle, he secured several (with access to more), which those who were cured provided me in their own words. These provide further samples of the range of claims involved when people speak of experiencing healings.

For example, in 1992 Nivedita Ghosh received surgery and radiation treatment for brain cancer in its final stages, destroying her salivary glands and ability to talk and eat. Nevertheless, doctors concluded that she would not survive beyond five months, nor would she ever be able to speak. When Nivedita was nearly unconscious, a Christian prayed; to the family's astonishment, Nivedita's fever broke and she was able to speak. The family got rid of their deity statues and talismans and became Christians; over the following months Nivedita became able to swallow, within six to eight months becoming normal. The neurosurgeon wanted to test her and could not even find scars where he had operated.¹¹⁹ Similarly, Lydia Singh was diagnosed with advanced uterine cancer and given at most a month to live. She recovered after concerted prayer and seven months later, when fully recovered, the astonished doctors noted that she was cancer-free, a verdict confirmed in subsequent tests.¹²⁰

In 1977 Prabhakar David's arms grew so blistered and resistant to treatment that doctors planned to amputate them. Though Prabhakar was barely conscious, that Sunday night Ajit Tiwari, a deacon at the church, prayed over him. Prabhakar awoke much better in the morning, and the following morning the pain, fever, blisters, and pus were completely gone, without leaving so much as a scar.¹²¹ Although not a healing account per se, Prabhakar also recounts the experience of his daughter Priyanka Rachael David. In 1985, when she was four, she fell from the window about one hundred feet to the road below. When they found her they rushed her to the hospital, but she kept insisting that she felt someone holding and protecting her just before the landing. To everyone's amazement, she did not even have a scratch.¹²²

Interviews with Some Indian Ministers

I spoke at length with Raju Mathew, a church leader in Maharashtra who lives sacrificially for his people and gives every evidence of sincerity; a friend of mine

119. Nivedita Ghosh, shared with me Oct. 13, 2010.

120. Lydia Singh, shared with me Oct. 13, 2010.

121. Prabhakar David, shared with me Oct. 13, 2010. Originally from Karnataka, today he directs operations for the Assembly of God Church Mission in Kolkata.

122. Prabhakar David, shared with me Oct. 13, 2010 for Priyanka. These circles do not make faith antithetical to medical treatment. Thus in 2009, a biopsy revealed that a progressive growth forcing Senthil Kumar's left eye from its position stemmed from a cancerous tumor. Senthil reports that the identified tumor was not of a kind amenable to usual chemotherapy or radiation, but after radiation treatment cancer was absent from his body (Senthil Kumar, shared with me Oct. 29, 2010).

who joined him for the interview with me has spent much time with him in India.¹²³ Pastor Mathew, who readily acknowledges that God is sovereign and that not everyone is healed, offered a sample of healings he has witnessed. Two accounts involved sicknesses of his own, twelve years apart. In the first case, he was very sick in Mumbai (formerly called Bombay) in 1988 and was finally carried to a medical school as a patient. After what he recalls were nearly seventy-five tests over many weeks, the doctors could not diagnose what was wrong with him and therefore could not treat him (except that one night he received an aspirin). Every day two or three people in his ward would die; sometimes he would hear their respirator stop at night. He was, he says, “an invalid,” unable to walk and throwing up when he would eat; he expected to die soon. When his young son came to visit him on May 6 (the son’s birthday), Pastor Mathew cried to think of dying and leaving this beloved son behind.

Soon after this, however, an evangelist visited him and prayed for him. Pastor Mathew says that he wept as he felt God’s presence, and he felt God’s power surge through his body. He found himself healed, though weak. The doctors made him remain in the hospital another week, but because they still offered no diagnoses or treatments, he finally walked home. More recently, in 2000, he was sick for a time, unable to walk, and he felt that he would die. When one Pastor Vijayan prayed for him, however, he was instantly healed; within a week he left for London.¹²⁴

He also told a story from 1989 or 1990 of their neighbor Sanda, who had been sick for fifteen years and could not walk. One night Pastor Mathew returned exhausted from church after 11 p.m., and his wife said that Sanda might die the next day. Medical doctors had been unable to help her, so she had sought traditional doctors, who also could not help, and now she appeared like “skin and bones.” Feeling fatigued, he asked his wife to invite Sanda to come; his wife replied that Sanda was not physically able to come. Finally, Sanda’s husband carried her there and placed her on Pastor Mathew’s sofa. The husband asked if they needed coconut or incense, traditional religious paraphernalia in that culture; Pastor Mathew replied no, “rebuked the evil spirit,” and told her husband to carry her home. The next morning, Sanda walked to his home and said she had slept soundly for the

123. The person I know is Matthew Lacy, who was present for the interview and also supplied a few experiences of his own when he was visiting Pastor Mathew in India. In March 2007, Matthew prayed for a boy who was hot with fever, asking the Spirit to come; though they were in a closed room with a temperature, he thought, over 100° F, they both felt a wind sweep through the room, at which point the people applauded. He touched the boy’s head, and the fever was gone. He reports from January or February 2008 a partial healing of a woman with a stroke and two failed kidneys, previously unable to sit up but after prayer able to sit up regularly. The people among whom they ministered lacked medical help, so they offered them what they could, namely, prayer (interview, Aug. 29, 2008).

124. Raju Mathew, interview, Aug. 29, 2008. That one would fall sick frequently is not surprising given the available health conditions he described to me. But he also reported the healing of a woman for whom he prayed at a church in Washington, D.C., two weeks before our conversation (noting that he received confirmation afterward). Among the stories he recounted was one told him by his parents and others, how his father, a Christian in Kerala, had been bitten by a rabid dog; his father was visibly and instantly healed but he reported that the other twenty-eight people bitten by the dog all contracted rabies and died.

first time in fifteen years; now she wanted prayer to continue the healing. Pastor Mathew was willing to pray, but only if she would first remove the many charms she was wearing. In faith, never expecting to use them again, she tore off the charms, charging that they had failed to help her all this time. She was healed; within a year she was baptized, and Pastor Mathew specified for me the church that she still attends.¹²⁵

I also spoke with Dr. Alex Abraham, a neurologist now leading a church planting ministry called Operation Agape.¹²⁶ He reported that miracles are common in India and that 80 to 85 percent of new churches in India are planted especially through healings and the like.¹²⁷ In our brief time together, he randomly offered several examples that came to his mind. Among them, one Sikh woman was in terrible pain, and the ultrasound showed that she was bleeding from severe fibroid tumors. Both the doctors and her family insisted that she have surgery, but she was terrified and, despite the pain, refused to go. As she confided the situation to her Brahmin neighbor, the neighbor disclosed that she was a believer in Jesus and offered to pray for her. After the prayer, the Sikh woman's pain left, and she returned home, announcing happily that Jesus had healed her. Thinking that she was just seeking to avoid surgery, her husband did not believe her but finally proposed that she have another ultrasound to settle the matter. She was afraid, but the ultrasound showed that these large tumors had vanished. The social price of conversion is very high, but the family was so convinced that a miracle had occurred that they all became followers of Jesus, and the son became a pastor in the same movement to which Alex belongs.

Alex also told me about Mohan Philip, now a coworker in his ministry. Mohan was a wealthy businessman but an atheist. He had a major heart attack at the age of thirty-nine, and when he was forty-seven, an angiogram showed 95 percent blockage, with three major arteries obstructed. Surgery was thus scheduled. The day before the anticipated operation, Mohan's fourteen-year-old daughter, a believer, prophesied that God had healed him and that the surgery would not happen. Although he hated to disappoint her, he did not believe her and went to the hospital in Hyderabad the next morning. After the family had waited five hours for the operation, however, the doctors apologized and postponed the operation; although this was an excellent hospital, the surgery theater had a highly unusual, severe leak.

125. Raju Mathew, interview, Aug. 29, 2008. In earlier times, too, healing could lead to faith; e.g., in Hickson, *Bridegroom*, 393, a dramatic healing led to conversion. Pastor Mathew also noted that in Kerala in 1973, his family had helped Chellamma, an orphan girl with a poor mother but no father, and she was to be married the next day. But she had become so sick with a high fever (a condition sometimes fatal there) that she could not get up, and there was no possibility of her marriage the next day. Pastor Mathew's father prayed for her; she was healed, and Pastor Mathew attended her successful wedding the next day. She remains alive today.

126. Alex Abraham, interview, Oct. 29, 2009. He was offering yet another example when our time ran out.

127. He spoke of "power encounters," including healings and confronting spirit possession; see appendix B for a discussion of the latter.

Initially upset, Mohan remembered his daughter's prophecy. His pain was gone, whereas before he could not walk even five feet without suffering angina. His sister, a physician in Boston, arranged for him to be seen at a hospital there, where the physician, examining the old angiogram, insisted on surgery. Despite the cost, however, Mohan now insisted on another angiogram, after which he had to wait for days while some top cardiologists discussed his unusual case. Nearly all the blocks in the previous angiogram had disappeared; with less than 50 percent blockage, he no longer needed surgery. Although surgery was canceled at the time, he did have a bypass operation six years later, since which time he has remained asymptomatic. But the experience so radically transformed him that he donated fifteen million rupees to church work and left his business for ministry.

Alex also told about Kuldeep Singh, who had intractable epilepsy for many years. One day his seizures were particularly severe, and he was unconscious for a few hours. Because Pastor Jarnail Singh was known for the sick being healed when he prayed for them, Kuldeep was taken to him. From the time of that prayer, Kuldeep had no more treatment and no more seizures, although he had experienced these regularly before; this was fourteen or fifteen years ago. Thoroughly convinced that he had been healed, Kuldeep became a believer in Jesus and a pastor. Knowing that Alex's specialist training was as a neurologist, I asked him what he made of this testimony. He noted that with a case of epilepsy this severe, with continual seizures, their abrupt, complete, and permanent stop thereafter is very unusual.

Sri Lanka and Nepal

What is true of India also seems to be the case elsewhere in South Asia.¹²⁸ When Christopher Daniel began praying for sick people in his country of Sri Lanka, it is reported that a disabled child walked, a blind child saw, and a deaf child heard.¹²⁹ In response to the signs, his healing campaigns eventually drew "crowds of 10 to 20 thousand people."¹³⁰ In his dissertation, Daniel cites an observer's report about his ministry on one occasion, reporting the healing of a man widely known

128. While I focus here on particular countries, others could also be included. Thus one Western writer offers his eyewitness testimony concerning another Westerner being "restored to health from the point of death" in Sialkot, Pakistan, in 1961 (Young, "Miracles in History," 117), and other reports involve healings of Pakistanis in Pakistan (a secondhand account in *ibid.*, 117–18; a report in Gardner, "Miracles," 1930; *idem*, *Healing Miracles*, 60–63). Young, "Miracles in History," 119, recounts that his son John, studying social anthropology, witnessed "miracles of healing taking place in answer to the prayers of tribal Christians" in a Hindu tribal village in Pakistan (citing his statement).

129. Daniel, "Signs and Wonders," 105 (cited in De Wet, "Signs," 114). Daniel describes his introduction to charismatic spiritual experience in Daniel, "Dynamics and Strategy," 106–7.

130. Daniel, "Signs and Wonders," 105–6 (cited in De Wet, "Signs," 114–15). When a Muslim boy in Sri Lanka who was deaf and mute was healed during prayer, the people gave glory to Isa Nabbi (the Prophet Jesus) (De Wet, "Signs," 89, following Chandy, "Discipling"). Stirrat, "Shrines," 389, notes Catholic healing shrines (but on 387 Stirrat notes the influence of Sinhalese Buddhism on Sinhalese Catholic healing forms, substituting saints for deities).

to be blind; a person mute from birth, who could now imitate sounds; and two paralyzed persons.¹³¹

In other reports from Sri Lanka, doctors concluded that Nadaraj, a Hindu man, had incurable blood cancer, and he asked Pastor D. F. Rodrigo to pray for him. After being healed, Nadaraj became a believer and an elder in the church.¹³² Declining in health, suffering during any activity, and diagnosed with a hole in his heart, a Buddhist asked Pastor Premadasa Ginigaloda to pray for healing. Subsequent tests revealed a healthy heart, to the amazement of the cardiologists.¹³³

A friend in Sri Lanka tells me of a pastor he knows who was converted from a non-Christian background through being healed. For two years, Wimalasiri's right foot suffered swelling, and doctors, medicine men, and even a chief exorcist were unable to provide relief. He therefore scoffed when one evening some Christians prayed for his foot, though he felt something strange in his foot at that moment. The next morning he awoke to discover his foot completely healed. Despite initial resistance, he became a Christian after about three more months and eventually established a church, now quite large, in an area that previously had very few Christians.¹³⁴

Observers report that healings often lead to conversions in Nepal;¹³⁵ one knowledgeable source claims that "there must be thousands who have come to the Lord through healing."¹³⁶ When in passing I asked one Nepali Christian with whom I have corresponded for a few years, Udaya Sharma, if he has witnessed any, he noted that he has. One particular example that he offered was someone suffering with a kidney problem for more than five years but healed during a prayer offered by Udaya and others on December 15, 2005. The person no longer needed dialysis, he reported that his doctors had certified that he no longer had the kidney problem, and many in the village consequently became Christians.¹³⁷ Dr. Rex Gardner reports a case in Nepal where an expatriate carpenter ruptured his spleen in an isolated area and the necessary medical treatment was unavailable; when the group prayed, however, the man rapidly began to recover, and continued to work in Nepal.¹³⁸

After many years, Nepali Hindu Mina KC had not had children, but she learned in a gospel tract about the story of Abraham and Sarah. She became a Christian

131. Daniel, "Labour," 160.

132. From Church of God testimonies sent to me by COG Director of World Mission Douglas LeRoy, personal correspondence, Nov. 9, 2009.

133. From Church of God testimonies sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, personal correspondence, Nov. 9, 2009.

134. Ajith Fernando, personal correspondence, March 8, 2009; with follow-up correspondence, March 12, 2009.

135. Stephen, "Church," 58.

136. Barclay, "Church in Nepal," 193, quoting Betty Young, archivist of United Mission to Nepal (email to Barclay, March 1, 2004).

137. Udaya Sharma, personal correspondence, March 29 and 31, 2009 (specifying the name of the person and the village; also alluding to healings of blind and deaf persons). Udaya regularly and primarily works to provide people access to medical help but refers here to direct, divine healing.

138. Gardner, "Miracles," 1931.

and had a son, and over the next few decades she began planting churches, even during civil war. She shared with me several accounts from her ministry. One young woman paralyzed from birth was healed; so was a leper, bringing the leper and his family to Christ. Persons with addictions and mental illness were restored; the simultaneous healing of three mutes brought a village to Christ.¹³⁹

Indonesia

Many people have reported on miracle claims from the revival on West Timor, in Indonesia, several decades ago.¹⁴⁰ A key element of this revival was its indigeneity and appropriateness for its Indonesian context.¹⁴¹ In its beginning, Johannes Ratuwalu, reportedly immature in his faith but responding to a vision, prayed for healings from October to December 1964, with many people being healed.¹⁴² Healings and other dramatic phenomena characterized the following revival as a whole (1965–69),¹⁴³ often with a very high percentage of those prayed for healed.¹⁴⁴

139. Mina KC (interview on my behalf by John Lathrop, provided to me on March 3, 2010).

140. E.g., De Wet, "Signs," 121–23; Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 181–84; Koch, *Revival*, passim (adding several subsequent reports from someone he knew in *Zulus*, 109–11; others also cite Koch, e.g., Young, "Miracles in History," 117). This revival was popularized in the West especially through Tari, *Wind* (healings in, e.g., 54, 99–100; *Breeze*, 89, 127); those uncomfortable with Tari for theological or other reasons will find Indonesian miracle accounts from a non-Pentecostal perspective in Koch, and the massive influx of converts is difficult to deny (Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 130–31). Tari was Reformed (*Wind*, 22, 65, 117) and a local eyewitness of and participant in the heart of the revival (*Breeze*, 6); his American wife observed that participants in the revival shared information with him as a mentor not shared with outsiders (Tari, "Preface," 10). De Wet cites also Brougham, "Training," 16–17; Yoder, "Church," 47; for its significance, see Wiyono, "Timor Revival." George Peters, working from a cessationist theological framework, played down the physical signs in the revival yet acknowledged its deep spiritual benefits (*Revival*, 86–87, cited in Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 282–83; on Peters's cessationist assumptions, see Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 287–88; on church growth during the revival, see Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 290, 291). Koch, *Gifts*, 98–99, complains that Peters, who denied Koch's claims of miracles in the revival, spent only 5 percent of the time in Indonesia that Koch did, arrived only in 1970, after the revival had mostly died down, avoided the chief places of the revival, and slanderously denied Koch's eyewitness claims without evidence. For citations of even secular sources mentioning the revival, see York, "Indigenous Missionaries," 243.

141. See York, "Indigenous Missionaries." On indigeneity and other social factors in church growth there, see, e.g., Willis, *Revival*, passim.

142. Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 278 (following, e.g., Brougham, "Work," 155; Koch, *Revival*, 122–24; cf. idem, *Gifts*, 100).

143. E.g., Wiyono, "Pentecostalism in Indonesia," 314; for an example, see Koch, *Revival*, 210. Koch, *Gifts*, 108, complains that educated Western critics, visiting the revival to explain away its genuine miracles to the simple believers who had been experiencing them, helped precipitate the revival's end.

144. While Koch does not expect healing in many parts of the world, he notes that often all those prayed for by the Indonesian teams were healed, but sometimes only 90 percent, at least initially (Koch, *Revival*, 151). He recounts the ministry of one team (Team 47) in which all fifty persons who came for prayer were healed, including three persons mute from birth (Koch, *Revival*, 146). Koch does not write from what Westerners would consider a charismatic bias; he himself views figures such as Oral Roberts extremely negatively (as mediumistic in *Bondage*, 54–55; he criticizes Billy Graham's support of Roberts in 52–54) and appears generally negative toward tongues (*Strife*). While allowing for genuine tongues

Although the numbers may be exaggerated,¹⁴⁵ some have estimated that thirty thousand healings through prayer took place in this period.¹⁴⁶ One Western researcher reported a number of blind people healed through one person's prayers in a short span of time,¹⁴⁷ the healing of the deaf,¹⁴⁸ and so forth. He notes many eyewitness accounts of water being turned to wine,¹⁴⁹ and after emphasizing that he would not have believed it himself five years earlier,¹⁵⁰ sheepishly notes that he himself witnessed its occurrence while there.¹⁵¹ One Western missionary couple trained to believe that miracles do not happen today witnessed so many genuine occurrences that they admitted that they had to rethink their theology.¹⁵²

Similar phenomena occurred in a revival among Indonesian Christians in the 1860s.¹⁵³ The Nias revival of 1916 to 1922 also experienced supernatural phenomena, including miracles, revelations, and the like.¹⁵⁴ The Nias church thus grew from five hundred to one hundred thirty-five thousand in forty years (i.e., 270 times over),¹⁵⁵ with claims of miracle workers, prophets and prophetesses, tongues, visions, and dreams. One cautious writer notes, "There were stories of healings and resuscitations of people who [were] supposed to have died. People supposedly walked on water."¹⁵⁶ Stories of early miraculous protection also appear; thus adversaries of Ludwig Nommensen in Sumatra found poison ineffective in harming him.¹⁵⁷

(e.g., *Gifts*, 35–36) and not being cessationist (39, 116), his approach is mostly negative (40–53; also 121–22, critiquing female involvement).

145. Cf. some Indonesian church leaders' concerns about exaggeration (while affirming the many genuine occurrences) in Crawford, *Miracles*, 135.

146. Koch, *Revival*, 265, contrasting what he claimed was a single instance of tongues (a gift with which Koch is much less comfortable; for his anticharismatic position, see the summary and sources in Collins, *Exorcism*, 126, 129); Koch, *Zulus*, 88; Tari, *Wind*, 86. It is doubtful that tongues was as rare as Koch thinks (Tari, *Wind*, 123–24, viewed it as pervasive in his circles), but his claim does underline the indigeneity of the revival among the Presbyterians and others and the lack of direct influence on them from Pentecostals, whom he considered extreme.

147. Koch, *Revival*, 140–41 (cited in De Wet, "Signs," 121–23).

148. Koch, *Revival*, 138 (cited in Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 288).

149. Koch, *Revival*, 147 (noting the entire church's testimony), 208–17.

150. *Ibid.*, 211–12 (inviting readers at the time to travel to witness the events for themselves).

151. *Ibid.*, 212–17 (again, cited by De Wet); on a popular level, see Tari, *Wind*, 78–84; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 79–80.

152. Wagner, "World," 87, 90 (regarding David and Eva Brougham).

153. McGee, "Radical Strategy," 73 (citing Johannes Warneck and Theodore Christlieb); *idem*, *Miracles*, 50. On various Pentecostal-like revivals in Indonesia independent of Western Pentecostals, see Ma, "Mission," 25.

154. Wiyono, "Pentecostalism in Indonesia," 313. Orr, *Awakenings*, 118, notes that Indonesian evangelicals tripled already between 1905 and 1915; in Orr, "Call," 423–24, he notes other factors in church growth in parts of Indonesia in the 1930s and 1960s.

155. Dermawan, "Study," 262 (on to three hundred thousand by 1985, after forty-five more years).

156. *Ibid.*, 256 (citing Peters, *Indonesian Revival*, 48, who sounds skeptical on the last point).

157. McGee, "Regions Beyond," 70; *idem*, *Miracles*, 50 (citing Warneck, *Christ*, 175–82; Lehmann, *Study*, 105–40); Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 196–97 (citing Mark 16:18). For more recent Indonesian Christian claims of protection from poison, see Tari, *Wind*, 42–43.

Although these reports involve a variety of church movements (especially Reformed Christians) and are by no means limited to Pentecostals, researchers report that experiences of healings, dreams, and so forth are a major factor currently driving Pentecostalism's growth in Indonesia.¹⁵⁸ The author of one study points out that Pentecostals have prayed for the sick since they entered Indonesia in 1921¹⁵⁹ and offers some contemporary examples of supernatural claims there.¹⁶⁰ In one city where authorities tried to shut down the Christian meetings, "the nominal Muslims who had seen the miracles petitioned to have the meetings continued," which they temporarily were.¹⁶¹ Missionaries entering Bali from ca. 1919 or shortly thereafter immediately invited the sick; among the healings reported was a complete healing of a leper once he was anointed with oil.¹⁶² When a Balinese prince dreamed that a white foreigner could heal this prince's severely ill daughter, he invited a missionary to do so; the girl was immediately healed when the missionary prayed.¹⁶³ Miraculous healings appeared in Surabaya¹⁶⁴ and elsewhere.¹⁶⁵

This signs-and-wonders approach to evangelism is common in Indonesian Pentecostalism, and signs are common in conversions to Christianity there more generally; it is said that "a majority of testimonies in Indonesia" that involve conversion from a non-Christian background also "involve some kind of miracle (i.e., healing, deliverance, dream, etc.)"¹⁶⁶ The author of another study on converts to Christianity in Indonesia noted that of his twenty-seven interviews, miracles or supernatural experiences factored in the conversion process of twenty-two of them.¹⁶⁷ Some were converted through visions or recurring dreams.¹⁶⁸ One Indonesian found no spiritual power for answered prayer in traditional religious options, but, finding it in a somewhat eccentric charismatic church, converted to Christianity.¹⁶⁹ After the showing of the *Jesus Film* in the village of Pamongan

158. Robinson, "Growth," 340–41; Williams, "Answer," 114–16; cf. Wiyono, "Pentecostalism in Indonesia," 319.

159. Filson, "Study," 134.

160. *Ibid.*, 150–51, 154.

161. *Ibid.*, 154.

162. Anonymous, "History in Indonesia," 136–37. Boehr, *Medicine*, 56, recounts the widespread response to the healing of a leper in India; cf. also healing of leprosy in Ten Boom, *Tramp*, 125–26; Mina KC (interview by John Lathrop, provided to me on March 3, 2010); Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 50–53 (two cases); Koch, *Zulus*, 71–72; Marszalek, *Miracles*, 3.

163. Anonymous, "History in Indonesia," 137.

164. *Ibid.*, 138.

165. *Ibid.*, 139.

166. *Ibid.*, 147.

167. Knapstad, "Power," 78, noting that most of those with these experiences in his sample were in Pentecostal and charismatic churches.

168. *Ibid.*, 82, 83, 87–88.

169. *Ibid.*, 79–81. That church grew from zero to seventy thousand in ten years (*ibid.*, 139, citing Robinson, "Power," 58); Knapstad tries to explain the eccentricities (Knapstad, "Power," 141–42) in terms of contextualization (143–45; others might argue that God works on behalf of Christ's honor despite human error). Wiyono, "Pentecostalism in Indonesia," 318, remarks on this movement's growth, and on 319 includes its emphasis on miracles as a contributing factor.

in central Java, some became Christians at great risk to themselves, and miracles, including healings, have followed believers' prayers and often led to conversions.¹⁷⁰

Eddy Swieson, member of a Chinese family in Indonesia, was present when his grandmother, after three days in a coma and deemed hopeless by a doctor, lay dying. Though her husband was devout in his religion and angry with Christians, he allowed a pastor to pray for her. As the family watched, she opened her eyes, asked for a glass of milk, and talked about a figure in white who had appeared to her. She recovered quickly, and her husband became a committed Christian.¹⁷¹

Eveline Susanto Lewis, raised in a nonmonotheistic family in Indonesia, also shared with me her experience of conversion through healing. She was injured in a road accident as a fourteen-year-old girl some thirty years ago but did not know that she might have internal as well as external injuries. Two nights later she woke up vomiting blood, which she kept doing at roughly five-minute intervals. It was the weekend, and no hospital was available at the time. Her brother was a Christian and prayed for her in a separate room while she also prayed to Jesus; finally he felt that the prayer had been answered and returned to her room, where she had stopped coughing up blood. She never coughed it up again; when she went to the hospital later the doctor said that her experience sounded like it could have been caused by injury to an internal organ. Nevertheless, he found nothing wrong with her, including in the X-rays. She was convinced that Jesus healed her, and she became a committed Christian.¹⁷²

South Korea

Emphasis on divine healing pervades mainline Korean Protestantism, which, in keeping with indigenous Korean culture and in competition with shamans and Buddhist monks, rejected the cessationism of the earlier Western missionaries.¹⁷³

170. Eshleman, *Jesus*, 120–21 (see also picture 29 between 124–25).

171. Swieson, *Angels*, 41–43. Eddy's father also was converted on his apparent deathbed, recovering quickly and living ten more years after Dr. Timothy Dzao, a minister from Hong Kong, prayed for him (65–66).

172. Eveline Susanto Lewis, interview, Jan. 23, 2009.

173. See Kim, "Healing," esp. 268; see also Kim, "Pentecostalism," 32 (on 27–31, noting some affinities between Pentecostalism and earlier Korean shamanism but recognizing on 30 that not all agree); Cox, "Miracles," 90–91; Mullins, "Empire," 91–94; Mullin, *History*, 273; Grayson, "Elements," 53 (comparing healing and shamanism), 54–55 (comparing a Buddhist mountain god granting material blessings); Noll, *Shape*, 64–65 (following O, "Volks Glaube," esp. 201, 212). Many features associated with shamanism may reflect merely contextualization (Yung, *Quest*, 209; Kim, "Healing," 281–82; more generally, Brown, "Introduction," 10–11), are too general to suggest borrowing (Kim, "Healing," 279–81; for differences, see also Kim, "Spirit," 92) as opposed to at most appeal, or apply only to extreme sects (Lee, *Movement*, 112–14). Some deployed the comparison with shamanism as a polemical charge even against Kim Ik-tu (Kim, "Healing," 282). Knapstad, "Power," 143, rightly argues that most features compared with shamanism also appear in Scripture and/or are Pentecostal practices not limited to Korea, which could suggest that a "shaman" critique would be ethnocentric (cf. also Lee, *Movement*, 113); Gifford, "Provenance," 63, notes that some supposedly Korean shamanistic features in some circles derive instead from U.S. prosperity teaching. But whereas some shamanic comparisons (such as calling through a vision, Cho, "Healing," 110, 113; all-night prayer meetings [cf. Luke 6:12] and

Thus, healings and other gifts characterized the ministry of Methodist evangelist Yong Do Lee in 1928.¹⁷⁴ After visits to a local temple did not help her, Gui-Im Park was healed following concerted prayer by her younger, Pentecostal sisters, and her long-term, painful abdominal lump vanished.¹⁷⁵ After this experience she became a prominent Pentecostal church planter (1948–62).¹⁷⁶

This emphasis is indigenously Korean and is more than a century old. It emerged among Korean Presbyterians, despite the views of most of the Western Presbyterian missionaries of that era,¹⁷⁷ and even converted a number of the missionaries to their position.¹⁷⁸ Kil Sun Ju, a leader in the Korean revival of 1907 and later a martyr during foreign occupation, challenged the Western missionaries' belief that miracles had ceased. He felt his views confirmed when Presbyterian preacher Ik Doo Kim (Kim Ik-tu) ministered among villages with healing and other signs.¹⁷⁹ Ik Doo Kim was Korean Protestantism's most popular preacher, and some have claimed as many as ten thousand reported healed during his ministry.¹⁸⁰ Cures reported included the healing of "blindness, paralysis, and hemophilia," with the mute speaking and paralyzed walking in his meetings.¹⁸¹ The commission designed to evaluate the miracle claims astonished the missionaries by confirming that genuine miracles had occurred.¹⁸² In 1923, therefore, "the Korean Presbyterian Church officially abandoned the doctrine" that miracles had ceased, widely held at the time among North American Presbyterians.¹⁸³

It is thus not surprising that emphasis on healing facilitates evangelism in many Korean churches today, and not just those associated with Pentecostalism.¹⁸⁴ In one

desire for prosperity or healing, 128) are too general to demonstrate genetic connections, the sometimes extreme demonology (ibid., 123–24) and the practice of *anchal-kido* (in which "beating the afflicted part of the body" accompanies prayer, 127, 131–32, 136) probably do reveal such influence.

174. McGee, "Regions Beyond," 88. See also Choi, *Rise* (e.g., 100) on the Korean Holiness Church.

175. Kim, "Prominent Woman," 204–5 (esp. 205).

176. Ibid., 208–14.

177. Kim, "Healing," 268, noting that the missionaries, while cessationist, encouraged indigenous leadership.

178. Despite detractors, some of the missionaries, respecting the Korean church, did affirm or even begin to participate in the practice (Kim, "Healing," 268–69). Most missionaries, even when trained to doubt the existence of spirits, came to believe in them through their experience in Korea (270–71). Believers included "Horace G. Underwood, the first official Presbyterian missionary to Korea," who prayed and fasted for three days beside a dying person; the person recovered, bringing the family to Christ (271–72). Korean believers nearly always led the prayers for healing, but on occasion missionaries (such as Annie Baird) participated (272).

179. Shaw, *Awakening*, 44–45. Some question Kil's eschatology (see Kim, "Apocalypse").

180. Kim, "Healing," 273 (though recognizing the figure's source as potentially exaggerated). Kim Ik-tu ministered even in the Korean diaspora of Russia and Manchuria (ibid.).

181. Ibid., 274.

182. Shaw, *Awakening*, 45; cf. further Lee, *Movement*, 41–47, 111, 113, 134. On the influential Korean revival of 1907, which influenced multiple denominations and eventually added nearly three hundred thousand converts, see Lee, "Korean Pentecost"; idem, "Movement," 510–11; Yi, *Movement*; Lee, "Church Growth," 50–56; Anderson, "Signs," 201 (citing Lee, "Distinctives"; Lee, "Development"); Shaw, *Awakening*, 32–53.

183. Kim, "Healing," 274; cf. also McGee, *Miracles*, 184, 300n86.

184. See Kim, "Influence" (here, e.g., 30–31); Kang, "Resources," 279. Kim's research involved various urban Korean churches (Kim, "Influence," 21).

study of healings, 562 of the 604 Christian respondents claimed to have experienced healings, all with positive spiritual and church benefits.¹⁸⁵ The study's author includes a small number of case studies (based on respondents' claims), in which a girl dying from kidney trouble was healed;¹⁸⁶ a woman dying of liver disease was healed after ten minutes of prayer;¹⁸⁷ and another woman was healed of tuberculosis.¹⁸⁸

Prayer for needy neighbors, often with reports of miraculous answers, constitutes a primary means of church growth in the world's largest church, an Assemblies of God congregation in Seoul, South Korea.¹⁸⁹ Perspectives on this ministry vary somewhat even among Asian Pentecostals,¹⁹⁰ but it is the interest in healing that concerns us here. The noted theologian Jürgen Moltmann, in a theological conference at this church, voiced his critical appreciation for the pastor, David Yonggi Cho (Paul Cho Yong-gi), and this pastor's theological reflection.¹⁹¹ In his autobiography, Moltmann notes that he was suffering again from asthma when he visited Pastor Cho; Cho "took my hand and prayed; and when I flew home, the asthma was in abeyance and remained so for some weeks. I do not want to make a miraculous healing out of this, but it was certainly unusual."¹⁹² One book from South Korea lists numerous healings following prayer and (usually) fasting: diabetes;¹⁹³ tuberculosis;¹⁹⁴ paralysis;¹⁹⁵ a boy dying from severe kidney failure, now healed;¹⁹⁶ a continuously bleeding head injury, healed after three days of

185. Kwon, "Foundations," 187. Because three thousand surveys were sent and those not experiencing healing may have been less likely to respond, the actual proportion is very likely lower than 93 percent; but the numbers are still noteworthy by Western standards. Wagner, "Genesis," 39–41, reports the healing or at least the reduction of glaucoma in a Korean doctoral student.

186. Kwon, "Foundations," 227–28 (on M. K. Yoon).

187. Ibid., 229–30 (on J. H. Song, noting that the healing converted twenty-three of her relatives).

188. Ibid., 231–32 (J. J. Kim).

189. Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 21–22 (on Yoido Full Gospel Church); for the claim of healings through fasting, see, e.g., Park, "Spirituality," 51, 59. The church is well known for its size, which was estimated at more than seven hundred thousand members by the year 2000 (Synan, "Revivals," 331; Noll, "Evangelical," 19) and is larger than the attendance in many significant U.S. denominations as a whole (Noll, *Shape*, 20); for academic studies of this church from several Asian Christian perspectives (but none antagonistic), see, e.g., the articles in *AJPS* 7 (1, Jan. 2004); Lee, *Movement*, 92–117; more extensively, Ma, Menzies, and Bae, *Cho*.

190. See again, Ma, Menzies, and Bae, *Cho*; critical appreciation in Yung, *Quest*, 205–13.

191. Moltmann, "Blessing," passim (esp. 147–49). Pytches, *Come*, 103–4, recounts the instant healing of a woman in a wheelchair, initially to Pastor Cho's surprise.

192. Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 351 (Moltmann probably employing more Western definitions of what counts as miraculous). I first learned of this incident from Mark Shaw, *Awakening*, 47; personal correspondence, July 23, 2010. On a smaller and perhaps less sympathetic scale, exuberant Brazilian Pentecostals assaulted the cold of a non-Pentecostal researcher, who nevertheless appreciated "the therapeutic value" of their spiritual attention (Chesnut, "Exorcising," 173). Cho himself reports that he experienced healing from tuberculosis after a vision (McGee, *Miracles*, 219).

193. Choi, *Korean Miracles*, 24–25, 97–99. The author and David Yonggi Cho began a tent church together (Kim, "Foreword").

194. Choi, *Korean Miracles*, 47–48.

195. Ibid., 83; also full healing of a partially paralyzed arm and leg (paralyzed for five months) after ten days of fasting (99).

196. Ibid., 83–86.

prayer (with the wound disappearing);¹⁹⁷ and so forth. One woman sold all her property trying to get medical help for painful mouth sores but was completely cured after just several days of fasting.¹⁹⁸

One young Korean woman, Kumsook Cho, shared with me the healing of a fellow student she had known for three years; this student from her class had been partly deaf from childhood, wore a hearing aid, and was expected by the doctor never to improve. When a minister known for ministry in healing was preaching, this student found herself healed and never again needed the hearing aid.¹⁹⁹ During the same meetings, the minister said that God wished to demonstrate something and that he was restoring someone's teeth. The youth pastor had seen a dentist regularly for his problematic teeth, though the expense was difficult; now he suddenly found and showed gold fillings in five or six of them, a situation known to my informant and others in the church.²⁰⁰ (Accounts of supernaturally filled teeth have made me uncomfortable, but that may be partly because I have a good dentist.)

Another seminarian, Jun Kim, told me of his injury in 2004 when he fell from roughly the equivalent of the roof of a two-story building.²⁰¹ His face was paralyzed from a head injury; he could not open one eye or control his facial movement but decided against surgery for his head injury. Another patient in the same hospital room had the same symptoms, which the surgery had failed to alleviate, and was shocked that Jun Kim would refuse the surgery. Jun prayed and committed himself to the Lord, whether God would heal him or not; the next morning, he was able to begin to move his face. Seeing the changed condition of Jun Kim's face, the doctor remarked that this was amazing; he could go home and just keep exercising his face, which is now fully well. Jun Kim's hospital roommate was astonished that Jun Kim left the hospital before he did. Not all of the above recoveries are incapable of being explained on natural grounds, but some of them would be very difficult to explain in that way; the point for now is that eyewitnesses can claim direct experiences of healing, as in the Gospels and Acts.

The Pacific

In one report from the Solomon Islands, a father and mother moved by watching Jesus raise a girl from the dead in the *Jesus Film* prayed for their dying five-year-old daughter. Although the doctors had said that her condition was terminal, she

197. Ibid., 96.

198. Ibid., 103–4.

199. Kumsook Cho, interview, Jan. 24, 2009. Partial improvement of hearing in South Korea appears in the case cited in *JWCDN* 1 (1, 2009): 24–26 (from a 112-dB threshold to a 78-dB threshold in the left ear, and a shift from 120 to 92 dB in the right), though this could be medically explicable if the hearing loss was recent (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, May 28, 2009), and one should allow for a small margin of error in the audiograms.

200. Kumsook Cho, interview, Jan. 24, 2009.

201. Jun Kim, interview, Jan. 24, 2009.

awoke completely well in the morning. The doctors could not medically explain her healing.²⁰² Among healings reported during an earlier revival in the Solomon Islands that began in 1970 was a dying man “in the final stages of tuberculosis,” who, after his instant healing, returned to his work.²⁰³

Healing of the sick constituted a contributing factor for the growth of the Assemblies of God in Samoa.²⁰⁴ I received some more direct testimonies from Fiji, some of illnesses that are known to recover at times naturally, and others of illnesses that are not. Two seminarians from Fiji shared with me some encounters that they attributed to divine healing. One night after Flint Hicks finished preaching in Fiji, he invited people forward who needed prayer. Nevertheless, he was surprised when one young woman, about age sixteen, began yelling, along with Flint’s colleagues who had prayed for her. She had been deaf in both ears, but now she could suddenly hear.²⁰⁵

On another occasion, a desperate woman requested prayer. Her kidneys were failing, and her eyes and skin were discolored; the doctors had sent her home, saying that they could not help her. Flint and a Christian woman prayed for her, and his colleague told the woman, “The Lord has healed you.” The woman went to the doctor and discovered that her condition was worse, so she challenged Flint about his friend’s prophecy. He felt sure in his heart that God was going to do this miracle, however, and encouraged her accordingly. Two weeks later, her eyes and skin were normal, and her next checkup showed fully functional kidneys. She became one of the first members of the new Hindi-speaking church that he started on February 8, 1998. She stayed well and married a younger man.²⁰⁶

Flint’s daughter, hospitalized with meningitis, was expected to die or become barely functional; praying and fasting, Flint felt confidence that God would heal her. When the family took her home, the doctor cautioned that she would not eat well or move her body; yet she immediately began eating, and she is now strong at age five, with no ill effects. The specialists are amazed, Flint says, that it is the same child.²⁰⁷

Josiah Mataika from Fiji noted that when his aunt gave birth, the baby was blind and expected to live only a few days; his grandmother, a pastor, led the family to

202. Eshleman, *Jesus*, 105–6.

203. Koch, *Gifts*, 22 (noting healings generally), 23 (for this testimony). Koch notes that the healing is well attested and that the clinic had discharged the man as incurable.

204. See Pagaialii, “Assemblies,” 40–41, 45 (I am grateful to William Alcabedos, of the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary library, for helping me with this reference). On the appeal of Pentecostalism and spiritual gifts to youth in the Pacific, cf. also Davidson, “Pacific,” 147, 150.

205. Flint Hicks, interview, Jan. 29, 2009.

206. *Ibid.* Like many others, Flint emphasized that he does not expect the same thing to happen in every case; he is simply recounting that this was how he felt God led them in this case. He also shared with me the testimony of a woman dying from AIDS (whose weight dropped from 92 to 39 kg after her diagnosis in Sept. 2004); after being bedridden for eighteen months, she found a man she had seen in a vision and asked him to pray. From that time forward she has remained healthy (as of Nov. 14, 2008, when the written testimony he shared with me is dated). Flint said that he had heard that tests now showed no HIV, and the testimony is well known around Fiji. Unfortunately, the recovery date was within the past two years, and I currently lack means to verify the account independently.

207. Flint Hicks, interview, Jan. 29, 2009. People often survive meningitis, but babies are at greater risk (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009).

pray and fast in hopes that God might intervene. The child's eyes were healed, and she is now in third grade.²⁰⁸ Josiah also told me of a time when he asked a family that he was visiting for the church if they needed prayer for anything. When they brought out a baby with something like scabies on its face, he was nervous but decided to anoint it; lacking oil, he used Fiji water. The next week when they visited, he discovered that the baby was completely well, and the family, attributing the results to his prayers, asked him to pray over all their Fiji water. He had to explain that the healing had nothing to do with the water.²⁰⁹

Donna Arukua from Papua New Guinea also shared with me her testimony. In November 1997, she became very ill; her typhoid fever was apparently not properly diagnosed until it was almost too late, when friends took her to the emergency room of the nearest mission hospital. The hospital gave her medicines, but because no one could stay with her at the hospital, she was sent back to the Bible school. Between the medicines and the typhoid, she says, she could barely hear or think and could not move her hands or legs. As soon as a prophet named Kindiwa prayed for her, however, she could hear and begin to think clearly, and movement started to return. After her full recovery she joined the prophet in healing ministry, where, she told me, she witnessed many healings.²¹⁰

On a Tuesday evening in April 2007, Matthew Dawson, a Youth With a Mission leader from New Zealand, was hospitalized in Australia, delirious and with excruciating pain; eight hours later, doctors confirmed that he had meningitis.²¹¹ After Matthew had been in the emergency room for nearly forty-eight hours, the doctor ordered him moved to a different room, warning that it might be weeks or even months before he would be well enough to leave. As he was being moved, however, on Thursday evening at 6:15 p.m., his body suddenly felt warm. Although doses of morphine over the past forty-two hours had not significantly alleviated his pain, the pain now instantly vanished. He felt well, and within minutes, he fell asleep; when he awoke at 1 p.m. the next day, he insisted that he was fine. Tests then revealed that there was nothing wrong with him physically. The doctor who examined him was shocked but confirmed that he was well and released him that afternoon. Soon after this experience, he called his father and learned that "the moment of my healing was exactly at the end of a meeting that my father had called together to pray for my healing."²¹²

208. Josiah Mataika, interview, Jan. 29, 2009.

209. *Ibid.*

210. One recent example that she gave me was that on Dec. 26, 2008, she prayed for a very sick non-Christian man with a heart problem in a hospital in Jakarta, Indonesia; he was discharged on Dec. 28 (Donna Arukua, interview, Jan. 23, 2009).

211. Culturally, most of New Zealand and Australia could also be in my chapter on the West; I have counted New Zealand in the Pacific islands, however, for geographic reasons. Australia and New Zealand, like South Africa and some other locations, are among the distinctive parts of the world able to lay claim to more than one category.

212. Matthew Dawson, personal correspondence, March 29; April 3 and 4, 2009. Matthew's father, John Dawson, mentioned in his testimony, is president of YWAM and founder of the International Reconciliation Commission and originally brought this case to my attention (correspondence, May 18, 2007).

Healings and China

I focus here at greater length on a particular Asian country because much has been written about healing claims there and because the nation by itself, like India, accounts for a significant proportion of the world's population. Marvelous anomalies that Western observers would call paranormal or miraculous have been part of Chinese culture since antiquity,²¹³ so Christian claims of supernatural events there are much more consistent with the traditional culture there than with Western antisupernaturalism.²¹⁴ Of course, biblical narratives themselves could challenge Western assumptions. A formerly cessationist Presbyterian missionary in the nineteenth century reported that as Chinese Christians read the NT for themselves, they began implementing biblical teachings on healings, changing his own views in the process.²¹⁵

Many observers note the emphasis on and many testimonies of healing and exorcism in the Chinese church, and examples of such claims could be multiplied.²¹⁶ Although more overt in the house churches, this emphasis also appears in Three-Self churches.²¹⁷ A researcher working exclusively with the official Protestant

213. McClenon, *Events*, 155–60; for concerns with health and spirits in traditional Daoism, see Oblau, “Healing,” 315–16. For skepticism in medieval China, see 160–63. Some might suggest that opposition to supernatural claims in some parts of Chinese society reflects not indigenous Chinese tradition, which had supernatural elements, but some Western Enlightenment ideas, whether mediated through traditional Western versions of Marxism or through some Western missionaries.

214. An important difference from many traditional practitioners there is that Christians do not charge fees (Oblau, “Healing,” 316; also elsewhere, e.g., Espinosa, “Healing in Borderlands,” 132).

215. Cited in Gordon, “Ministry of Healing,” 197–98.

216. E.g., Oblau, “Christianity in China,” 421; idem, “Healing”; Jenkins, *New Faces*, 114; Menzies, “Sending,” 100; Wesley, *Church*, 42 (for testimonies in China Gospel Fellowship), 53 (house churches in general); Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 87 (noting one claimed “eyewitness to many miraculous healings”), 101, 104; Feaver, “Delegation,” 34 (“Wherever we go, signs and wonders follow our sisters and brothers”); also popular-level books, e.g., summaries of many claimed healings in Yun, *Heavenly Man*, 49, 71, 75, 105, 138, 193, with specific examples in 32 (hemophilia), 50 (after a vision), 139, 193, 208, 247, 259, 300–301 (other miracle claims in 15, 25–26, 189; a non-healing on 137; for one positive evaluation of this work, see Ross, “Review”; for earlier stories about this man, see Danyun, *Lilies*, 23–88); earlier, Jones, *Wonders*, 61–63, 71, 97, 101, 127, 135, 136–37, 137, 138–39 (on 137 also noting mountain women going out in pairs to preach and heal the sick; note, e.g., 99, conversion after healing from being bedridden twelve years, though the details are not specified; 107, the story of the dying girl healed in front of gathered people and a goiter healed; 118, the healing of a man nearly dead); Osborn, *Christ*, 94. Tang, “Healers,” 481, notes that corporate prayer for the sick (and less often, gifted leaders laying hands on the sick) are central and a part of the church's witness.

217. Tang, “Healers,” 481. Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism*, 151–52, note that the government expects Three-Self pastors to downplay healing; while they may pray for it, they normally do not openly claim success (cf. Yamamori and Chan, *Witnesses*, xx). Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 140, agrees that Three-Self pastors pray for the sick, along with counseling and other traditional pastoral duties. Oblau, “Healing,” 321, observes that official church pastors working among the people engage the topic of divine healing but that theologians and officials more often avoid it, despite its contextual relevance. I have included whatever healing reports that have come to me, not pretending competence regarding church distinctions in China, which is outside my cultural and academic expertise; I cite more reports from house-church circles because more are readily available, but most accounts from either group of churches are not available for me to verify or falsify directly. Yao, “Dynamics,” 27, warns against exaggerating belief

churches noted that claims of supernatural healings characterized all the churches she studied.²¹⁸ In China, praying with the sick involves among other things an element of social support, in that no one suffers in isolation.²¹⁹ Any Christians, not simply some specially gifted ones designated for that purpose, will visit them and take their illness seriously enough to pray regularly with them until they recover.²²⁰

Earlier reports from some members of the official China Christian Council suggested that roughly “half of the new conversions of the last twenty years have been caused by faith healing experiences” of the convert or someone close to them.²²¹ Speaking more broadly of Christians in China in general, one researcher cites less conservative estimates; “according to some surveys, 90% of new believers cite healing as a reason for their conversion.”²²² Whatever the exact figures, the experience is clearly widespread. Such testimonies are so common that it is said that even a number of government officials recognize that many people become Christians in response to claims of prayers resulting in healings.²²³ A well-known Western reporter notes that healings have propelled the growth of many churches.²²⁴ He contends that “it is difficult to investigate the phenomenon of Christianity in

differences between the TSPM (Three-Self) and house-church movements (and on 31–32 criticizes Aikman’s overpolitical reading of the house churches).

218. Währisch-Oblau, “Healthy,” 87. Oblau, “Healing,” 308, notes that Christianity appealed to intellectuals for its social utility (fitting a Confucian perspective), but that healing was its primary grassroots appeal; on 308, 311, he notes that it pervades both recognized and unofficial Protestantism, mainline as well as more explicitly charismatic. In a public statement of their position, the Chinese house churches reject cessationism, affirming continuing miracles (Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 300) and claiming that freedom to practice healing and exorcism is one reason that they currently remain independent (304).

219. On no one suffering in isolation, see Währisch-Oblau, “Healthy,” 88; Oblau, “Healing,” 314.

220. On all Christians participating rather than designated healers, such as exist in Korea and the Philippines, see Währisch-Oblau, “Healthy,” 88–90; for lay visitation and its wholesome impact, see also Oblau, “Healing,” 312, 314, 325.

221. Währisch-Oblau, “Healthy,” 92–93. On healing functioning as a means of compassionate evangelism, in the absence of the ability to help with medical treatments, see 92–95. Reports also exist from earlier twentieth-century China, e.g., the concise Lutheran report, perhaps muted for Western sensitivities (as missions reports often are): “Mr. Tao, who was healed from sickness through prayer and became a believer a year ago” (Bly, “Glimpses,” 10).

222. Tang, “Healers,” 481, noting that “this is especially true in the countryside,” where medical treatment is less available. Oblau, “Healing,” 313, cites the figure of at least half but adds, “According to many local Chinese Christians and my own random observations, this figure may be as high as 80–90 percent”; cf. also Brown, “Introduction,” 14. As one factor in growth, see Yamamori and Chan, *Witnesses*, xv; as “one of the most significant factors” in growth, see Wagner, “Genesis,” 47, citing David Wang, director of Asian Outreach in Hong Kong; as “the single most important factor,” see Oblau, “Healing,” 325. For other strategies for church growth there, see Lim, “Challenges,” 197–202. One academic informant in my circle of friends told me of a close friend who does healing ministry in various provinces, with the paralyzed walking, the deaf hearing, and cancer being cured (anonymous informant, interview, Jan. 30, 2009).

223. Lambert, *Millions*, 112, 117. On 112–13, he adds, “The phenomenon is so widespread, that even allowing for exaggeration and syncretism,” it is clear that many extraordinary recoveries are occurring. His earlier work for Hodder & Stoughton also notes that many were converted through healings and exorcisms (*Resurrection*, 89, 114); he observed that Chinese Christians do not doubt healings or miracles (287). Lambert was a diplomat in China when Mao died and did significant research on the church there (1–9; *Resurrection* revises his 1990 thesis for Oxford Polytechnic).

224. E.g., Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 85, 273–74.

China today without hearing stories of miraculous healings,” pointing out that the tellers are often those who were healed.²²⁵

Examples

In one report the recovery of a boy nearly dead from drowning, after more than twenty-four hours of prayer, led to the spread of Christianity in an area.²²⁶ In 1989, Zhao Guifang, nearly bedridden, was healed of a chronic illness (diagnosed as inoperable uterine cancer and appendicitis) during a vision; as a result, Christianity spread and a church grew to five hundred.²²⁷ A university administrator who was close to death from her sickness was healed after some Christian friends prayed for her, and she became a committed follower of Christ.²²⁸ One observer notes that a close friend of his, whom he calls Mr. Huang, had an advanced case of hepatitis, swelling his body; he was yellow and near death, and “the doctors offered little or no hope of his survival.” As it turned out, he recovered within a few weeks after prayer, to the doctors’ surprise, though four others had entered the hospital “with similar symptoms” after he did, and all had died.²²⁹

In the 1980s, David Wang, Chinese director of Asian Outreach, recounted a report he heard in 1981 from a woman doctor exiled to Inner Mongolia because of her testimony. Because the local official’s wife was miraculously healed in answer to the doctor’s prayer (as well as converted), the official allowed the Christians considerable freedom, and the doctor’s congregation had grown to twelve hundred. Many continued to be healed and delivered from harmful spirits there.²³⁰ Stanley Mooneyham, who was president of World Vision International from 1969 to 1982, also recounted a report from a girl he interviewed, who informed him that 80 percent of her village had been converted in response to a miraculous healing.²³¹

A foreign interviewer reports various accounts in China. One interviewee claims, “In 1992 . . . I could hardly walk, and I was in terrible pain. . . . My younger brother is a Christian. He just prayed for me once, and the leg didn’t hurt any more. . . . Soon afterwards, I could get up and walk again.”²³² Christians have such a reputation for healing that non-Christians, particularly in the countryside, “often seek

225. *Ibid.*, 76, noting that the healings seem to have flourished especially in the 1970s and early 1980s, “during and just after the Cultural Revolution.” Claims of healings and visions appear elsewhere in the work (e.g., 83).

226. Oblau, “Christianity in China,” 414; *idem*, “Healing,” 324.

227. Zhao ming, “Chinese Denominations,” 450–51 (also specifying the locality).

228. Wesley, *Stories*, 37, recounting the testimony as the healed woman (“Sister Yang”) told it to him; “Wesley” (a pen name) is a scholar whose integrity I and others who know him trust.

229. *Ibid.*, 5–7.

230. Wagner, “World,” 82–84.

231. *Ibid.*, 85–86. Mooneyham has also pastored Baptist and Presbyterian churches, worked as a special assistant to Billy Graham, and was in 1964 the interim executive director of the National Association of Evangelicals. Earlier, J. Herbert Kane also noted that hundreds of believers associated with China Inland Mission in Anhui were converted through healings and other answers to prayer (Kane, *Growth*, 106, cited in McGee, *Miracles*, 190, 302).

232. Währisch-Oblau, “Healthy,” 89.

out Christians” to pray for them when they cannot afford medical help or when medical help has proved inefficacious for them.²³³ Thus, in one taped interview, an atheist whose daughter had heart disease became a believer and invited Christians to pray. “After ten days,” he said, “she could leave the hospital because she was much better.”²³⁴ Another taped interview involves a woman who could not be helped by doctors, who claims that she thus decided to become a Christian and was healed.²³⁵ The interviewer notes that many traveling evangelists report healing experiences, and she has heard these reports from those approved by the government church.²³⁶

One Western researcher on Chinese Christianity recounts a number of stories.²³⁷ In Taixing, in October 1989, doctors discovered that Zhao Su’e, age twenty-one, had serious cancer, and they estimated that she had six months to live, with only a 1 percent chance of long-term survival. A Christian prayed for her, and over the next few months she recovered and was found to be completely healthy; as a result, the church in Taixing grew from a handful of believers to five or six thousand by 1994.²³⁸ Chen Guifang was “bed-ridden for eight years,” fed through a tube because she was “unable to eat”; the day after her conversion, she asked for food for the first time in years, and “after a month she recovered completely,” leading to the starting of a new church.²³⁹

Likewise, the researcher claims that Chen Heying “had throat cancer for three years and no doctor dared operate on her”; after having been healed, she now sings daily.²⁴⁰ In 1985, Liu Qinglin prayed for a man who had not recovered from tuberculosis in the hospital. Within a few weeks, the man recovered, as did his relative. Others then sought prayer, and many people in the region became believers, mainly through being healed. By 1989, there were close to three thousand baptized Christians in the region, but Liu Qinglin was arrested, and rumors circulated that he may have died in prison.²⁴¹

One could survey many works reporting claims (some of them noted in previous endnotes); I add here just one more example, a work originating in Hong Kong in 1991. The book contains numerous healing claims;²⁴² while I lack direct means

233. Ibid., 93.

234. Ibid.; cited also in Oblau, “Healing,” 314.

235. Währisch-Oblau, “Healthy,” 93; cited also in Oblau, “Healing,” 314.

236. Währisch-Oblau, “Healthy,” 94. She provides other testimonies of healings from her taped interviews on 97.

237. Lambert, *Millions*, writes from an expressly Christian perspective, though he seems very quick to dissociate his reports from Pentecostalism and charismatics.

238. Ibid., 113–14 (citing *Bridge*, August 1994, and noting that she remains active in the church).

239. Lambert, *Millions*, 114–15. He also notes that one healing of broken bones (over the course of three weeks) led many to Christ (115–16).

240. Ibid., 114.

241. Ibid., 117–18.

242. See, e.g., Danyun, *Lilies*, 90, 132–33, 217 (apparently incurable before the healing), 322 (summaries about many), 326–27 (terminal liver cancer, healed during prayer, including the immediate departure of pain), 328, 329 (summary), 330 (tuberculosis; another bedfast woman; blindness), 332 (summary), 345 (leukemia, deafness, and others), 350–51 (multiple healings during baptism). In another, after a doctor

to verify them, the accounts illustrate the frequency of belief in divine healing. In one report, a nearly dead prisoner was discarded among bodies, all of them victims of plague. In his unconscious state, he saw a vision of an angel and awoke healed; the report says that his recovery so stunned the doctor that the latter was converted.²⁴³ In another, a non-Christian woman so far gone that a doctor ordered her taken to where cadavers were kept regained consciousness enough to cry out to Jesus, of whom she knew only a little. Soon she recovered fully, with her healing influencing surrounding villages.²⁴⁴ Learning her testimony, a forsaken old man suffering for years from bleeding, open sores asked the woman, now apparently a new Christian, to pray for him. He was completely healed within two days, and others began to ask Jesus to heal them.²⁴⁵ According to this source, X-rays showed another man's two broken ribs, but without obtaining medical treatment he went to another district to recuperate; two days later, after prayer, a new X-ray showed that the ribs were no longer broken or showed signs of a break.²⁴⁶ A village chief who made life difficult for Christians entreated them for prayer when his son became very sick and the doctor could not help; he was converted and his son healed.²⁴⁷ The healing of a person with a medically hopeless brain tumor brought many conversions.²⁴⁸

Answering More Skeptical Perspectives

Some of the healing reports above involve conditions that can remit naturally; others are more dramatic. Some people, however, would question any reports that cannot be explained in terms of natural phenomena. Two China researchers who work from the premise that supernatural healings do not occur²⁴⁹ complain about superstitious healing claims rife in rural districts.²⁵⁰ They do note that healing

had given up on a dying child and departed, "a young believer" prayed and the child was healed, ultimately contributing to the conversion of much of the village (298). A man who had suffered for seventeen years was suddenly healed as he heard preaching (322). I reserve some claims for ch. 12.

243. *Ibid.*, 11–12 (on Miao Zizhong).

244. *Ibid.*, 304.

245. *Ibid.*, 305.

246. *Ibid.*, 325–26.

247. *Ibid.*, 331.

248. *Ibid.*, 347–48.

249. Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism*, 146–48, are clear about this premise, noting (148) that one should not accept as authentic claims of spiritual healing because "there is no verifiable evidence of physiological illness cured by these means" (which seems to me to risk assuming what one hopes to prove). Chan's position may be less severe than Hunter's or may have changed in the face of further evidence; Yamamori and Chan, *Witnesses*, 42–48, seems appreciative of healing testimonies.

250. Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism*, 150, noting that such views are still more pervasive in rural areas, where traditional spiritual healing practices are likewise rife. They emphasize (152–53) that charismatic activity fits the traditional religious culture of China (on the emphasis on healing there, cf. Barnes, "History," 100). In fact, it fits most traditional cultures, which are not shaped by the radical Enlightenment. Christianity competes successfully in the countryside because it delivers healings also sought by folk religion there (Yamamori and Chan, *Witnesses*, 42). Yet even Lambert, *Millions*, 111–12, dismisses the value of many miracle claims from the countryside as syncretistic folk religion (though apparently accepting others,

claims are abundant²⁵¹ and that they heard several healing claims in a house church in Shanghai.²⁵² But they emphasize that the nephew of one of their informants noted that the women there “loved repeating such stories, which according to him were just gossip, always unverifiable.”²⁵³ Working from an antisupernaturalist framework, the authors do not count as gossip itself the nephew’s testimony that he regards his aunt’s stories as gossip, and they seem to use this verdict to discredit all healing testimonies.

Yet however one chooses to explain them, many stories from China cannot be simply gossip; they derive from persons directly affected by them. A young man recounted that as a boy, he was given up by the doctor for dead, but when his father desperately cried out to God and dedicated the boy to his service, the boy quickly recovered.²⁵⁴ A Three-Self pastor reported that he found in his church believers praying over a girl that the local doctor had just pronounced dead; the desperate mother had brought her to the church. The girl recovered.²⁵⁵ (For more reports of raisings from China, see ch. 12.) When an imprisoned believer prayed for a prostitute in the prison, the latter was healed and quickly accepted Christ.²⁵⁶

A farmer with a tumor on his leg solicited for prayer a retired physics professor ordained in the state-approved church movement. Doctors had said that only an operation could remove the tumor, yet this operation would cost more than a year’s wages for the farmer. Despite the former scientist’s skepticism about divine healing, he prayed for the man with sincere compassion; a few weeks later, when he visited the farmer’s village again, the man ran up to him and showed him that the tumor was almost gone.²⁵⁷

Indeed, the coauthor of the above-mentioned skeptical study served as coauthor for another book published seven years later, less critical of miracle reports.

117; on *chi gong* in traditional China, see Turner, *Healers*, 34–36); Oblau, “Healing,” 318, notes this attitude among urban intellectuals, but also that some of them have healing testimonies. While I have no reason to doubt that many cases could represent syncretism, some examples might represent instead contextualization, just as Joseph and Daniel became dream interpreters especially in Gentile settings (Gen 40:12–22; 41:9–32; Dan 2:16–45). For the complexity of the relationship between rural Christianity and Daoism, see Oblau, “Healing,” 316. Whereas many urbanites are converted through intellectual inquiry, more are converted in rural areas through healings (Leung, “Conversion,” 106), but perhaps 80 percent of Christians live in rural areas (*ibid.*, 105).

251. Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism*, 145–52. They cite with skepticism the letter of an elderly house church leader in Henan that when he laid hands on a man with a large tumor, it disappeared (155).

252. *Ibid.*, 150. With what might appear scarcely concealed class and modernist assumptions, they complain (151) that many elderly people in Shanghai who seek healing at temples or churches “are illiterate or semi-illiterate and still strongly influenced by traditional beliefs,” grasping “any opportunity to comfort themselves, even if in illusion.”

253. *Ibid.*, 150.

254. Wesley, *Stories*, 84–85, reporting the young man’s own testimony.

255. Lambert, *Millions*, 109, who interviewed the pastor directly, as well as noting where the story was later published in Hong Kong. Following TSPM expectations, the pastor did not allow the mother to testify publicly at the church. Note also the account in Oblau, “Healing,” 319.

256. Wesley, *Stories*, 133; *idem*, *Church*, 47, reporting the formerly imprisoned believer’s testimony.

257. Oblau, “Healing,” 318.

The authors note that most Chinese rural Christians “can provide testimonies of healing and other miracles.”²⁵⁸ This book recounts numerous healing testimonies from a single Chinese village in southern Fujian Province,²⁵⁹ suggesting that such samples could be multiplied hundreds or thousands of times over. While non-supernatural explanations are sufficient to explain some of these claims, they are clearly not gossip, but reflect people’s understanding of their positive experiences.

In the 1980s, Wu Shining fell sick and eventually became unable to get out of bed. After she repented of her materialistic pursuits, she found herself healed and began evangelizing the area effectively.²⁶⁰ She tells of one family where an accident had made the father unable to walk and a stomach sickness lasting seven years had rendered the son virtually unable to eat, medical interventions proving ineffective.²⁶¹ Shortly after conversion, the father could walk again; within a year after the believers prayed for them, the boy had regained full health.²⁶² After observing these recoveries, she recounted, many neighbors in the village became Christians and received healings. Zhen Qingfei, unable “to walk for several years,” received healing a few weeks after his conversion.²⁶³ Wei Dongbei was paralyzed in his legs but after conversion could walk using a crutch.²⁶⁴ As Heng Xin’s oxen were dying from poison, he urgently called a Christian to pray, and the oxen were immediately healed.²⁶⁵ Wu Shining explains that she could give many more testimonies even from this village but stops with such samples because she could neither write them all out nor would the reader expend time to read them all.²⁶⁶

The book recounts other healing claims from interviews as well. One elderly pastor of a fifteen-hundred-member church noted how in 1961 she prayed on

258. Yamamori and Chan, *Witnesses*, 42.

259. *Ibid.*, 43.

260. *Ibid.*

261. *Ibid.*, 44.

262. *Ibid.*, 45.

263. *Ibid.*, 46.

264. *Ibid.*

265. *Ibid.* For poor rural farmers, healings of animals are significant. For example, on Jan. 27, 2009, I heard in the Philippines of the healing of a pig; for the apparent raising from death of a poor family’s goat in the early twentieth-century United States, see Stewart, *Only Believe*, 154; cf. healing of a dog in Godwin, *Strategy*, 14; healing (the stopping of bleeding and instant healing of a wound) of a donkey (transporting the minister) in Colombia (Ronald Ballenger, among reports sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, Nov. 9, 2009); the instant healing of a mule that had been dying, which then got up and went out to eat (Jones, *Wonders*, 120); the healing of a mule in Duffin, *Miracles*, 18; the healing of Wesley’s horse (and Wesley himself simultaneously; Telford, *Wesley*, 196); a horse in Bede (Young, “Miracles in History,” 114, on Bede H.E.G.A. 3.9); a special case in Llewellyn, “Events,” 256–57; for what it is worth (if anything), when I had been a Christian less than one year and was doing personal evangelism, an apparently dead butterfly in a hearer’s hand instantly revived when I prayed for it in response to my hearer’s challenge; also animals in the heterodox ministry of A. H. Dallimore (Guy, “Miracles,” 458). Healing of animals appears in traditional Appalachian faith healing reports (Wigginton, *Foxfire Book*, 347, 352, 364, 368). One secondhand report even claims that someone with the gift stopped bleeding in freshly killed beef (Wigginton, *Foxfire Book*, 349), although this report seems too difficult to explain in terms of biblical paradigms (i.e., it seems to exhibit human power rather than alleviate a need).

266. Yamamori and Chan, *Witnesses*, 48.

numerous occasions for a bedridden woman, who finally “began to get up and walk.”²⁶⁷ She does not pray for people’s healing now; she prays for their spiritual condition, and many of them are healed after she prays.²⁶⁸ Another elderly pastor in Shangdong Province recounted that when she was a girl, she was facing amputation of her ulcerated left leg. Desperate, she knelt and asked Jesus for mercy, whereupon she was healed fully.²⁶⁹ Another elderly woman had a vision on her deathbed that she would be granted another year of life; she recovered and then died a year later.²⁷⁰ Chen Shaoying was a new believer. When several people she prayed for in the Qingyuan Prefecture in 1991 were healed, “word spread that Chen’s God was a powerful deity able to perform miracles,” and Christianity spread in the region, with Madam Chen as one of the leaders.²⁷¹

Visiting Some Chinese Pastors

In 2007, while briefly visiting one location in Asia before lecturing elsewhere, I had an unplanned opportunity to ask questions from a number of Chinese pastors I met there. Although I was given to understand that these pastors were not “charismatics” or Pentecostals,²⁷² when I spontaneously asked if any of them had firsthand accounts of healings, I had time to write down only a sample of the accounts that they had available.²⁷³ One account, independently reported to me

267. *Ibid.*, 10.

268. *Ibid.*, 11 (cf. also 12).

269. *Ibid.*, 37.

270. *Ibid.*, 59–60. Such reports are not unheard of elsewhere; one article tells the story of a minister in North Wales who had been apparently dying when one prayed for fifteen more years for his life (alluding to Isa 38:1–9); the preacher died, as he expected, at the end of the fifteen years (“Fifteen Years,” on Thomas Charles). A similar case, praying with the same allusion, involves English Baptist Benjamin Keach, who survived from 1689 to 1704 (Crosby, *History*, 4:307–9, referred to me by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary professor Lloyd Harsch). Cf. also H. C. Morrison in Kinghorn, *Story*, 98.

271. *Ibid.*, 70.

272. I do not know the affiliations of the pastors I met, apart from being told they were not charismatic, but apparently most Chinese “noncharismatics” emphasize healing no less than “charismatics” do (see Wesley, *Church*, 47–48, on the noncharismatic Word of Life Church; healings associated with that movement are also noted in Xin, “Dynamics,” 177). Most of the Chinese church is charismatic by Western standards (see Oblau, “Healing,” 311); Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 81–82, contends that the majority of house churches became “charismatic” theologically from the late 1980s. Part of the apparent discrepancy in estimates of charismatics may depend on the definition of “charismatic,” since most allow but do not require glossolalia (see the statement of the house churches on 300, though it is, perhaps diplomatically, capable of different interpretations), but the proportion is significant (273–74).

273. For reasons of safety and especially discretion, and out of respect for both government policies (still sometimes ambiguous on a local level at the time of writing) and these pastors, I record no names, as I promised them. Some more published researchers have likewise omitted specific cases “due to political considerations” (McClenon, *Events*, 80, though such precautions may be less important today). In most of these cases, I include here only a short account of the stories, which they recounted at greater length and with the utmost sincerity. Regarding sincerity, for example, when I asked one informant about the spiritual source to which she would attribute some inexplicable phenomena she had seen and reported, she frankly admitted that she did not know, though she offered her best guess. Most but not all the informants were university educated. Theologically, the two I asked emphatically rejected having any “gifts” of healings; several emphasized that God is sovereign over whether healings occur and that God performs them for God’s glory.

by two individuals present,²⁷⁴ involved a prominent atheist family. The elderly mother was diagnosed in three hospitals as having inoperable, terminal, and rapidly spreading brain stem cancer; walking soon became impossible in this state. Within a month after prayer, however, the tumor had shrunk from two centimeters to the size of a grain of rice, and she soon began walking and carrying on normally, to the astonishment of her physicians. The entire family are now believers, and the elderly mother has testified widely of her recovery.

Another pastor reported a non-Christian family carrying a half-paralyzed, non-Christian member to a church for prayer in 1980 in Shandong Province. They prayed for her, and instantly she got up to walk, spurring rapid church growth. It was reported that an estimated hundred mutes began speaking in the church over the next decade, as the church grew to roughly two thousand.²⁷⁵ In another case, a fifty-eight-year-old woman in a village in 1995 was dying of an incurable disease; she had not eaten or drunk for three days. Because her younger brother was a Christian, Christians gathered to pray, and the whole village came to watch. The villagers promised to believe if she was healed. The believers prayed for half an hour; she started to drink, and the next day she had fully recovered. Most of the village became Christians.²⁷⁶

An elderly woman pastor, with a year of medical training, lamented to me her small faith in seeing only seven or eight dramatic healings, plus many less dramatic ones, over the years.²⁷⁷ When I asked her if she had ever witnessed healings of eyes or ears, she immediately told me the story of a non-Christian elderly woman about ten years earlier, who had not been able to open one of her eyes for twenty-seven or maybe twenty-eight years due to a nerve problem. As soon as this pastor laid hands on her, the eye opened. The healed woman immediately became a Christian and remains one today.

This belief in God's sovereignty in healings may not be universal in China (Währisch-Oblau, "Healthy," 94–95), but even the narrator in Danyun, *Lilies*, 94–95 (despite having narrated some highly unusual claims on 91–93), acknowledges that God does not always choose to heal and did not in this case (again through a different narrator in *ibid.*, 218; God's sovereignty in Oblau, "Healing," 311). In these accounts where God did not heal, doctors had already given up, but believers were nevertheless held responsible for the deaths (in Danyun, *Lilies*, 94–95, 218–22). After Mao's death, healing remained illegal if one were prevented from seeking medical treatment (Lambert, *Resurrection*, 69), an approach found in some cults (134). Not distinguishing cults from others, many non-Christians viewed all healing and exorcism as superstitious (60).

274. One from the healed woman's city, another a relative of the woman, from a distant city. They supplied different but compatible details, despite the spontaneity of my request and lack of any time for them to coordinate accounts. I deliberately leave some unnecessary details ambiguous; I should also add that neither myself, my volunteer translator on the occasion, nor most of my informants were using or knew precise medical terminology.

275. My informant had not seen all these cures himself but was familiar with some of them, otherwise depending on reports from the church.

276. My brother tells me of an oral report of a village conversion through an older woman's healing in China, given to him by the woman's granddaughter studying in the United States, who was not herself a Christian. Given the size of China, and the timing involved in his report (probably earlier than 1995), these are undoubtedly distinct occasions.

277. She did note that people in her church are regularly healed of high blood pressure and heart problems (she was not counting these among the dramatic ones), but she insists that she lays hands on people only when she gets special inspiration to do so. She disclaimed having any "gifts of healings."

Another woman from a particular urban area told me of her classmate, who after eight or ten years of marriage remained childless. The doctor discovered that the classmate had two uteruses, one with a defective tube to the ovaries, and the other apparently without a tube. Although doctors repaired the defective tube for the first uterus, no pregnancy resulted. My informant prayed for her persistently, and her classmate did become pregnant—in the apparently unconnected uterus! My informant said that because this uterus was also unconnected to the normal birth canal, the surprised doctor had to remove the baby surgically, but the daughter is healthy.²⁷⁸ The same informant told me about the mother of another classmate of hers with a heart problem that would be too expensive to treat medically. About six months before our conversation, they prayed together with the mother, who quickly recovered. About one week after the prayer, the doctor was astonished during another test to discover that the mother was in fact healed.²⁷⁹

Because in many local areas persons lacked adequate medical care, in some localities, an observer reports, “Faith healing has . . . replaced medical care.”²⁸⁰ Although many believers’ theology sometimes unfortunately appears to make inadequate room for those who are not healed,²⁸¹ in practical implementation the Christians seem to provide intensified social support.²⁸² The healings occur especially among the poor, who trust God, the observer notes, when the system cannot help them.²⁸³ Against a traditionally fatalistic culture, the new hope motivates them not to resign themselves to fate.²⁸⁴

One Example in 1930s China

Experiences of healings and miracles not only spur growth in the Chinese Christian movement today; they did so also in indigenous Chinese churches in the early twentieth century.²⁸⁵ Although examples of healing claims from various

278. My informant supplied various other details about the woman, her long-term and intimate friend; it is difficult for me to communicate in writing the utmost sincerity with which she shared. She was eager for me to get this story out to the world, because she believed that it would help challenge skepticism that God could do miracles, including in cases like the virgin birth (though no one claims that the healed woman was a virgin). She was disappointed that her friend, once granted the miracle, did not publicize it much for God’s glory.

279. When I asked various questions of detail, the answers to which my informant did not know, she pulled out her cell phone and called her classmate, who supplied her far more details than we needed.

280. Währisch-Oblau, “Healthy,” 94. She compares African immigrants in Germany who had little access to adequate health care and limited trust in Western medicine (95).

281. See the example in *ibid.*, 94–95, who nevertheless notes the tremendous support and esteem the paraplegic received relative to others in her situation outside the church; also noted in Oblau, “Healing,” 323. The problem of insensitivity to the disabled is not unique to China (see discussion in Black, “Preaching”; *idem*, *Homiletic*), and some renewal theologians are now addressing disabilities in helpful ways (see Yong, “Disability”).

282. Währisch-Oblau, “Healthy,” 94 (cf. also remarks on social support on 89).

283. *Ibid.*, 97.

284. *Ibid.*

285. Zhaoming, “Chinese Denominations,” 440; cf. also the Shandong (Shantung) revival of the 1930s (Oblau, “Healing,” 309; Bays, “Revival,” 173; McGee, *Miracles*, 191); cf. comments in Stanley, “Christianity,” 78. An antimissionary, indigenous Pentecostalism emerged already by 1919 (Bays, “Revival,”

parts of the world could be multiplied, I have chosen to focus here on a particular historic example. The following example depends on what is widely agreed to be the personal diary of the evangelist who was the eyewitness to most of the claims it offers.²⁸⁶ At the very least it reflects an openness to the early Christian evangelism paradigm in a manner foreign to traditional modern Western approaches. In the 1930s, Dr. Shang-chieh Song, or Dr. John Sung, from Fujian Province in southeast China, engaged in the sort of apostolic evangelism portrayed in Acts.²⁸⁷ He was not Pentecostal (and sometimes faced opposition from Pentecostals for not insisting on speaking in tongues),²⁸⁸ nor was he influenced by Western models; some Western missionaries in fact opposed him,²⁸⁹ and he opposed Chinese dependence on them.²⁹⁰

169–70, 173–74; Shaw, *Awakening*, 186). For a specific example of an earlier healing account, one Rev. Zhang Zhentang of Yulin had tuberculosis in the 1920s; after the doctors declared his case hopeless, he prayed for three months and was healed (Lambert, *Millions*, 112). A young man was healed from tuberculosis and lived to 101 (Fant, *Miracles*, 116, from Dr. Thomas Moseley); the same source reports another young man who was dying of tuberculosis (“a young Confucian scholar named Keo Loh Tien”), who recovered well enough to continue preaching Christ to age sixty-five, despite his infirmity (*ibid.*, 115–16). Miao Zizhong was healed of a fatal disease, incurable by the hospital, when he turned to Christ in 1948 (Danyun, *Lilies*, 8–9). In the early twentieth century, a Holiness missionary who spent more than four decades in China reported that many people in China became believers after witnessing successful exorcisms (McGee, “Strategy in Mission,” 91); Dr. Henry Frost also recounted healings there (Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 86–87).

286. Many of these stem from the day in question, although other parts of the diary, especially the summary of his earlier years, may be later summaries of earlier events. Other sources from this period also report John Sung’s activity.

287. Sung is one of the better-known, early Asian revivalists associated with healings. See, e.g., Solomon, “Healing,” 362; also Yung, “Power,” 81 (naming also from India Sadhu Sundar Singh and Baht Singh; from China Pastor Hsi; and from Indonesia Petrus Octavianus); Young, “Miracles in History,” 116; Koch, *Revival*, 43–64 (on healings, 59); cf. Osborn, *Christ*, 82–87 (China’s “greatest evangelist” at the time); more recently, Bays, “Revival,” 173 (“probably the single most powerful figure in Chinese revivalism in the mid-1930s”); Robert, “Introduction,” 15 (perhaps “the greatest Chinese revivalist of the twentieth century”); Wu, “Yu,” 98 (“China’s George Whitefield”). He is usually regarded as one of the leading early figures of indigenous Chinese Christianity (Tan, “Work,” 98; Leung, “Conversion,” 89, 106; Oblau, “Healing,” 309; Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 43). His strategic discipling through small groups remained important even in Indonesia (Brougham, “Training,” 141); outside China, in fact, he influenced Indonesia (Koch, *Revival*, 54–57, 60–62), the Chinese-Filipino church in the Philippines (Shao, “Heritage,” 96), and in 1935–40 the Chinese churches of Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore (Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 129).

288. From an incidental mention, we do learn that he prayed in tongues (Sung, *Diaries*, 29). Nevertheless, he insisted that the real evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit was power to witness (32; cf. 212); he insisted that the priority be holiness and love rather than spiritual gifts and tongues (163–64); and he felt that overemphasis on spiritual gifts at the expense of fruit produces error (114). He emphasized the role of faith (112, 115) but also God’s sovereignty (131) and hearing God’s voice (e.g., 118–19). Uldine Utley’s ministry in J. R. Straton’s Baptist church affected him deeply (McGee, *Miracles*, 191, 303).

289. For some conflict (leading in this case to a Western missionary’s conversion experience), see, e.g., Sung, *Diaries*, 146. Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism*, 147, note that some “missionaries attributed some of John Sung’s ‘cures’” to emotionalism in the meetings.

290. For his insistence on Chinese independence from Western control and finances, see, e.g., Sung, *Diaries*, 54, 56, 183. He did appreciate the minority of Western missionaries who sacrificially adopted the Chinese way of life (118, 154) but criticized those who valued Western comforts (24).

His diary reports numerous healings taking place, especially through his own ministry.²⁹¹ Maladies that he believed were cured include leprosy,²⁹² blindness,²⁹³ paralysis and inability to walk,²⁹⁴ muteness,²⁹⁵ deafness,²⁹⁶ deformed spine,²⁹⁷ pneumonia,²⁹⁸ and tuberculosis,²⁹⁹ as well as the curing of some persons with multiple conditions.³⁰⁰ Most cures were immediately evident,³⁰¹ but some were gradual, such as the healing of leprosy over the course of two days³⁰² or the gradual healing of paralysis.³⁰³ Nearly all, he averred, were permanent, but a few were temporary.³⁰⁴ Sometimes when he laid hands on people, what they felt resembled a bolt of electricity surging through them.³⁰⁵ Such testimonies generated skepticism even among Christians,³⁰⁶ but there was no shortage of people claiming to have been healed and to have witnessed healings. One Westerner reportedly investigated and directly discovered more than a hundred healing testimonies.³⁰⁷

291. E.g., from 1901 to 1920, see *ibid.*, 2, 4; in 1934, see 23, 40–41, 43–44; in 1935, see 48–49, 52, 61; for 1936, see 74, 76, 87, 91, 93–94, 99; for 1937, see 104, 106, 111; for 1938, 145; for 1939, 152 (in Malaysia), 161. He notes some kinds of healings more than others; exorcisms are comparatively few (e.g., 23, 30, 34), and resuscitation stories tend to be secondhand (45, 59) or only for an hour (43). Some non-healing miracles are also reported, such as a “healed” bus engine (142) and the holding back of rain (143, 158, 161).

292. *Ibid.*, 27, 52, 111 (the leper showing his now-clean skin, April 15, 1937), 155 (after prayer by proxy, a method also employed on 117), 162 (multiple cases). Cf. also the healing of eczema (125) and a growth on the head (133); a skin disease on the nose, instantly healed and still healed forty-eight years later (as of 1985; the report on 150–51).

293. *Ibid.*, 28, 36, 56 (a seven-year-old blind girl), 111 (multiple cases), 116 (multiple cases), 153 (a girl in Singapore), 158 (multiple cases), 161 (four cases).

294. *Ibid.*, 32 (mostly), 44, 48 (a child who had been unable to walk for six years), 56 (many cases), 91, 111 (multiple cases), 121 (someone besides Sung testifying that many left their crutches behind), 134 (a six-year-old boy), 135 (another’s testimony of a disabled beggar who crawled on his hands, now healed and eventually able to secure a good job), 140, 162 (multiple cases). In most cases, a person unable to walk was immediately able to walk. On 109, a partly dead, malodorous foot was instantly healed, leaving only a scar.

295. *Ibid.*, 29 (after healing, the formerly mute person became a preacher), 40, 48, 56, 93, 125, 153 (a child in Singapore), 155 (multiple cases), 161 (four cases). At least some of these mutes may have also been deaf without that being mentioned in every instance.

296. *Ibid.*, 40 (after six years of deafness), 91, 109 (three cases), 111 (multiple cases), 116 (multiple cases), 155 (multiple cases), 161 (two cases).

297. *Ibid.*, 109, 111 (a hunchback).

298. *Ibid.*, 134 (another’s testimony about healing).

299. *Ibid.*, 137, 138. During Sung’s era, Watchman Nee recovered gradually from tuberculosis through rest, diet, and trusting Christ’s atonement for triumph over sickness (Kinnear, *Tide*, 117–20); Dora Yu also believed her recovery from heart problems was miraculous (Wu, “Yu,” 95).

300. Sung, *Diaries*, 43 (blind and unable to walk), 58 (a deaf and mute person), 110 (mute and unable to walk), 137 (another’s testimony of healing from malaria and tuberculosis).

301. E.g., a large goiter instantly healed (*ibid.*, 58).

302. *Ibid.*, 52.

303. *Ibid.*, 108.

304. E.g., one healing of inability to walk (*ibid.*, 93); one healing of blindness lasting only two days (108).

305. *Ibid.*, 62.

306. Some changed, e.g., the preacher who changed his mind after his daughter’s healing (*ibid.*, 108), and another after he saw some members of his congregation healed (115).

307. *Ibid.*, 94. Likewise, not only Sung’s diary (120) but also a local witness testified of the many healings on one occasion (121; note the editor’s comments).

Sung's story is not triumphalistic, nor does it ignore contrary data. He acknowledged that some were not healed³⁰⁸ or were only partly healed,³⁰⁹ and he was often quite sick himself.³¹⁰ For several years he went ahead with preaching even in great pain,³¹¹ but the last three years of his life were spent suffering and eventually dying from an agonizing disease.³¹² He did not lose faith at this time, but even as in his earlier suffering,³¹³ he believed that he understood God's purpose in it.³¹⁴

Conclusion

In chapter 7, I noted that from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, hundreds of millions of people claim to have witnessed or experienced miraculous healings. While believers would praise God for all these claims, they are of varying evidential weight regarding direct divine action, some appearing more substantial than others. In this chapter, I have sought to illustrate the broader fact of eyewitness healing claims with specific examples from a number of regions in Asia. In the next chapter, I turn to examples from Africa and Latin America. In chapter 12, I will revisit these continents, as well as the West, with accounts of cures of blindness and paralysis, as well as of raisings from the dead.

308. Ibid., 51, 52, 58, 100, 131, 165. He did believe that most were healed; e.g., of the 234 he prayed for on April 6, 1937, 170 to 180 "testified later of being healed" (110); of 774 prayed for on the morning of April 14, 576 testified of healing in the afternoon (111); of 1,583 people prayed for on Aug. 25, "most" were healed (120).

309. Ibid., 117 (a woman's hands but not feet healed; nevertheless, she was happy), 158 (a mentally challenged boy made more manageable).

310. Ibid., 8, 55–56, 70, 73, 74, 79, 82, 100, 128, 187, 188. He used medicine (146, 223), received surgery (157, 174, 188–89, 221, 223), and felt stronger in better weather (152).

311. Ibid., 156, 158, 164–66. His bloody exertions for the sake of preaching (e.g., 128) resemble those of Whitefield (on his health problems, see, e.g., Stout, *Dramatist*, 249–50), though especially in the region of the body that afflicted Livingstone (e.g., Livingstone, *Last Journals*, 397–98).

312. Sung, *Diaries*, 190–91, 221–25. He lived from 1901 to 1944 (his wife died in 1980; p. 226).

313. Ibid., 159, 170; cf. Sister Sheng's lesson on 180. He was no "prosperity" preacher. Cf. his theology of suffering as a prerequisite and conduit for effective ministry (160–61, 191); his expectation of poverty for a true servant of God (192) and simplicity in churches (47); coming purification through suffering for China's churches (197); holiness included giving up movies (33, 52) and small talk (164).

314. Ibid., 189, 215–16. Although the editor of Kings offers no explanation, Elisha also died of sickness (2 Kgs 13:14, 20).

Examples from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean

By God's grace I have seen God healing all kinds of diseases and sicknesses by his power: malaria, pains and aches, cancer, depression, bones; and the dead brought back to life. —Leo Bawa¹

The dominant [Anglo] society snickers and considers us superstitious *jíbaros* (peasants) when we speak of demons, or of Satan. They consider us naïve and too literal when we believe in the biblical narratives of miracle and healing. But when U.S. Hispanics/Latinas read Scripture, it is not with a fundamentalist agenda. We read Scripture believing in God's promises of salvation and hope. —Loida Martell-Otero²

In chapters 8 and 9, I survey sample Majority World claims of healings. In chapter 8, I focused on Asia, the continent that holds the largest proportion of the world's population; here I treat Africa and Latin America. The texture of some of my sources varies from some locations to others (for example, more published sources were available to me for Asia), but that the claims are widespread in many cultures is evident. I reserve further examples of some of the most dramatic claims (regarding cures such as healing blindness or raising the dead) for chapter 12.

As noted in the previous chapter, I must emphasize that what I include here is only the barest possible sample, often made barer by my very limited resources. The texture of my sources for Africa also differs from that of some other regions due to the particularly oral character of local African historiography.³ I have drawn

1. Leo Bawa, personal correspondence, Aug. 10, 2009.

2. Martell-Otero, "Satos," 31–32 (protesting the dominant culture's frequent view of Hispanic/Latina faith as superstitious also on 16). She cites Brueggemann, *Astonishment*, 39, 42, regarding academia's loss of ability to hear sympathetically awesome experiences among the marginalized. For strong distinctions between global Pentecostals and fundamentalism, see, e.g., Cox, "Miracles," 92–93; Spittler, "Review."

3. See Burgess, *Revolution*, 21, noting the value of the ethnographic approach there.

examples from particular countries where sources or contacts made information available to me; I believe that these constitute a representative sample and that such information could be multiplied many times over.

Thus, for example, I have elaborated at length on reports from Congo-Brazzaville because I had immediate access to this information. As a very small country, Congo-Brazzaville (not to be confused with its massive neighbor, Congo-Kinshasa), is particularly valuable for two different kinds of reasons. First, I or my immediate family know most of the people I interviewed there and could therefore validate their long-term integrity. Second, if mainline Protestants (most of my interviewees) in that small country can offer many eyewitness healing claims, one might infer even larger numbers in many larger countries of the Global South with large and active Christian populations. This less well-known nation can thus function as a sample (one hopes somehow representative) for the many countries I could not personally survey. Likewise, Cuba is a fairly small country (though with some eleven million residents, it has more than seven million more residents than Congo-Brazzaville). Nevertheless, so many testimonies came my way during my brief trip there that I quit mentioning my book project.

Examples in Africa

In a paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature meeting in New Orleans in 2009, I suggested that Majority World readings of miracles could provide Western readers a more sympathetic model for reading biblical miracle narratives than our recent heritage has encouraged. In this context, I mentioned briefly some examples that I had collected for this book. After I had finished, during the discussion period, Dr. J. Ayodeji Adewuya, a Pauline scholar who is now a professor in the United States, stood and publicly offered reasons for his Nigerian perspective. I knew Ayo from conversations at previous years of these biblical studies conferences, but we had not had occasion to discuss his nonacademic personal experiences until this conference. Ayo offered his eyewitness account of a nature miracle and then narrated how his newborn son, pronounced dead at birth by a midwife on January 1, 1981, was raised after twenty minutes of prayer. The son, none the worse for the experience, grew up and has completed his master of science degree. I suspect that I was not the only listener in the room intrigued by these accounts.⁴

Ghanaian urologist Ken Aboah notes that when medical resources have been inadequate, he has often seen patients who were nearly dead miraculously survive through prayer.⁵ Scotland-trained pediatrician Samuel Anankra, of the Thirty-Seven Military Hospital in Accra and for several years president of the Pediatrics Society, tells of his four-year-old's debilitating illness and the family's prayers for

4. Nov. 22, 2009; the paper was Keener, "Readings," and Ayo confirmed his report for me in a phone interview (Dec. 14, 2009). Ayo's academic works include *1–2 Corinthians*, *Transformed*, and *Holiness*.

5. Mensah, "Basis," 177.

her. Starting with fifteen days of fever and paralysis of the lower limbs, her illness persisted for months; X-rays revealed physiological changes in the lower limbs. Finally, after five months, she suddenly became better in a single day, a cure he ascribes to God answering prayer.⁶

Even when trained in Western culture, Africans draw on a repertoire of experience and cultural interpretation that differs starkly from our inherited Western assumptions.⁷ Supernatural phenomena are compatible with most African worldviews,⁸ and reports of miraculous healings are frequent in Africa,⁹ especially where normal medical resources are difficult to come by.¹⁰ Healings and other miracles are important in the growth of religious movements in Africa, including most kinds of churches that are growing.¹¹ Earlier Western missionaries tended to neglect or repudiate supernatural elements of special interest to Africans, like

6. Ibid., 179, also reporting a Scottish boy hit by a car and left “in a persistent vegetative state.” Ananka prayed daily for him and after some time found him “sitting up playing video games,” able to see, “talk, and walk”; the parents were so touched they became Christians. “In my heart I knew that medically we did virtually nothing for this boy.”

7. Thus one philosopher notes highly educated Ugandan and Nigerian priests he knows who are “unshakably convinced that miracles, magic and spiritual warfare are manifestly real aspects of daily life, of which they themselves have had direct and incontrovertible experience on a number of occasions” (Hart, *Delusions*, 102, preferring their experience over our assertions).

8. See, e.g., Abogunrin, “Search”; Mbiti, *Religions*, 253–57; for the ancestors and healing, see Moodley, *Shembe*, 44–45. Many African indigenous Christian movements “expected to experience miracles in everyday life” (Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 98). For the relevance of miraculous power in Africa, see also Gräbe, “Discovery.” Early in the Qua Iboe Mission in Nigeria, “a spontaneous outburst of glossolalia” occurred without any “Pentecostal influence . . . within hundreds of miles” (Orr, *Awakenings*, 160).

9. De Wet’s sources for Africa include Olson, “Growth,” 229–30; Ross, “Search,” 146–47, 216–17 (Ross addresses S. Central Zaire, now in Congo DRC); Oosthuizen, *Penetration*, 309–23; Riddle, “Growth,” 38–42; McGavran, “Faith-Healing,” 376–77; see also some claims in Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 65–71; in one African Catholic church, see Jenkins, *New Faces*, 118–19. Unfortunately, many people seek out the most “powerful” pastors who can accomplish cures (as in traditional shamanism), leading to competition and exaggerated claims in those circles (see Währisch-Oblau, “Healing in Migrant Churches,” 72); I have tried to focus on cases where a genuine change in health is reported.

10. For inadequate access to health care increasing the appeal of supernatural healing, see, e.g., Folarin, “State,” 84; Brown, “Introduction,” 7; Oblau, “Healing,” 315. One missionary doctor notes that, often lacking adequate medical resources, he was forced to pray, in which setting he “was then surprised by some unexpected outcomes” (Lees and Fiddes, “Healed,” 24). Dr. David Zaritzky told me (July 24, 2009) that he prayed for people for two hours in Tanzania recently and all but one was healed.

11. See, e.g., Burgess, *Revolution*, 182–83, on early Igbo charismatics; the proportion of renewalists in the African population is perhaps three times higher than the average globally (Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 103). Nevertheless, the pattern applies to older churches, Pentecostal churches, and indigenous churches ranging from those more compatible with older churches (while contextualizing for African interests) to those including larger mixtures of elements from traditional African religions. For examples, see (esp. for the twentieth century), e.g., Akinwumi, “Babalola”; idem, “Idahosa” (on Idahosa, see also Kalu, “Mission,” 14–15); Brockman, “Kimbangu”; Dayhoff, “Marais” (a hand paralyzed for nine years healed through prayer in 1949); Etienne, “Diangienda”; Fuller, “Tsado”; Hexham, “Shembe”; Keener, “Ndoundou”; Larbi, “Anim”; Lygunda li-M, “Pelendo”; Manana, “Kitonga”; idem, “Ndaruhutse”; Menberu, “Mekonnen Negera”; Millard, “Duma”; Moodley, *Shembe*, 74–77; Nsenga, “Fuisa”; Odili, “Osaele”; idem, “Agents”; Akinwumi, “Orimolade” (not suggesting that all the oral traditions are authentic); idem, “Oschoffa”; Brockman, “Kivuli”; Buys and Nambala, “Hambuindja”; idem, “Kanambunga.”

witchcraft and healing.¹² Yet these central concerns of the African worldview emerged in indigenous African Christian movements.¹³ Today they continue as major emphases to varying degrees among various indigenous African Christian movements,¹⁴ a heterogeneous category spanning a wide range theologically.¹⁵ Independent churches offer numerous healing claims¹⁶ (and as noted earlier, such claims are a common reason for joining them), but they are widespread beyond such circles. Because healing and health are important to life, and African tradition expects religion to provide these benefits, the concern is neglected to churches'

12. Among exceptions were the early Basel missionaries to southern Ghana, whose belief in religious healing was consistent with local Akan tradition; this shifted in the final years of the nineteenth century (Mohr, "Medicine").

13. Cf. the indigenous Pentecostal-like movement in Nigeria in 1927 (Burgess, *Revolution*, vi) and the prophetic movements of Harris, Braide, and Kimbangu cited in ch. 7. Some missionaries, however, like Nazarene missionary Everette Howard in the Cape Verde Islands, did teach divine healing, and many healings were reported in their circle of African believers (Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 51–52, 80).

14. See, e.g., Oosthuizen, *Healer-Prophet*, 16–18 (on AICs), 120–21; Daneel, *Zionism*, 21 (most Zionists join through faith healing); Ellingsen, *Roots*, 2:259–60; Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 129 (on the continuity of healing's centrality in earlier African culture and African Christianity), 357, 360–62, 364 (on the supernatural and healing as a normal African interest); Molobi, "Knowledge," 90; Akogyeram, "Ministry," 149; Shaw, *Awakening*, 60; Burgess, *Revolution*, 160; cf. Brinkman, *Non-Western Jesus*, 234–35.

15. Mainline and Pentecostal Christians would regard as syncretistic a number of these churches (see Gilliland, "Churches," as cited in Adeney, *Kingdom*, 288), which include, e.g., diviners and sacrifice to ancestors (Oosthuizen, *Healer-Prophet*, 25–26) and notably movements granting a messianic role to their leaders (Moodley, *Shembe*, 65–66; cf. Shaw, *Kingdom*, 246–47) or promoting possession by various spirits (see Behrend, "Power"). Nevertheless, others are more in line with traditional Christian approaches (see the summary in Oosthuizen, *Healer-Prophet*, xix; Moodley, *Shembe*, 65; Molobi, "Churches," 70–71; arguing for legitimate contextualization, Nussbaum, "AICs," esp. 102–8). Daneel, "Churches," 182, argues that only a few of the "spirit type" southern African AICs (with their healings and tongues) have messianic leaders. Biblical models suggest much flexibility for cultural contextualization (more than usually assumed today) while condemning spiritual mixing (missiologists debate the precise boundaries). Syncretism is common in African Christian and Muslim homes (Dasuekwo, "Charms"; "Islam and Christianity," 170, 174, 180–82; cf. West, *Sorcery*, 40; for Islam specifically, Adeniyi, "Interaction," 60; for some Pentecostal Christians, Ayuk, "Transformation," 200; for some traditional denominational black southern African Christians more than black charismatics there, see data in Joubert, "Perspective," 131–33), though Christians in various cultures differ with respect to what practices are actually syncretistic (Noll, *Shape*, 25, noting that such charges can readily be laid against Western Christians; cf. Brown, "Awakenings," 373, emphasizing contextualization). For example, Western Christians often turn a blind eye to their own syncretic accommodation of deism, what African Christians could regard as coming close to following "the outward form of piety but denying its power" (2 Tim 3:5; cf. also the danger of syncretism with materialism in Matt 6:24//Luke 16:13; perhaps Col 3:5). African syncretism often results from the lack of Christian teaching addressing spirits (so, e.g., Jackson Mutie Munyao, an Africa Inland Church pastor in Kenya, cited in Wagner, "World," 91; in India, cf. Hiebert, "Excluded Middle," 39). Similarly, cultural androcentrism has also exacerbated problems with sexual exploitation (Chitando, "Prophetesses," 6).

16. E.g., associated with Isaiah Shembe (e.g., Becken, "Healing Communities," 234–35, 238, based on his interviews; Moodley, *Shembe*, xi, 20–21, 123–24, 137). Like Kimbangu, Shembe was deified by some later followers (see Mzizi, "Images"; Moodley, *Shembe*, 96, 98, 136–37); some argue that he never accepted this claim for himself (Isichei, *History*, 316–17; cf. Prouet, *Christianity*, 161), though not all agree (cf. sources in Moodley, *Shembe*, xi). His son taught that all believers can pray for healing (Becken, "Healing Communities," 236). His grandson Vimbeni is also credited with healings (Moodley, *Shembe*, 138, 173–74). The movement is a new faith (Mzizi, "Images"), no longer discernibly Christian by any historic definition (see esp. Moodley, *Shembe*, 130–37, 140–43, 160–61, 177–88, 211).

peril.¹⁷ Some scholars regard the emphasis on healing and exorcism as an important contribution of African Christians to the global church.¹⁸ Certainly healing is a central human concern and one prominent in Christian Scripture.

Examples among growing Christian movements¹⁹ include some evangelists with extraordinary cure rates and prophets with extraordinary accuracy on unexpected details. In sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, 56 percent of Christians claim to have witnessed or experienced divine healing.²⁰ Among earlier figures who were Pentecostal, one student touched by the Kenyan revival, Margaret Wangari, prayed for a dying grandmother, who was instantly healed; Wangari went on to found an indigenous Pentecostal church in central Kenya.²¹

Healing in Mainline Churches

Not limited to independent or Pentecostal movements, the emphasis also appears in many traditional mainline churches;²² as one observer notes, the “ethos of some mainline churches today” resembles that “of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches.”²³ One well-known and often-researched case is the mainline churches in Ghana.²⁴ For example, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, recognizing the healing gift of catechist J. J. Manteaw in the late 1940s, appointed him a lay chaplain in their

17. Manala and Theron, “Need” (esp. 172–77). Olaiya, “Praying,” 101, observes that traditional Western missionaries offered “civilization” without alternatives to the supernatural benefits offered by traditional religions.

18. See Taylor, “Future,” 647.

19. Healing also functions as a means of evangelizing fellow Africans and occasionally others in African immigrant churches in Europe (Währisch-Oblau, “Healing in Migrant Churches,” 69–75); for significant church growth among African Pentecostal and other immigrant churches in the United States, see Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 294, 297–98. Other health-related factors also can generate people movements, such as the failure of traditional religious methods to check the smallpox epidemics of 1873 and 1912 at Onitsha (Ekechi, “Medical Factor,” 294; cf. a family’s conversion due to the failure of juju to prevent child mortality in Numbere, *Vision*, 39).

20. “Islam and Christianity,” 30, 211 (significantly higher than among practitioners of other religions there). A high proportion believe in miracles, especially in West (followed by parts of East and Central Africa (ibid., 176).

21. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 96.

22. Charismatic influences have affected mainline churches in much of Africa; see, e.g., Maluleke and Nadar, “Pentecostalisation,” 1; in Nigeria, Kalu, “Afraid”; in Kenya, Parsitau, “Pentecostalisation.”

23. Parsitau, “Pentecostalisation,” 92 (speaking of how it is “sweeping across mainline Christianity” and “knows no denominational barrier”); Burgess, *Revolution*, 304–8. Pentecostalism may be viewed as the most prominent face today of wider indigenous Christian emphases (Gruchy and Chirongoma, “Elements,” 301). Asamoah-Gyadu, “Hearing,” 142–43, notes that its experiential focus makes “Pentecostalism” the new ecumenism (i.e., transdenominational form of unity) in African Christianity. The definitions are fluid (classical Pentecostalism was more mission-centered than personal need-centered; Watt, “Dangers,” 385–86), but clearly most African Christian practice is not cessationist.

24. See, e.g., Omenyo, *Pentecost*; idem, “Healing”; cf. Gifford, “Developments,” 524–25; more generally on the charismatic movement in mainline churches there, Atieno, *Movement*; Omenyo, “Charismatization.” Charismatic renewal helps Ghanaian Catholics to address traditional African issues through their faith (Rakoczy, “Renewal”). The number of neo-Pentecostals has grown more, but the traditional mainline churches are holding steady or growing (Shaw, *Awakening*, 166). Many Pentecostal churches in Ghana, such as the rapidly growing, indigenous Church of Pentecost, emphasize healing (Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*,

hospital. "It is believed that he instantly healed a number of people who had been declared terminally ill," and the church, encouraging the gift, subsequently ordained him (in 1959) and others known for this gift.²⁵ In the 1970s the Methodist Church Ghana approved of the traveling healing ministry of Samuel B. Essamuah, who had earlier been presiding bishop of the denomination.²⁶ Today Ghanaian Methodists and Presbyterians sponsor healing crusades;²⁷ a 2001 Methodist official report on a crusade in the capital recounted the deaf hearing and a leg instantly growing four inches in public sight, enabling the person to walk and jump.²⁸

This pattern began early; Methodists experienced revival with healings starting in 1918.²⁹ A significant early healing occurred that year when John Cheke and David Mandisodza commanded a disabled girl to rise in the name of Jesus. The girl, who had not been helped by the witch doctors, was healed and jumped up shouting, "Jesus Christ has healed me. I am no longer a cripple. Haleluya, Haleluya!" Revival spread.³⁰ The East African Revival, originating in the late 1920s and flowering more fully in the following four decades, was accompanied with healings, visions, tongues, and conflicts with hostile spirits;³¹ this revival affected most of the churches.³²

One may also compare an earlier generation's reports about Isaac Pelendo in central Africa; he was associated with the (non-Pentecostal) evangelical church.³³ Pelendo was also known to pray for the sick, and many were healed on the day that he prayed for them,³⁴ including those who had been dying.³⁵ (As we shall note in

351). Gifford, *Pentecostalism*, 81, argues that Ghana's Pentecostal churches emphasize economic success more than healing; Omenyo, "Healing," 243, suggests the opposite.

25. Omenyo, "Healing," 242–43 (quotation from 242).

26. *Ibid.*, 243.

27. *Ibid.* Some Muslims seek healing through Presbyterians (*idem*, "Renewal," 149).

28. Omenyo, "Healing," 244. The Methodist Church Ghana has ordained many evangelists with healing gifts, some ministering to tens of thousands of persons in a year (244–45).

29. Ranger, "Dilemma," 352–53.

30. *Ibid.*, 353. One major impetus for Ghanaian Methodist growth in the 1920s came through Sampson Oppong, preaching after a prophetic dream (Walls, *Movement*, 88; see more fully Southon, *Methodism*, 149–52 [with the name Samson Opon]; cf. briefly Alleyne, *Gold Coast*, 78–79; Orr, *Awakenings*, 162).

31. Noll, *Shape*, 186.

32. *Ibid.*, 181; Reinhardt, "Movements," 270. For one discussion of this revival in the larger context of other revivals in the preceding decades (esp. Ugandan revivals in 1893 and 1906), see Griffiths, "Fruit," 234–42.

33. In popular works in English, see, e.g., Anderson, *Pelendo* (written while both Pelendo and many eyewitnesses remained alive, and including on p. 5 the endorsement of the Evangelical Free Church of America's missions secretary, who also knew Pelendo; more academic, Lygunda li-M, "Pelendo"); others often mention him (e.g., Adewuya, 1–2 *Corinthians*, 22). Episcopal Bishop Yeremaya of the Sudan was viewed as a prophet because of a correct prediction (Simeon, "Datiro"). Of course, many leaders have far less successful "records" or integrity, and disagreements as to how far to press healing claims raise disputes in Africa as well as elsewhere (cf., e.g., Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 77).

34. Anderson, *Pelendo*, 131. When he could not stop to pray for one child right away, they wrapped the child in his blanket, and he recovered (133).

35. *Ibid.*, 69–70, 99–100 (though recognizing that not all would be healed), 119–20, 120–22, 124–25, 129–30. Pelendo himself was raised from his deathbed after a vision and regained strength (112–14).

ch. 12, Pelendo also claimed to have raised someone apparently already dead.) But while interest in healing existed for some time among Africans in the older churches, sensitivity to African needs has highlighted it in the past half century.³⁶ Among others, Lutherans have a long-standing tradition of healing ministry in Madagascar.³⁷ Mainline churches there have healing services with prayer and exorcism,³⁸ with cures reported for sorcery-associated sicknesses but also others beyond the treatment of Western medicine.³⁹ Among the cures reported are brain tumors, “leukemia, stroke, and advanced mental illness”; while not all are cured, Malagasy Christians believed in healing.⁴⁰ Most Presbyterians in Malawi also associate prayer with healing.⁴¹ Mennonite missionaries in Burkina Faso observe that most believers in their churches, as elsewhere in Africa, “had come to faith through healing and liberation from evil spirits.”⁴² In Nigeria, by 1969, not only were many being converted through the evangelical Scripture Union but also hospital visitations often resulted in reports of healings.⁴³ While Pentecostal churches circulate many of the healing claims, then, such testimonies are widespread among various movements, some of whose reports appear below.

Various Sample Claims from East and Central Africa

Some other sample healing claims in Africa include a child in a Kenyan village, nearly dead but instantly healed after prayer;⁴⁴ tens of thousands trusting in Jesus in response to the healing of a girl in Jesus’s name;⁴⁵ or the daughter of Swiss church planter Jacques Vernaud, permanently healed of leukemia through prayer at the age of three in Brazzaville, Congo. (I know both Jacques Vernaud and the

36. See Omenyo, “Healing,” 238–40, emphasizing on 240 the rejection of the Western radical Enlightenment paradigm.

37. Rasolondraibe, “Ministry,” 347–50. Issues vary geographically; while many Lutherans in Tanzania pray for the sick, many have been attracted instead to non-Lutheran charismatic meetings (Vähäkangas, “Responses,” 163–64; cf. Lugazia, “Movements”); some Lutherans there have welcomed charismatic gifts while others have responded negatively (Mchami, “Gifts,” 170–71, urging the welcoming approach).

38. Rasolondraibe, “Ministry,” 349.

39. Ibid., 350.

40. Ibid. (particularly emphatic about Lutherans).

41. Ross, “Preaching,” 15 (73 percent for Presbyterian pastors; 79 percent for members); percentages are lower for Roman Catholics (30 percent for pastors; 37 percent for members). On Pentecostalism in Malawi, see, e.g., Englund, “Quest” (addressing one issue).

42. Entz, “Encounter,” 136. By far the largest Protestant group in Burkina Faso is the Assemblies of God (Laurent, “Transnationalisation,” 256), where healings and exorcisms are also claimed (268).

43. Kalu, “Mission,” 12–13; Burgess, *Revolution*, 150, 152. Although Nigerian charismatic origins are not limited to Scripture Union (ibid., 95), the revival in SU heavily shaped early Nigerian charismatics (ibid., 82, 101–2, 137, 144–45, 148–50, 157–59). In general, while Presbyterians initially opposed the charismatic movement in Nigeria, the massive Anglican church welcomed it (Kalu, “Mission,” 17); but the early situation was in many cases more complex (Burgess, *Revolution*, 93, 98, 185–87). Young, “Miracles in History,” 117, cites a Westerner who was in Nigeria in 1966–67 as noting no fewer than six raisings reported at one location.

44. Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 18 (noting that his student documented the report).

45. Stearns, *Vision*, 172, noting Kenya Muslims believing in Jesus’s power after her healing in a mosque in Jesus’s name.

daughter in question, with whom I attended college, and she remains alive and well today.⁴⁶) Africa Inland Church pastor Jackson Mutie Munyao had been taught that miracles do not happen today, but when a dying member of the congregation, Mutemi Mwinzi, was immediately healed after prayer in 1963, the church began praying for the sick and grew as a result.⁴⁷

Various testimonies come from Uganda.⁴⁸ For example, Pastor Solomon Mukonjo reports various healings, including that of his associate pastor who was healed of, among other problems, visual impairment and no longer needs glasses; and another case claiming healing from asthma.⁴⁹ Pastor Esther Gumikiriza prayed for a member of her church, Halima Namakula, who had “suffered severe bleeding for two years,” rendering conception impossible. The “bleeding stopped instantly,” and she soon had another child.⁵⁰

Healings are often reported in Uganda’s massive Anglican Church. Onesimus Asiimwe, chaplain to the Anglican archbishop of Uganda, shared with me some accounts of healings in his ministry.⁵¹ One includes the disappearance of a cyst from an American song leader’s vocal cords after he prayed for her, with obviously positive results for her ministry.⁵² A mutual friend of ours, Anna Gulick, told me that she planned to receive prayer from him for healing of her sight. Anna, in her nineties, had been virtually completely blind in her right eye for a number of years and had suffered irreversible macular degeneration there. After Onesimus prayed, she had a strange sensation in that eye, and some measure of vision returned to it. While the restoration is only partial as of the time of this writing, the doctor acknowledged that there was no medical explanation for the tested, physical changes in her eye.⁵³

46. Pastor Vernaud was friends with my Congolese father-in-law, who knew of his ministry in healing, and I attended college and was friends with this daughter, Liliane, before I met my future wife or her family; Jacques Vernaud, now in Kinshasa, also confirmed this account for me in personal correspondence (Aug. 29, 2005), and I talked with father and daughter in person in Kinshasa (July 23, 2008). The daughter had not received medical treatment in Europe because from a purely medical standpoint her survival seemed hopeless.

47. Wagner, “World,” 92–93.

48. Cf. the boy whose bleeding stopped after prayer, though the bullet still had to be removed surgically (Eshleman, *Jesus*, 86–87). Kassimir, “Politics,” 261–62, also notes popular Catholic healing and exorcism addressing witchcraft in Uganda (though the church leadership in Africa is sometimes uncomfortable with this approach; see Spear and Kimambo, “Revival,” 245–46).

49. Sample Church of God testimonies sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, director of World Mission for Church of God (personal correspondence, Nov. 9, 2009).

50. Among testimonies sent to me by Douglas LeRoy (personal correspondence, Nov. 9, 2009).

51. Onesimus Asiimwe, interview, Oct. 13, 2008, e.g., noting the restoration of Henry Mugsha, though this included medical intervention. Onesimus also shared sample stories of healings of infertility (esp. a couple for whom he prayed in 1996) and his own instant healing of stomach ulcers at his conversion on Jan. 8, 1988, which ulcers never returned. He has also shared other healing testimonies subsequently, including from his ministry to people in the United States (e.g., in correspondence on April 4, 2009; May 2, 2009).

52. Onesimus Asiimwe, personal correspondence, May 2, 2009 (copying the correspondence he received after the song leader’s doctor noted that the cyst was gone); May 27, 2009.

53. Anna Gulick, personal correspondence (April 19, 23, 24, 25, 2010; June 10, 11, 12; July 31; Sept. 4, 9, 2010). She provided documentation from her doctors; the inexplicable changes were noted, in

Likewise, Anglican bishop Nathan Kyamanywa, whose diocese includes more than four hundred thousand persons, notes that in his earlier days his life was changed radically when a visiting evangelist felt led to pray for someone with a long-term, medically incurable problem in the right leg. A man whose leg was swollen, with a smelly septic wound oozing pus, came forward hesitantly. As the evangelist, Nathan, and the other priests prayed for him, the man felt warmth and his pain stopped; within a week the swelling was gone. Until the man's death more than eight years later the illness never recurred.⁵⁴ Bishop Nathan himself experienced a heart attack in early 2009. After detailed tests at the main hospital in the capital, the doctor noted that he was surprised that Bishop Nathan had survived his heart attack. The doctors in Kampala provided the best treatment that they could but insisted that he needed further treatment outside Uganda. Despite its medical urgency, his visa to the United Kingdom was delayed; Anna Gulick informed me that during this time Bishop Nathan sounded very weak, even weaker than she had during her own earlier heart attacks. Thousands of people were praying not only for his visa but also for his heart, and some felt very certain that God was going to give him a new heart. When he was finally able to travel to London, testing showed that his heart was completely healthy, with no evidence that he had had a heart attack to begin with.⁵⁵

Reports of various cures abound in various denominations elsewhere in east and central Africa. From 1972 to 1975, Edmond John, younger brother of Tanzania's Anglican archbishop, had a remarkable healing ministry, leading to many conversions, including those of many Muslims.⁵⁶ A Southern Baptist missionary was astonished by the immediate and full recovery of two dying Tanzanians for whom he prayed, multiplying receptivity to the evangelism crusade then underway.⁵⁷ After a Western psychiatrist prayed for a man in Madagascar completely crippled with clear, "severe, advanced ankylosing spondylitis," the man was ultimately restored and even dancing.⁵⁸ A Rwandan woman unable to speak for a year was suddenly

different ways, both by her eye doctor (a macular degeneration specialist; July 6, 2010; April 15, 2011) and her optometrist (June 10, 2010), and warranted a new prescription that included her previously blind eye (Aug. 26, 2010; documentation from her optometrist dated March 10, 2008; Aug. 26, 2010). By our correspondence of Aug. 28, 31; Sept. 3, 2010, she was able to read (laboriously) with her previously blind eye, with improvements progressing (Oct. 30, 2010; Jan. 11; April 15; May 25; June 11, 2011).

54. Bishop Nathan Kyamanywa, personal correspondence, Nov. 15, 27, 2010; first brought to my attention through Anna Gulick, Oct. 11, 2010.

55. Bishop Nathan Kyamanywa, personal correspondence, Sept. 2, 2009; Anna Gulick, personal correspondence, Aug. 23, 2009; cf. Aug. 24–25. I have omitted many details for the sake of space.

56. McGavran, "Healing," 73. For healings in a popular Catholic movement in Tanzania (albeit without the church hierarchy's approval), see discussions in Comoro and Sivalon, "Ministry," 282, 286–87; Wilkins, "Mary and Demons."

57. Knapp, *Thunder*, 189–91. This Southern Baptist publication notes other healings as well (e.g., 188–92). Many others, who were not healed, proved models of dedication (199–200). For prayer for the sick and exorcism in many Protestant lay fellowships in Tanzania, see Mlahagwa, "Contending," 304.

58. Wilson, "Miracle Events," 272–73. He cannot confirm exactly when the full healing occurred, but knows that the man remained well two years later. He also knows that this disease cannot be cured without medical intervention and that no such intervention occurred (*ibid.*, 278).

and completely healed in a Pentecostal revival meeting, now able to pray loudly without pain.⁵⁹ Bishop John Mumba in the Central African Republic reported a number of healings there, among them a dying child restored to health and the healing of a foot condition so that the planned surgery was canceled.⁶⁰

In Ethiopia, 83 percent of believers surveyed in a Lutheran (Mekane Yesus) church attributed their conversions to healings and exorcisms.⁶¹ Mennonite churches in Ethiopia (Meserete Kristos) also report experiencing many miracles.⁶² During a period of persecution, Genet Lulseged Kumsa, a Mekane Yesus believer who had been beaten so badly that she could not walk, came for prayer to a Meserete Kristos church. Daniel Mekonnen prayed, and Genet felt such an electrical surge course through her that she announced that all the pain was gone.⁶³ Among healings reported at such times were “cancer, paralysis, blindness, asthma.”⁶⁴ Although healing was most common among believers, many nonbelievers were also healed; MKC evangelist Daniel Mekonnen explained the latter as love healings rather than faith healings—God healing by love rather than believer’s faith. Thus on one occasion an atheist attended with a severely painful leg; when the evangelist announced that God wanted to heal a painful leg, the atheist was shocked, was healed, and became a believer.⁶⁵ The church became known through many healings.⁶⁶ In the early days of ministry in Wollega, people who saw healings and exorcisms discarded charms; many continue to be healed at the Mennonite church there.⁶⁷ Many were healed through individuals from various movements, like Regassa Feysa; these included a paralytic, a schizophrenic boy, those believed possessed by spirits, and others.⁶⁸

Although remaining quite active in ministry both in Ethiopia and in the United States, Pastor Daniel Mekonnen kindly spoke with me about his forty years of ministry, about which I had read samples. After preaching, he prays for the sick; those reported healed include persons who were blind or deaf or unable to walk, those with cancer, and so forth. In most cases, healings are visible; when they are not, he tells healed persons that they must get confirmation from the doctor before they are allowed to give their public testimony. His ministry in Ethiopia is now collecting for a book testimonies written by many of those who have been healed, to be published in Amharic and subsequently in English.⁶⁹

59. Among reports sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, Nov. 9, 2009.

60. Among reports sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, Nov. 9, 2009.

61. McGavran, “Healing,” 75.

62. They are expected, as are power encounters (Hege, *Prayers*, 244). That many miracles occur there is also the observation of Sharon Kraybill (personal conversation, May 26, 2009; Nov. 10, 2009); Sharon was a Western Mennonite missionary there.

63. Hege, *Prayers*, 179.

64. *Ibid.*, 170.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*, 199.

67. *Ibid.*, 227–28.

68. E.g., Menberu, “Regassa Feysa”; *idem*, “Mekonnen Negera.”

69. Daniel Mekonnen, phone interview, Dec. 10, 2009. The testimonies will provide medical documentation where possible but, as he noted, this is often not possible in Ethiopia, even (for example)

Ethiopian evangelist Gebru Woldu has ministered in perhaps fifty countries and offers numerous accounts of healings and other miracles.⁷⁰ For example, he notes that he prayed for a woman with a gangrenous leg that no medicine could cure; when he met her the next week, he learned that it healed the day he prayed for her.⁷¹

Evangelist Woldu testifies that, even if he witnessed the healing himself, to screen out potential problems (such as cultists and those who would come to discredit them), his ministry allows public testimonies only from reliable persons whose healings could be confirmed by relatives and physicians. After sharing a meal and varied conversation, I pulled out some paper and began asking Gebru questions about his experiences. He began by affirming that he merely prays, and that it is God who either heals or does not heal people.

He then shared with me stories of instantaneous healings of blindness and other ailments, some of which are recounted later in this book. He illustrated the points extensively with other individual cases, including a Western doctor instantly healed of a dislocated shoulder and a Western lawyer instantly and completely cured of a hip bone problem. He recounted that people who had tested HIV-positive and were already sick were healed; he said that new tests (on which he always insisted before they could testify) revealed a negative status, including two persons he identified in the West.⁷² A child with liver cancer in a pediatrics hospital in Brisbane, Australia, was dying for lack of a transplant, but a week after prayer arrived at church well. Most often he has witnessed the instant disappearance of goiters and the healing of back problems (some of the latter having prevented walking).⁷³

I could continue to summarize reports from various locations but here wish to recount some claims in somewhat greater detail. When in the summer of 2006 I asked my students in Kenya if any of them had witnessed a dramatic healing, one, Bernard Luvutse, told me of his younger sister when they were children. Paralyzed in her legs, she was dragging herself on the ground for more than a year. Hearing

for a blind person. Pastor Mekonnen also referred me to Mennonite missionaries who would know about events of the revival in Ethiopia from 1978 to 1981.

70. E.g., a baby in the wrong position before birth, which would have required medical intervention, who shifted into the right position (Woldu, *Gifts*, 157); this also happened to my wife in Congo in 1997 (her journal, Aug. 29–Sept. 1, 1997: notified that the baby was in the wrong position, she felt the position shifting after prayer, and the next day ultrasound confirmed the shift; others report prenatal healings, e.g., Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 27–28, 54). Doctors in a Japanese hospital were reportedly surprised when a woman's toxemia was healed through his ministry (142). For summaries, see, e.g., 141, 157. He has also kindly corresponded with me (including Jan. 28, 2010). Although he has left where the documentation was kept, he noted that his ministry counted publicly only those many cases verified by physicians (personal correspondence, Feb. 5, 2010).

71. Woldu, *Gifts*, 140.

72. One of these instances, in Melbourne, was so astonishing that a particular reporter from a local news station came to interview the person, but apparently lost interest once the man testified that Jesus had healed him.

73. Interview, May 20, 2010; personal correspondence, Feb. 5, 2010. Although I had not warned him of any of my questions in advance, he provided full descriptions of whatever I asked him, and I have condensed these interesting accounts into summaries here. I have experienced Gebru as a very humble, self-effacing, caring, and sincere person.

about an evangelist who was going to pray for the sick, the mother put the girl on her back and walked a great distance, crossing even a difficult river. Because they had prayed before, the discouraged father had no hope that the outcome would be different this time. Nevertheless, during the week after the prayer, the girl began to recover fully, and now, after thirty years, she continues to walk well.⁷⁴

Bruce Collins is a leader in an international, interdenominational renewal group called New Wine, originally based in the Anglican Church. He told me of a young orphan in Ekwanda, Meseno District, western Kenya, where his group cares for some orphans. The boy was perhaps 90 percent blind, needing to be led around and unable to see even fingers held up in front of his face. After about ten minutes of prayer, he could count all ten fingers even ten meters away; after ten more minutes, he could see them thirty meters away. (That is better than my eyesight without glasses, by the way.) Bruce witnessed the healing himself, and when he returned that evening he nearly wept as he saw the boy playing football for the first time.⁷⁵

Lidetu Kefenie, a doctoral student at our university and a professor in Ethiopia, noted that he had witnessed healings associated with prayer (such as a healed limp), including one in his own family. For two years, his wife's back pain steadily grew worse until it became difficult for her to move, especially at night. One night, when the pain was unbearable, he prayed a simple prayer and the pain vanished instantly; she sat up and showed that she was better. He was astonished and advised that they would see if it was still better in the morning. Not only the next morning but in the months that followed before he shared his report with me, the back trouble was gone.⁷⁶

Likewise, my close and trusted friend Melesse Woldetsadik not only described to me but also provided me with recent clips from the ministry of a friend and coworker of his, Pastor Dawit Molalegn of Faith Baptist Church, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In one of these clips, an older woman who had apparently been carried to the service made her way forward slowly on crutches, in obvious pain. After a brief prayer, she began walking unaided, quickly gaining confidence and apparently lacking any pain. This was no momentary burst of emotion; the clip includes a couple of minutes of her continued walking and praising God. She testified that she had been injured in a car accident on October 19, 2005, a couple years earlier when she came to town to visit her children, and that she had now been healed.⁷⁷

Another of the clips involved a girl who had been healed of a severe heart disorder and was now testifying about the healing. She wept as she shared how

74. Bernard Luvutse, personal correspondence, Aug. 17, 2006. Cf. the knee healing in Kenya reported in Marszałek, *Miracles*, 158.

75. Bruce Collins, phone interview, April 11, 2009. He also noted that the child remains healthy; though hundreds of the orphans are HIV-positive, including this one, at the time of our interview only one had died since January 2005.

76. Lidetu Alemu Kefenie, interview, Sept. 30, 2010; personal correspondence, Oct. 1, 2010.

77. Pastor Dawit Molalegn, Atsheber DVD 2 (the fifth track). Melesse, a graduate of Columbia Biblical Seminary, noted that supernatural phenomena also occurred when he was present but pointed me to these clips so that I could see examples myself.

she had seen other children running and playing, yet she was unable to do so. She wondered why God did not hear her prayers, but her mother assured her that it would happen eventually. She could not run, lacked an appetite to eat, and could not even hold a cup because her hands were weak; she said she was receiving twelve injections a day. Normally the only available medical cure for her heart condition, insofar as one may understand it based on her limited description, would be a transplant or surgery, which she presumably could not afford.⁷⁸ She received prayer on March 6, 2007, and went to her scheduled checkup three days later. Astonished at what they discovered, the doctors declared her now healthy and stopped all medication. Since then she had been able to eat, run, and play normally and had returned to school.⁷⁹

Friends of Melesse's brother Tadesse, also my trusted friend, gave him permission to share with me their story of healing when Pastor Dawit prayed, and they provided medical documentation. The fertility doctor explained that Tariku Kebede Woldeyes and his wife, Adanech Negash Tesema, who had moved to the United States, would not be able to have a pregnancy, and the medical condition is clearly documented in the material that they sent me.⁸⁰ Pastor Dawit prayed for them, noted their specific physical problem, and declared that within a year, the wife would become pregnant. After the wife became pregnant, they returned to the fertility doctor and nurse, who confirmed that this was beyond normal natural expectations.⁸¹ Yabsira Kebede Tariku was born October 19, 2009, at about 1:20 p.m., in WakeMed Hospital in Raleigh, North Carolina.⁸²

Various Sample Claims from West and Southern Africa

Joshua Obeng of Kumasi, Ghana, shared with me two stories from his family. The first involves his sister Eunice, who was given two weeks to live when she was eight and Joshua was ten. Their mother held her and prayed for her for about a week, after which Eunice vomited and then felt all right. About two weeks before I spoke with Joshua, Eunice married a university professor in the United Kingdom. The second account depends especially on the recollections of Joshua's mother, which Joshua acquired from her. When Joshua was two, he bumped into the stove, and a

78. I owe this parenthetical evaluation to Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009.

79. Pastor Dawit Molalegn, Atsheber DVD 2 (the eighth track).

80. Tadesse Woldetsadik, with information and medical documentation from Tariku Kebede Woldeyes and Adanech Negash Tesema, personal correspondence, Sept. 28, 2009; follow-up correspondence, Oct. 1, 2009; Oct. 17, 2009 (twice). The medical reports from 2006 and 2007 document 99 percent abnormal spermatozoa, with 0 percent rapid progressive motility; the 2009 pregnancy is thoroughly documented. Although they are Ethiopian, they were married in Yemen, and the events described here took place mostly in the United States (also the source of the medical documentation).

81. They wrote out their conversation during the interview with the doctor (the nurse who had worked with them serving as interpreter); a copy of this transcript is among the twelve pages of material they provided me.

82. Tadesse Woldetsadik, personal correspondence, Oct. 30, 2009, with a copy of the child's birth certificate; follow-up correspondence, Nov. 1, 2009. "Yabsira" is Amharic for "the father's work," i.e., in this case, "the work that God has done."

pot of boiling water spilled on him, burning his scalp and scalding him over most of his body. He hit the ground so hard that it affected his brain so that he could not speak. Most medical help available in Kumasi at that time was not adequate, and where he lay on the bedsheets his skin would stick to them.

Two Ghanaian doctors and a British doctor concluded that even if Joshua recovered, he would be so abnormal that he would never walk properly, would shake, and would talk dysfunctionally. His mother refused to accept this and prayed for him day and night, yet at the end of the week he remained in the same condition. At this time, feeling that God spoke to her in a dream, she checked Joshua out of the hospital, though the doctors insisted that it would kill him. Medically, they would have been right had she been wrong in this case; burns this severe create a tremendous risk of infection and dehydration.⁸³ Two days later, he began talking, and within about two months his body began healing. He showed me one spot where a scar remains, but his head shows no signs of the injury, and he has no impairments.⁸⁴

Larger evangelism crusades have also provided a context for some healing reports. Missiologists report that during the evangelism crusades of Jacques Giraud in Côte d'Ivoire in March 1973, disabled people discarded crutches and blind people claimed sight. Giraud had not witnessed many healings before this time but found that in this setting, as he preached Christ, supernatural things happened. Various denominations welcomed his ministry around the country, and some government officials were healed (for example, one whose leg had been paralyzed). As a result, even government officials organized more meetings, and entire villages were converted. The emphasis was evangelism; the vast majority of those healed were Muslims or belonged to traditional tribal religions.⁸⁵ Reportedly, fifteen thousand people were healed during these ten months.⁸⁶ One could cite many individual examples from evangelistic crusades in the same decade.⁸⁷

When Bishop Darlington Johnson was growing up in a Presbyterian family in Liberia, a car accident claimed the life of his aunt and left his two older sisters in

83. Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009.

84. Joshua Obeng, interview, Jan. 28, 2009; Joshua told me of a book that his mother wrote detailing the incidents with both himself and his sister. For the healing of other severe burns, see, e.g., Chevreau, *Turnings*, 143–44. The case elsewhere of the cure of seriously burned, eight-month-old Jaewoo Lee (receiving prayer on Jan. 28, 2006) over the course of some three weeks (http://www.wcdn.org/wcdn_eng/case/case_content.asp?id=46&page=2; accessed May 6, 2009) is intriguing but could be understood as part of a natural healing process (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, May 28, 2009).

85. Wagner, "World," 98–100 (following the report of C&MA missionary there, Don Young); De Wet, "Signs," 93–94 (following McGavran, "Healing and Evangelization," 294–96); Devadason, "Missionary Societies," 187–88; Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 178–80. On these sorts of healings, see further ch. 12. Pentecostal church growth in Côte d'Ivoire was greater in the 1990s (Newell, "Witchcraft," 468), with as much as 11 percent of the nation specifically affiliated with charismatic churches by the end of the decade (Newell, "Witchcraft," 490n1; figures are lower in Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World*, 209; also Mandryk, *Operation World*, 285).

86. Wagner, "World," 100.

87. Such as Stewart, *Only Believe*, 149–50 (from which I have cited only an individual account below).

a coma for weeks. When Darlington's mother prayed, she experienced what she took to be God's audible voice, and the sisters' miraculous recovery helped shape Darlington's subsequent emphasis on prayer.⁸⁸

Likewise, healing reports are frequent in southern Africa. A noncharismatic European researcher reported on many healings in connection with a revival among the Zulu people of South Africa in the 1970s.⁸⁹ Among others, these included a number of cases where deafness and muteness were cured,⁹⁰ people being healed who had been dying,⁹¹ and some claims regarding blindness and paralysis to be surveyed in chapter 12. De Wet conducted interviews with members of the Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa, noting again that the blind saw and the lame walked; healing campaigns produced church growth.⁹² Already in the mid-twentieth century, many miracles were attributed to (among others) the Zulu evangelist William Duma, including raising a girl from the dead.⁹³ Richard Ngidi, a Zulu layman, felt burdened for the needs in his region and after forty days of prayer and fasting reported that he began to see miracles; he and his colleagues now plant churches in conjunction with healing campaigns.⁹⁴ Many Hindus in South Africa have become Baptists as a result of healings, such as the instant healing of a mute girl after prayer.⁹⁵ My friend Rodney Ragwan shared with me that many people were healed when prayed for by his grandfather Kisten Ragwan, an Indian Baptist tailor in South Africa. In one case a Hindu who had suffered for eight months severe stomach problems, cured neither by doctors nor traditional healers, was instantly healed when Kisten prayed for him. The man was so convinced that he became a Christian.⁹⁶

The most massive response numerically has been to the healing campaigns of Reinhard Bonnke, a German minister based in (but not limited to) South Africa.⁹⁷

88. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 329.

89. Koch, *Zulus*, passim, e.g., 71–85, 90–105, 140; often these occurred in connection with repentance or conversion, e.g., 97, 140, 175–76, 177–78, 178–79, 203, 290. Reflecting a common approach in its era, at a number of points the ethnic perspective of the book is objectionable (though elsewhere sympathetic); while supporting cross-ethnic ministry that took place and human equality in Christ, it is largely apolitical.

90. Koch, *Zulus*, 80–84 (four cases, three of them siblings on 81–82); muteness in 146–48, 196.

91. *Ibid.*, 72, 197; cf. 80.

92. De Wet, "Signs," 94–95. Johan Engelbrecht in Wagner, "World," 104, notes that the first person for whose healing he prayed was "a chronic stutterer"; completely healed, the man became a well-known evangelist. Note the extensive ministry of Assemblies of God Zulu evangelist Nicholas Bhengu, e.g., in Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 126–39, esp. 129, 131. Bhengu and others would start preaching in an unevangelized area, and as people would be healed the community would open to the gospel (Bhengu, "South Africa," cited in McGee, *Miracles*, 219, 316). Bhengu influenced many (Poewe, "Nature," 6).

93. Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 123–24 (citing Garnett, *Duma*, 40ff.). For the context of one Zulu spiritual leader's recovery and healing activity in the early twentieth century, see Draper, "Land."

94. Johan Engelbrecht in Wagner, "World," 101–2.

95. Knapp, *Thunder*, 191–92.

96. Rodney Ragwan, interview, Dec. 17, 2009, based on his deliberate inquiry from his father, Raymond Ragwan, on my behalf on Dec. 16.

97. De Wet, "Signs," 95–98; Johan Engelbrecht in Wagner, "World," 102–3; Heron, *Channels*, 113; Cutrer, "Miracle." Synan, *Voices*, 26, notes that today Bonnke's crusades draw tens of millions

One of Bonnke's videos includes testimony from persons who were cured and from those who knew them both before and after their healings. In most cases, Bonnke told people in the crowds to lay hands on themselves; he attributes the healings to Jesus rather than to himself. Many of his cases on this video involve Nigeria. Daniel Attah, for example, had been deaf and mute for years after an accident but was overwhelmed with light during prayer for healing and suddenly was able to speak.⁹⁸ Another account involves Matthew Kolawole, whose migraines grew worse until he was blinded, suffering this affliction for about a year until his instant and permanent healing during prayer for healing on June 19, 2000.⁹⁹ Bernard Ozor claims to have been healed after about ten years of severe pain, after an injury sustained by carrying an excessively heavy load.¹⁰⁰ Bonnke's associate, Daniel Kolenda, reports that in one recent crusade with reportedly 280,000 in attendance, he prayed for three children, all blind, and all three received their sight instantly. The next day, Kolenda's team verified all the details in the family's village.¹⁰¹

Although my direct experience is admittedly extremely limited, I lack reason to doubt that Bonnke's ministry offers only reports that they believe to be true. This is not least because I trust the judgment of some others, including my friend Dr. Michael Brown, a Hebrew Bible scholar (and commentator on Jeremiah for the revised *Expositor's Bible Commentary*), who is very close to Daniel Kolenda; Kolenda works closely with Bonnke in his crusades. I also trust Daniel Kolenda, with whom I have also corresponded a number of times; he has offered as much help as possible and invited me to visit the meetings in person (unfortunately not yet in my travel budget). Likewise, Professor William Wilson was part of a group that invited Bonnke to a meeting in the United States, where he claims that he also witnessed blind people seeing and lame people walking.¹⁰² It is impossible for evangelists in large crusades to confirm all claims individually, so noting the existence of claims does not rule out the possibility that some individual claims might not withstand scrutiny even if the leaders work with full integrity. Nevertheless, I have no reason to doubt that they are recounting events that they have witnessed and that they have done their best to confirm a number of cases.

("3.4 million decision cards" in a single week). Josiah Mataika of Fiji shared with me his eyewitness experience of healings at one of these crusades (interview, Jan. 29, 2009). Critics charge that "disabled people returned the next day to find the crutches they had so readily abandoned" (May, "Miracles," 151, citing a media report), but it is not clear whether they followed up positive cases. May, "Miracles," 152, did find significant exaggerations in one claim that he investigated, but the original source of the exaggerations is not clear.

98. *Miracle Investigation*, track 1, providing copious details.

99. *Miracle Investigation* (again providing other witnesses and details).

100. *Ibid.* (presenting supporting testimony from his brother).

101. An update from Bonnke's ministry regarding the Nsukka/Nigeria crusade on Oct. 9, 2008, including photos, forwarded to me on Nov. 15, 2008, with further details from my friend Dr. Michael Brown, who notes that he knows Kolenda quite well.

102. Wilson, "Miracle Events," 277. Wilson depends on the claimants' behavior and testimonies, but it strains credibility to suppose that Bonnke planted all these people in another country, in a meeting organized not by himself but by Wilson's group.

Examples in Nigeria

Healings are commonly reported in Nigeria in a range of church settings.¹⁰³ These are common in evangelistic contexts; to take just one prominent ministry in the south as an example, Geoffrey Numbere has witnessed many healings.¹⁰⁴ My close friend Danny McCain, founder of the International Institute for Christian Studies and a lecturer at the University of Jos in Nigeria, knows this minister well and introduced his story to me.¹⁰⁵ Early in Numbere's ministry he laid hands on a man who was dying in bed and prayed for him. The man immediately rose from his bed, fully well, generating significant attention for Numbere's Christian message in this area.¹⁰⁶ Soon after this incident he visited a dying woman who could have been saved medically only through a heart transplant. Unfortunately the transplant was not available, and she could not have afforded it anyway; meanwhile, her legs were swollen and her breathing labored. Numbere prayed, and in a matter of seconds she sat up, fully recovered. She checked herself out of the hospital and went home, with many coming to visit her and learning of God's power.¹⁰⁷

Numbere reports numerous examples from his subsequent ministry as well. A midwife continuously bleeding since an operation on her womb was dying, and when he prayed for her, she was healed and lived for fifteen more years, without this problem returning.¹⁰⁸ A boy who was born deaf was instantly healed at age fifteen.¹⁰⁹ Others began being healed instantly as even the team members' shadows touched them.¹¹⁰ Henderson Jumbo's fractured spine was healed even without special prayer, during worship; documentation supports his claim.¹¹¹ The former chief judge of

103. With, e.g., Dr. Danny McCain, personal correspondence, June 1, 2009; Dr. Gary Maxey, personal correspondence, May 26, 2009. Note Igbo experience in Chinwoku, "Localizing," 18–19.

104. Numbere, *Vision*, passim. The book recounts (e.g., 65, 130–32, 167, 210, 443–44) and summarizes (e.g., 61, 63, 99, 130–31, 134, 185, 192, 210, 213, 233, 414) many other miracles associated with his ministry. See especially the summary of healing services on 415–16 (noting on 416 that many are reported in more detail in their magazine): "Broken bones have been mended, paralytics, epileptics, the blind, the deaf, the lame and many others have been healed; including those with heart and liver diseases. One of the latter cases was a medical doctor." On other occasions, Numbere made use of more natural means of health restoration when available (230, 293, 345). The book's author, Numbere's wife, is a medical doctor as well as a pastor.

105. Danny McCain (personal correspondence, July 11, 2009), noting that he is "a very good friend and a very credible witness." Having lived and worked with Danny for three summers in Nigeria, I have full confidence in his integrity and judgment; he is well respected by both Christians (of all denominations) and Muslims in Nigeria.

106. Numbere, *Vision*, 61.

107. *Ibid.*, 62–63. In these early cases, Numbere had visions and healings but did not speak in tongues until some years later (120–21).

108. *Ibid.*, 122–23.

109. *Ibid.*, 213. He was also healed of the inability to speak.

110. *Ibid.* (including hernia with swelling; a case of gonorrhea for many years; restoration of menstruation).

111. *Ibid.*, 415. Because the relationship with Jumbo has continued, Apostle Numbere's wife, Nonyem, a medical doctor, was able to provide me with more information, especially Jumbo's own testimony of the immediate healing, in Jumbo, "Healed" (including photographs of him in traction and then a body cast before the healing, and his well state since that time; with personal correspondence, Jan. 6, 13, 2010).

Rivers State, Justice Koripamo D. Ungbuku, “was healed of a shaking palsy of the right hand,” although he had previously suffered this affliction for three years.¹¹²

Likewise during one of Apostle Numbere’s crusades, in January 1981, a medical student’s ulcerated arm, about to be amputated the next day, was healed, to his own initial astonishment;¹¹³ in this case I was able to confirm the story with one of the eyewitnesses, Tonye Briggs, his fellow medical student at the time and now a medical doctor located in Texas.¹¹⁴ Tonye noted that the wound had been about 10 to 15 centimeters (more than four inches) wide and very deep; because it continually oozed fluids, the bandage had to be changed every night. The wound closed up overnight after prayer, and nothing but a small black spot remained on the site. The entire campus saw it and was shaken, and Tonye witnessed the event himself.¹¹⁵

Tonye noted that many miracles followed, some of which he witnessed directly. He knew one man who was unable to chew properly since two of his teeth had been removed, but during the crusade, he discovered two new teeth, even matching his other teeth in color. (The man went on to medical school himself and now pastors a large church in Trinidad.) One of Tonye’s own patients when he was a junior doctor at the hospital (something like residency here) had such a serious condition that the gynecologist, Dr. Membre, had to perform a bilateral tubal ligation, removing the tubes. The woman prayed during Apostle Numbere’s monthly healing meetings there, and three months later Tonye was present when Dr. Membre found her pregnant. Having removed the tubes himself, he could only concede, “Your God is great.” After the child’s birth, a hysterosalpingogram, a sort of X-ray using dyes, confirmed that the woman indeed had two healthy tubes; Tonye witnessed this test himself, and the woman had other children afterward.¹¹⁶

Other churches, such as the rapidly growing, indigenous Redeemed Christian Church of God, retain healing as a core emphasis and offer a variety of healing testimonies.¹¹⁷ Healing also remains an emphasis in the massive Deeper Life Bible

112. Numbere, *Vision*, 415.

113. *Ibid.*, 246–47. The student’s name was Martins Okokowre (Ikokobe), healed Jan. 11, 1981, and the doctors he worked with recognized it as undeniable; though Dr. Tonye Briggs tells me that one simply called it a “spontaneous healing,” the medical students knew it was a miracle (phone interview, Dec. 16, 2009).

114. Dr. Tonye Briggs, phone interviews, Dec. 14, 16, 2009. He directs a mission called Doctors on Missions, U.S.A., which brings medical help to people in areas with less access to it.

115. Dr. Tonye Briggs, phone interview, Dec. 16, 2009.

116. Dr. Tonye Briggs, phone interview, Dec. 16, 2009; he also noted a similar healing, a woman’s pregnancy after her hysterectomy, of which he knew during this time but did not witness directly. I have chosen to recount the case where he was an eyewitness. Concern for infertility runs high among African women and is naturally a central object of ministry in AICs (e.g., Zimbabwean prophetesses in Chitando, “Prophetesses,” 7); it was also an emphasis of a Catholic charismatic woman in Nigeria (Csordas, “Global Perspective,” 341), though she fell from favor with the establishment (341–42); and in other African Protestant testimonies (e.g., Koch, *Zulus*, 84–85; Baker, *Miracles*, 152; Jeanne Mabiala, interview, July 29, 2008; Onesimus Asimwe, interview, Oct. 13, 2008).

117. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 354, 355; cf. the introduction to Adeboye with Mfon, “Preparing,” 204. Some examples of testimonies appear in *Our God Reigns*, the program book for the Redeemed Christian Church of God’s Holy Ghost Congress, Dec. 14–19, 2009 (pp. 35–38), shared with me by Pastor James

Church.¹¹⁸ Likewise, healings of young people opened doors for Emmanuel Okorie's ministry in both Nigeria and the United States.¹¹⁹ From a different source, some may find interesting one memorable if highly unusual story. In this account, a Nigerian Muslim insisted to an evangelist that God showed him that God would heal his deaf wife if the evangelist would spit in her ear (perhaps evoking Mark 7:33; John 9:6; or some traditional African practices).¹²⁰ Initially unwilling but finally acquiescing to the hefty supplicant's demands, the evangelist spit in her ear. She was healed (the evangelist attributing this entirely to God responding to her and her husband's faith), and the Muslim became a well-known Christian preacher.¹²¹

My colleague in Hebrew Bible, Emmanuel Itapson, from the Evangelical Church of West Africa, shared with me the recovery of his sister Ladi Anana, whom I knew and respected from my visits to Nigeria. She had a growth in her abdomen that grew to a significant size, causing painful pressure, and doctors took X-rays. Much prayer was being offered for her, and when she went for surgery they noticed that they could not feel the growth. Although the situation was highly irregular, they decided to check her again; they found nothing, and her pain and pressure had instantly disappeared. The money for surgery was even refunded.¹²² This is not the first extraordinary experience in Emmanuel's immediate family; I will recount a nature miracle in chapter 12 and mention another case of health against the odds in chapter 14, and there are other incidents regarding his father, Ladi, and others that I am not recounting. Some readers might dismiss one extraordinary occurrence as simply an anomaly, but when such experiences happen more often in the same circle, one might wish to look for some common factors.

From my own circle of acquaintances, I contacted also my friend Leo Bawa, former director of research at Capro (a prominent Nigerian missions movement), currently a PhD student at Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, because I knew from past discussion that he would have stories from his own ministry. In his response,¹²³ he pointed out that all "life in Africa is a miracle," and Africans have to depend on miracles regularly. He works with widows, orphans, the elderly, and

Fadele; see further <http://www.rccg.org>. Others have commented even on the movement's expansion in the West (e.g., Adeboye, "Running"); it has branches in 110 nations (Shaw, *Awakening*, 162, 172), and is estimated to be planting five to ten churches a day (Wagner, "Introduction: Africa," 14); for its growth, see also Clarke, "Wine," 151.

118. Shaw, *Kingdom*, 261–62.

119. Burgess, *Revolution*, 183.

120. In African traditional religion, see Evans-Pritchard, *Religion*, 308; for a reported healing through saliva in Simon Kimbangu's ministry, see, e.g., Rabey, "Prophet," 32. There are also ancient Mediterranean examples, with the case of Vespasian being most noted (Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81; Suetonius *Vesp.* 7.2–3); cf. ancient folk cures in Pliny *Nat.* 28.7.35–37; 28.22.76; in ancient Egyptian magic, see Ritner, *Mechanics*, 73–92; perhaps relevant in this case, cf. Ritner, *Mechanics*, 92, on a similar practice in Islam.

121. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 149–50 (himself the evangelist and eyewitness). He recounts this story because it is unusual, not because it was the only healing noted on that occasion.

122. Emmanuel Itapson, phone interview, Dec. 17, 2009. The incident was known both to the doctors directly involved and to those among Emmanuel's relatives.

123. This section is based on Leo Bawa, personal correspondence, Aug. 10, 2009.

other impoverished people who cannot afford hospitals. While advocating hospitals and medicine where available, he notes that many people lack such resources, so God's power to heal is the "better alternative to millions of people in this part of the world." Though noting that he was not able to collect as many firsthand accounts for me as he wished, due to communication difficulties, he supplied nine pages, from which I take the following examples. Leo notes that these are only samples and summarizes, "By God's grace I have seen God healing all kinds of diseases and sicknesses by his power: malaria, pains and aches, cancer, depression, bones; and the dead brought back to life."

Road accidents are common in Nigeria, and he mentioned two examples of these. One believer he had mentored, Boniface, was driving on Rukuba Road in Jos in July 2002 when in an accident his car somersaulted and crashed into rocks below in the river.¹²⁴ He remained unconscious for months, and the doctors expected him to need medical care for the rest of his life in the unlikely event that he recovered; yet after several believers prayed for him, he recovered quickly and fully, so that today one would not even know that he had suffered an accident. Elijah Amah had a motorcycle accident in July 2008 and was run over by a pickup truck. Many people believed that he was dead, and doctors again felt that if he survived he would need medical attention all his life. When Leo and a friend laid hands on him, they felt peace that he would recover; he recovered quickly and, as in the case of Boniface, no one today would know that he had an accident. In both cases, the doctors believed that the recoveries involved miracles, and relatives and neighbors were so amazed at the recoveries that some became believers.

He reports numerous incidents of women who after years of being unable to bear children now were able to bear.¹²⁵ Among other unexpected acts of grace, he experienced divine help during earlier research travels (travels that we sometimes discussed some years ago). "For example," he noted, "among some tribes in Adamawa and Taraba State, I had instances where no interpreter was available and the Lord gave me understanding and ability to speak the people's languages, a feat I never performed before or since after that incident." (Other accounts of this phenomenon exist, though many of these are secondhand.¹²⁶) In chapter 12, I will recount Leo's eyewitness experience of the raising of a boy believed to be dead.

124. I have been on this road (in the summers of 1998–2000) and, though not yet knowing Boniface's story, as a Westerner sometimes contemplated the dangers if one were to have an accident over the river. Unremoved wreckage on the riverside by some roads' bridges offered travelers somber enough warnings.

125. Although I do not elaborate these because they are of less interest to many Western readers, they address concerns that are central in African society (reported elsewhere, e.g., Anderson, *Pelendó*, 122–25).

126. I have direct accounts in which others recognized the languages from Dr. Derek Morphew (Nov. 12, 2007); Pastor David Workman (April 30, 2008); Dr. Médine Moussounga Keener (Aug. 12, 2009, secondhand about Pastor Daniel Ndoundou); my student Leah Macinskas-Le (April 25, 2010, regarding her Jewish mother becoming a believer in Jesus because she understood the Hebrew prayer of an uneducated pastor's prayer in tongues); Del Tarr, personal correspondence, Sept. 30, 2010 (noting three cases he has witnessed, including a recent one involving Korean; cf. also Oct. 5, 6, 2010). In written sources, see Tarr, *Foolishness*, 401–3 (about ten cases, some with considerable supporting evidence, especially cases where Tarr, a linguist, was one of the eyewitnesses); Prather, *Miracles*, 166–71 (an eyewitness

My student Benjamin Ahanonu shared with me accounts of various healings and other dramatic events.¹²⁷ On one occasion here in the United States, during a period when we were discussing miracles in the Acts class he was taking with me, he was called to pray for a friend's wife. X-rays showed that her neck had been fractured when someone rear-ended their vehicle. His friend shared with me the details, which I summarize here: she was transported to another hospital with better facilities while they prayed; at this hospital the new X-rays contradicted the first ones, showing that nothing was wrong. The doctor at the second hospital, though conceding that he was unsure what to make of it, concluded that perhaps

account); Mansfield, *Pentecost*, 50 (a French major, Mansfield listened as a friend, praying in tongues, prayed in French with perfect pronunciation, and Mansfield discovered afterward that the friend did not even know that he had been praying in French); Warner, *Evangelist*, 256–57 (on 267n13 noting the interview source insisting that the speaker, who knew no Romanian, spoke it for twenty-five minutes); Burton, "Villages," 8 (when central African believers received tongues, "we heard perfect English and beautiful French by natives who had never heard" them, as well as "South African Dutch and German"); Simpson, "Utterance" (a Chinese Christian reported unknowingly praying in Japanese, thereby softening and converting a previously hostile Japanese officer in North China); Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 271 (a Jewish bystander confirmed an utterance as perfect Hebrew, according to Dennis Balcombe); Koch, *Gifts*, 36; Tari, *Wind*, 26–27 (he personally knew that the English speaker on 26 did not know English; see also 124; Breeze, 172); Jones, *Wonders*, 66 (if I understand correctly); Stibbe, *Prophetic Evangelism*, 75; Olson, *Bruchko*, 152; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 38, 97, 142–43; Bennett, *Morning*, 107–8; Robertson, *Miracles*, 10–11 (citing supporting evidence); Bredesen, *Miracle*, 139–44 (four cases); most extensively, about twenty-five cases in Harris, *Acts Today*, 108–30 (on 7 he refers to his earlier book with seventy-five cases); less certainly, Yeomans, *Healing*, 119 (understood "a little" by the author); see also Woodworth-Etter, *Miracles*, 110; McGee, *People of Spirit*, 24, 46–47, 57, 61, 64, 75; idem, *Miracles*, 112; Robeck, *Mission*, 268–69; Lindsay, *Lake*, 25, 27; Blumhofer, "Portrait," 96, 99; Sherrill, *Tongues*, 19, 20, 42–43, 45, 90–91, 93, 94, 95, 96–97, 99–100; Synan, *Voices*, 60, 76–77, 84, 101–2; some possibly relevant examples in McGee, "Radical Strategy," 78–79, 84–85; idem, "Shortcut" (some after minimal acquaintance with a language, citing, e.g., "Tarry"; "Gift of Tongues"; Goforth, *Goforth*, 87–88; Wagner, *Wave*, 102–4; see also McGee, "Strategy in Mission," 78–79; idem, *Miracles*, 64; for this phenomenon, see also Rutz, *Megashift*, 38, 90–91; Synan, *Voices*, 147; perhaps the facility in Cherokee reported in Kidd, *Awakening*, 226). Analogously, cf. claims of learning how to read by inspiration, in Rutz, *Megashift*, 88–89; cf. Rumph, *Signs*, 124–28, though after exposure to words; Koch, *Zulus*, 201–3 (for the Bible); Bredesen, *Miracle*, 92–93 (also used by Sherrill; with other academic issues, 90–97, esp. 90–92); DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 40; Adeboye with Mfon, "Preparing," 207; Marszalek, *Miracles*, 156 (in Kenya); cf. Anderson, *Pelendo*, 37–40. For a reported case of independent yet identical "interpretations" of tongues in two different languages, see Pullinger, *Dragon*, 69–70 (the second interpreter did not know the first's language); for reports of *hearing* in another language, see Young, "Miracles in History," 119; Anna Gulick, interview, March 11, 2011. Some tested incidents are better explained differently (Hilborn, "Glossolalia," 115–16; Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 47–48); Hudson, "Strange Words," 61, suggests that most accounts are based on snippets here and there recognized by hearers, which could be random, or the sorts of sounds speakers could have heard before and unconsciously verbalized. These explanations cover some claimed incidents of supposed language recognition (likely including some cited above) but do not seem to cover the kind of linguistic fluency Leo's report (or some other extended verbal reports I received) envisions. For treatment of reported xenolalia and spirit languages in some traditional religions, as well as anthropological and sociological approaches to some Christian glossolalia, see, e.g., comment on Acts 2:4 in Keener, *Acts*.

127. His most recent example involved his sister Charity, a nurse. She prayed for her friend Robin Flores, who had a spot on her left arm for about six months that her doctor believed was cancerous; about three days after the prayer, it disappeared without treatment (Charity Ahanonu, phone interview, May 19, 2010; Robin Flores, phone interview, May 23, 2010). There had not yet been verification by means of a biopsy before the cure, however. Confirmed, biopsied cancer vanished in, e.g., Prather, *Miracles*, 200–201.

the apparent fracture on the first X-ray was a nerve that looked like a fracture. Benjamin's friend then explained, with Benjamin as a witness, what they had prayed, and the doctor accepted that explanation. She was then discharged immediately.¹²⁸

Examples in Mozambique

Reports of extraordinary recoveries also characterize the ministry of Rolland and Heidi Baker, especially in their work with thousands of orphans in Mozambique.¹²⁹ Unless one works from controlling presuppositions that miracles cannot occur, most would consider the Bakers credible sources: Heidi Baker holds a PhD in systematic theology from King's College, University of London; they work with doctors;¹³⁰ and they openly and sympathetically acknowledge the many who are not healed.¹³¹ Nevertheless, they also offer eyewitness accounts and summaries of miraculous healings in connection with their ministry in Mozambique, including healings of deafness,¹³² AIDS,¹³³ epilepsy,¹³⁴ tumors,¹³⁵ tuberculosis,¹³⁶ and a boy

128. Chibuzo Oparanyawu (personal correspondence, Dec. 18, 2009; Feb. 22, 2010; June 7, 2010; Sept. 1, 2010); reconfirmation from Benjamin, Sept. 4, 2010.

129. For healings, see, e.g., Baker, *Miracles*, 108, 137, 152 (infertility), 170, 172, 180 (one apparently dying); also reported in Clark, *Impartation*, 107–22, 173–77, 190–93, 218–20. For healings outside Mozambique, see, e.g., Baker, *Enough*, 25 (dyslexia), 32 (in Indonesia and Hong Kong), 48 (pneumonia). Many were restored from cholera in Baker, *Enough*, 144 (cf. also a healing in 168); Clark, *Impartation*, 191–92. Others note the rapid growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Mozambique (Schuetzle, "Role," 36–37). For academic study of their ministry, see Kantel, "Revival" (as cited in Brown, "Awakenings," 367n15); some other recent studies note them at least in passing (e.g., McGee, *Miracles*, 306n13).

130. Baker, *Enough*, 56, 58, 61, 90, 97, 148–49, 172; cf. idem, *Miracles*, 80–81; Chevreau, *Turnings*, 182, 214.

131. Baker, *Enough*, 37, 41, 61, 65, 148–49, 163–64, 179–80, and especially 169, 171–72; also idem, *Miracles*, 43, 58, 86, 93–94, 115, 135, 137, 149, 163, 165; cf. Chevreau, *Turnings*, 55, 211–12. Working among the poor, they do not promulgate what North Americans would define as a prosperity gospel (Baker, *Enough*, 30–31, 42, 52, 70–71, 81, 156; idem, *Miracles*, 58, 86–89, 131; Brown, "Awakenings," 354).

132. Baker, *Enough*, 157 (a girl deaf from birth), 169, 173; idem, *Miracles*, 7–8 (two examples), 39 (two examples), 43, 78 (often, including examples), 108, 114 (many), 163 (two examples), 172 (twelve mentioned, plus many others), 180, 183, 192–93 (all); Chevreau, *Turnings*, 142. For the healings of persons both deaf and blind, see 145, 174, 182. Elsewhere in Africa, see, e.g., Numbere, *Vision*, 210; Crandall, *Raising*, 152; claims of multiple cases in "Our God Reigns," 35; Marszalek, *Miracles*, 160.

133. Baker, *Enough*, 160 (verified by the negative test afterward). Most cases of AIDS in Africa are not supernaturally healed (see, e.g., Numbere, *Vision*, 270–71), and churches have responded in various ways spiritually (cf., e.g., Adogame, "Walk") as well as in practical ways of running orphanages and caring for the sick. Most traditional practitioners do not claim to be able to heal AIDS (Bond, "Ancestors," 154), though Binsbergen, "Witchcraft," 225–26, cites a prophet-healer who promised this briefly before his own demise. A number of the claims I have received from various sources do not distinguish HIV and AIDS, so I am not always certain which claim they are making; a person can recover from the latter (normally with treatment) without the former status changing (Dr. Tahira Adelekan, phone interview, April 24, 2009), and sometimes the latter is renewed after remission (Eaton, "AIDS," 319). Presumably my sources' references to tests, however, normally refer to HIV infection.

134. Baker, *Enough*, 63.

135. Baker, *Miracles*, 57: "a tumor the size of a fist instantly disappeared."

136. Baker, *Enough*, 56. Cf. Chevreau, *Turnings*, 181–82, where apparently a tubercular cyst ruptured, which could have led to the victim bleeding or choking to death that night; instead, after a time of prayer, he was restored.

who had been essentially “brain-dead for months.”¹³⁷ Heidi notes the first time when she “saw totally blind eyes, white from cataracts, change color and become normal and healthy.”¹³⁸ Kathy Evans, who works with the Bakers’ ministry, remarked to me offhand that she had visited them with a team of students recently and witnessed a middle-aged man born deaf healed when Kathy and students prayed for the person.¹³⁹

In the course of my correspondence with Rolland Baker, he encouraged me that the most meaningful approach for me to learn about the miracles would be for me to come to Mozambique and witness them for myself.¹⁴⁰ Due to my circumstances at the time, I could not make that journey or many others that would have been helpful, but other visitors have reported seeing such incidents. A young filmmaker teaching at the time at Judson University videotaped Heidi and some orphans praying for a non-Christian woman known in her village to be deaf. This person’s recovery of hearing, along with the healing of another person on the same trip, provides one of the more dramatic scenes in the film.¹⁴¹ One of my students, Amanda Hammill Kaminski, who had met Heidi Baker through YWAM, told me that her roommate had spent some time working with Heidi Baker and during that time witnessed numerous conspicuously visible miracles.¹⁴²

When I was asking another contact, Shelley Hollis, about healings she had witnessed, she mentioned her experiences in Mozambique about a year and a half before our conversation.¹⁴³ Before she raised the subject, I had not been aware that she had spent any time in Mozambique, but she independently confirmed reports about the ministry of the Bakers and their Mozambican colleagues. She said that when she was present, in one village without any Christians, Heidi asked a crowd of about a thousand if anyone was sick. A deaf and mute girl of about eight or nine came forward, and Heidi prayed; the girl began to hear first and then gradually began to try to imitate sounds whispered in her ear. Immediately, Shelley noted, the reaction swept through the crowd like a wave from front to back, from whispering to ululation and finally jumping up and down. Shelley witnessed a deaf boy about the same age healed the same night, and the next day a church was started.

Shortly after this, Shelley was preaching in another village there with no Christians. A commotion started in the back while she was preaching, but she continued

137. Baker, *Enough*, 65.

138. *Ibid.*, 76 (noting other such incidents in 171–72, 173). Most research recommends that surgery is the only option for cataracts (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009).

139. Kathy Evans, personal correspondence, Nov. 10, 2008 (two emails that day, the first commenting also on the healed person’s astonishment).

140. E.g., personal correspondence, April 26, 2008. What he invited me to come see for myself (the healing of the deaf in non-Christian villages when they prayed for them) others independently confirmed for me having seen; when Shelley Hollis (noted below) began sharing her testimony, she did not yet even know that I knew of the Bakers.

141. The DVD is called *Finger of God*.

142. Amanda told me this during my spring 2008 Matthew course at Palmer. We have not been able to reach her former roommate.

143. Shelley Hollis, phone interview, Jan. 10, 2009.

preaching until she discovered that in the back, a teenage girl had started to hear for the first time. The girl's mother brought her forward and began to testify that her daughter had begun to hear. While they were testifying, the blind right eye of a woman to Shelley's left was suddenly healed. Shelley announced that God was healing people and instructed them to bring the sick. In response, they brought a paralyzed woman on a mat.¹⁴⁴ The woman then got up and began to dance! None of these people, Shelley emphasized, were yet Christians, although before the night was over some five hundred people committed themselves to become followers of Christ, and a church was started the next day. Presumably the locals who knew those who were cured believed that something dramatic had happened. The probability of an alternative explanation seems abysmally low: Would a village, though already committed to a particular religion, fake all these healings and then contribute so many members to a permanent new church, just to fool some visiting Christians? More recently, a research team has discovered surprising medical confirmation of claims of healings of blindness and deafness taking place there.¹⁴⁵ In view of such evidence, I believe that the sorts of claims surrounding the Bakers' ministry should appear credible to those who do not presuppose that such events cannot happen.¹⁴⁶

Congolese Evangelists

These examples are a small number among tens of thousands¹⁴⁷ who have claimed to be healed, sometimes through the many healing crusades and other activities of evangelists known for healing gifts, but other times in less public settings.¹⁴⁸ I take a significant number of my African healing accounts, however, from a small African country of about three or four million, the Republic of Congo. (This nation should not be confused with the larger Democratic Republic of Congo, which is not only much larger but also proportionately has much larger Pentecostal and charismatic movements.) I have chosen accounts from this small country because it is my wife's country, and I have therefore had more opportunity to speak with numerous eyewitnesses and some secondhand witnesses there. Because the country has a small population (roughly the size of Philadelphia), and because almost all my samples come from the mainline Protestant church (Église Évangélique

144. Long-term paralysis is typically irreversible; deafness may be cured, but normally through surgical intervention (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009).

145. They measured auditory and visual function before and after prayer for healing of hearing and vision impairments and found that audiometric and visual acuity measurements of improved function corresponded closely with self-reported improvements in function subsequent to prayer (Brown, Mory, Williams, and McClymond, "Effects"; briefly, Brown, "Awakenings," 363–64). Such a report may generate critics, but I am confident that the reporters (two of whom I know) are reliable; if one does not presuppose that such healings cannot happen there is no reason to doubt their claims. The circumstances resemble those depicted in the Gospels and especially Acts.

146. That detractors could be found in Mozambique is likely, given religious and other variations there; but detractors cannot erase the hard evidence of people who have been and remain cured.

147. As McGee, "Strategies," 206, notes, "The sheer quantity of testimonies alone bears serious assessment."

148. E.g., Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 178–80; in Kenya, Clark, *Impartation*, 169.

du Congo) rather than Pentecostal, independent, or Catholic charismatic circles there,¹⁴⁹ and because a majority of those I interviewed were lay workers rather than church leaders, my random sampling obviously represents merely a tiny cross section of the sorts of miracle claims occurring in Africa.¹⁵⁰ That is, I believe that it representatively illustrates on a microcosmic level what is clearly a much more pervasive phenomenon documented throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa. Not all these accounts are naturally inexplicable; for my informants, healing remains God's work, whether it involves a headache disappearing or someone being raised from the dead.

My wife, Dr. Méline Moussounga Keener, has told me some of the reports about the ministry of Pastor Daniel Ndoundou (1911–86), who had a reputation for miracle working and even resuscitations from death. She has collected material about him,¹⁵¹ but her father knew him personally much better than she did. (I would also note that neither my wife nor her parents belonged to distinct charismatic circles in the usual Western sense; they were traditional Congolese Protestants.¹⁵²) To take one early example from Pastor Ndoundou's ministry, Milandou Simone's legs were paralyzed; when Pastor Ndoundou prayed for her in 1948, she was healed.¹⁵³ My wife's mother, Antoinette Malombé,¹⁵⁴ recounted various stories about Pastor Ndoundou,¹⁵⁵ for example, the story of a miracle in

149. Those circles are large there, with Catholics being dominant and 23.2 percent of the Central African population being renewalists (Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 103, higher even than East and West Africa, though lower than southern Africa). The EEC itself has been open to spiritual gifts, including healings, since a "spiritual revival" in 1947 (Dorier-Apprill, "Networks," 296).

150. Although, as the stories themselves will make clear, few of these cases occurred in a setting where medical documentation would be available, Dr. Joseph Harvey shared with me (July 25, 2008, in Brazzaville) that in his medical practice there he has also seen recoveries after prayer there that he believed had no medical explanation. For example, he and his wife, Rebecca, recounted the story of Marie-Rose Nyiragwiza, a Rwandan survivor settled in Congo, who was unexpectedly restored from the brink of death in April 2003 and now works in the hospital. A man who came to visit Dr. Harvey during our conversation offered a testimony as well, which Dr. Harvey said he could verify. The same day, Dr. Harvey recommended I consult a U.S. missionary to Congo, Gary Dickinson, who had recovered from the sort of liver ailment from which, Dr. Harvey indicated, a person does not simply recover. I already knew Gary (we had attended college together) but did not know his story, which he shared with me soon afterward (personal correspondence, Aug. 5, 2008; also a circular letter, March 2010). He was diagnosed in 1991 with severe liver disease and given four to twelve years to live without a transplant. He continued on medication, but in 1999 he was so ill that he lost almost sixty pounds in three weeks and was often sleeping twenty hours a day; in 2000 he turned yellow. But he says he has been improving since God touched him in 2002, without a change in the medicine, and is now working normal hours (mostly in this tropical country) and remains in good health.

151. In published form, see Keener, "Ndoundou."

152. Other sources have told me that the charismatic movement did affect both the Catholic and Protestant churches there, but my wife and her parents did not belong to distinctly charismatic churches, nor have they prayed in tongues.

153. Keener, "Ndoundou," citing Église Évangélique, *Ngouédi*, 27.

154. She remained married to Méline's father, Jacques Moussounga, until his recent death; following their custom at the time (also fairly common in the West today), however, they retained their different surnames.

155. All recounted to me July 13, 2008.

which a woman whose uterus had been removed had a baby.¹⁵⁶ He also prophesied various things to my father-in-law, Jacques Moussounga, that came to pass.¹⁵⁷

My mother-in-law also recounted a story she heard from another African Christian prophet, Malonga, about an event that took place in the mid-1980s. One day Malonga had announced that a disabled boy, who was about six years old, would be healed on a certain day of that week. Afterward he began to worry that he should not have promised this healing so confidently. While Christians gathered that day to pray, others gathered from curiosity or to mock them. The Christians kept praying and singing, but nothing was happening. After the mother carried the child aside to the bush to defecate, however, she unexpectedly discovered the child healed and brought him back to the meeting happily. When people saw the child standing on his own, they stood and began to applaud; but Malonga said that he fell on his face and thanked God that his expectation had not failed.

My wife's family knew Evangelist Ngoma Moïse personally.¹⁵⁸ They heard from him a story about his oldest son, then a teenager named Joël; when he was very sick, they took him to the hospital at Kingoyi near the border of the larger Congo. The father was spending the night in the hospital when he dreamed about a particular trail and someone instructing him about the leaves of a small tree there. When he awoke, he carried his son outside and came across the very trail he had seen in the dream. He followed it until he saw the small tree, then put his son down and began to massage him with the leaves of this tree, squeezing out their juice. The son was suddenly healed and stood up, and in the morning they left the hospital, to the doctors' surprise.¹⁵⁹ We were later able to confirm the basic account briefly from Ngoma Moïse.¹⁶⁰

Papa Jacques's Experiences

But such claims are not limited to traveling evangelists, nor do they all simply rehearse another person's testimony. Although a railroad official rather than a traveling evangelist, my wife's father, Jacques Moussounga, also from Congo, offered

156. Medically impossible, of course (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009), hence presupposing a miracle (I would assume that it would entail the creation of something like a new uterus). Such reports also occurred in the West in early Pentecostalism (in Edmonton, Alberta, see Cadwalder, "Healings").

157. Antoinette Malombé, interview, July 13, 2008.

158. The story was recounted to me July 13, 2008, about an incident in Loulombo, but the account narrated an event that took place more than thirty years earlier.

159. I recognize that the use of herbal remedies reflects traditional African practice (cf. Byaruhanga-Akiiki and Kealotswe, *Healing*, 61–78, and sources noted earlier), but hesitant Western Christian readers might consider that God could contextualize for various cultures' healing traditions, just as Western Christians often pray for God to work through medicine. Although they are not pervasive, we do have biblical accounts of God working through poultices (Isa 38:21) and obedience to strange commands like washing in a particular river (2 Kgs 5:10–14). That culture and local history affect how people seek healing is clear enough; cf. the distinctive forms used in Argentina (Marostica, "Learning").

160. Later Ngomo Moïse visited my wife's family, and I was told that he was pleased to learn that I would be using some of his stories; we confirmed the basic story in a brief phone interview (May 14, 2009).

simple prayers in faith for healing.¹⁶¹ My wife once profited from this as a young girl, when she was instantly healed of severe fever.¹⁶² Likewise, Henriette Mabiala, then Henriette Makita, told me that when she was sick as a girl, too weak to stand, Papa Jacques (as my father-in-law was known) prayed for her very simply. When he finished praying, he took her by the hand and helped her to stand. Suddenly she felt better and had no fever, nor did the sickness return.¹⁶³

Papa Jacques also shared with me in writing some specific healing testimonies close to him, including one about himself. From 1960 to 1981, he suffered from frequent mouth abscesses; sometimes the sores on his tongue made eating and speaking too painful. Although he was treated three times, the treatments failed to cure him. The third time, in 1980, he was hospitalized, unable to speak or eat for a week; nevertheless, afterward he still had a burst of abscesses monthly. Despite the pain, he quit praying for healing and quit asking for others to pray for it. The next year, he was transferred to a different city; there he joined a prayer group but never mentioned his ailment. One night Suzanne Makounou, who hosted the group, dreamed that he was having terrible pain from mouth abscesses. She had known nothing about them, so afterward she asked him why he had not requested prayer. She prayed simply, "God, why did you show me his sickness? If it was so that he would be delivered, heal him." About a month and a half later, he noticed that he had not experienced the abscesses since her prayer. He never suffered with the mouth sores again.¹⁶⁴

On another occasion, when his youngest daughter, Gracia, was seven months old, she was sick with cerebral meningitis, and they took her to A. Sisse Hospital. But the next day, Barthélémy Boubanga, a hospital administrator, sent word that Gracia had only twenty-four hours left to live.¹⁶⁵ That night, Papa Jacques and Antoinette Malombé (locally known as Mme Jacques) remained all night in the hospital, praying; Mme Jacques pressed some milk into a small spoon and put it in her daughter's mouth. When Mme Jacques felt that the child would really die, she went into the bathroom and cried and asked God to give the child back; never-

161. Some of his story appears in Keener, "Moussounga," which includes some of the stories here; Méline also wrote about him in "Special Men," 9–14.

162. My source for my wife's healing is my wife, undated here because she has recounted it to me multiple times, from before our marriage until now. She recounts the story also in Keener, "Special Men," 12. Her brother Emmanuel had a similar healing experience (correspondence, July 2, 2011).

163. Interview, July 24, 2008, in Brazzaville. She and her husband also supplied other testimonies.

164. Shared with me in writing Sept. 8, 2005. Cf. also the healing of a malignant oral ulcer, which is rarely cured medically, in Heron, *Channels*, 128–29.

165. Meningitis need not always be fatal, but infants are less likely to survive and normally need emergency care and antibiotics (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009). Given the hospital's warnings and the doctor's reaction, her survival had not been considered likely. A doctor whose son was dying of meningitis in a Western hospital, in a case where, like this one, other doctors expected the baby's death, considered his survival and gradual recovery without impairment miraculous (Woodard, *Faith*, 30–35). For a story of another baby not expected to survive the night, and healed of various severe problems, see DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 128; the cure of another baby dying of meningitis, Salmon, *Heals*, 87–88; the recovery of Gisángel Curvelo Jiménez (treated under Cuba).

theless, she felt despair. When the French doctor and the nurse (a nun) entered the room in the morning, the doctor asked tentatively whether the child was still alive; they were surprised to see that she was. The doctor asked to what God they prayed, and when he learned that they prayed to Jesus,¹⁶⁶ he commented, "You pray to a true God." Gracia recovered only gradually, remaining in the hospital for more than a month, though soon afterward she recovered fully. At the time of my writing this account, Gracia is thirty-five years old and healthy.¹⁶⁷ She was present when I interviewed her mother about this recovery, to confirm and supplement her parents' account based on what she had been told as a child.¹⁶⁸

Mama Jeanne and Others

Outside this family, I spoke also with Jeanne Mabiala (no relation to Henriette, above). Mama Jeanne was not famous; we knew her because she was close friends with the family. That is, she appears here not as someone whose sort of ministry is unique (we knew some others who had similar ministries) but as one of the people in our immediate circle with this sort of ministry. Whenever we approached her home, we found her praying for the many people who were coming to her, some having experienced what they believed were miracles in connection with her prayers.¹⁶⁹ Mama Jeanne is a deacon in a mainline Protestant church in Brazzaville and exuded obvious concern for people's needs and joyful confidence that God would meet them. She told me of a midwife whose fibroids were so serious that her uterus was removed when she and her husband were in France. After they returned to Congo, the family of her husband, a colonel, procured a younger woman for him to ensure that he would have children, much to the wife's dismay. This situation continued for four years, during which time the younger, second wife failed to conceive.

Finally, in 1992, the midwife dreamed that a voice instructed her to go to a particular church in Poto-Poto. When she went there and requested prayer, Mama Jeanne says that God told her and someone else to just pray for this midwife for the next three months. Toward the beginning of the third month, the midwife felt a pain in her stomach; those praying for her believed that it was a child, but

166. Technically, Papa Jacques said, "I am a Protestant." It was explained to me that in that cultural setting at that time this was understood to mean that he prayed to Jesus.

167. Jacques Moussounga's account is dated Sept. 8, 2005; I have added details from the separate telling of the account by Antoinette Malombé, offered July 12, 2008, with Gracia's age then confirmed by herself. While each telling included some separate details, neither disagreed on the substance of what they did include (more than three decades after the event).

168. Gracia Moussounga, interview, July 12, 2008.

169. Interview, July 29, 2008, in Brazzaville. Mama Jeanne sees no tension between medical and divine healing; she appreciates positive training she received from the World Health Organization before the war, noting that it helped her in delivering babies during the war. Doctors have believed and wanted the effective local herbal remedies that she felt led to prescribe, and my brother-in-law, who has a PhD in chemistry and a master's degree in pharmacology, has examined some of them from a pharmaceutical standpoint and would research them further if he could get research funding. In this book, I have used only some of her stories; others included a child progressively healed of heart and brain damage in 2006 and a woman (who was leaving as we arrived) healed in 2005 of epilepsy.

the midwife was not convinced. She knew that it was impossible! Nevertheless, this woman, in her late forties, gave birth to twins, and later gave birth to another set of twins. The second wife left angrily, but the midwife joined Mama Jeanne's church and remained there until the war. I recognize that this account is medically impossible;¹⁷⁰ but then, when healings are medically possible (like many that I have noted above), we Westerners tend not to call them miracles.

One husband was living promiscuously, and in 1986, both members of the couple tested positive for HIV. The wife was crying that she was going to die. Mama Jeanne entered a twenty-day period of prayer for them, and at the end she told them that God had removed their sickness but that they must not go outside the marriage again. A new test showed no trace of HIV, but they were retested afterward when visiting France to be certain.¹⁷¹ Again there was no trace of the virus, and they have remained in good health, except for the husband's mild diabetes. My wife and brother-in-law, present during the interview, both know the man, though I was permitted to use this story only after omitting all identifying details.

On another occasion, during a prayer meeting in Dolisie, a panicked mother brought her daughter in on her back. The daughter, about nineteen years old, was convulsing, with white spittle coming out as if she were dying. She was healed and walked out of the church under her own power; the impressed mother became a member of the prayer group. My brother-in-law, Emmanuel Moussounga, was with us during the interview with Mama Jeanne and attested that he was present on the occasion described, and that he not only saw the young woman recovered, but sees her whenever he visits the city of Dolisie.¹⁷² I will include a further, more dramatic eyewitness account from Mme Jacques and more stories from Mama Jeanne in chapter 12.¹⁷³

I also talked with other ministers, such as Pastor Jean Mouko,¹⁷⁴ who was a friend of my father-in-law and is well known to my wife. When I asked if he had any healing stories, he protested that it would be hard for him to decide which to recount, because he had so many. Given the brief time available, he spoke quickly, offering whichever accounts first came to his mind. In one of his accounts, he noted that during Pentecost season 2007 in Mvouti, he was told during a service that someone outside was close to death. The person who brought the sick man had no real hope that he

170. Dr. Nicole Matthews (personal correspondence, April 1, 2009) noted that without a uterus "it is physically impossible to carry a baby (let alone twins) to term and have a live birth." The account, then, apparently presupposes the restoration of the uterus.

171. The HIV virus "can go undetected for years or even decades" but is less likely to disappear after being present (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009).

172. My brother-in-law, Emmanuel Moussounga, holds a PhD from France, like my wife; his PhD is in chemistry, and he has a master's degree in pharmacology as well. He thus knows and affirms the best in the Western medical healing tradition, but he also affirms complementary spiritual realities. He also recounted other cures involving supernatural elements (July 25, 2008).

173. After hearing the stories, I joked that some U.S. readers would want to travel to Congo to have Mama Jeanne pray for them. She and her nephew began laughing and pointing to an old picture of Jesus on the wall. "It's just Jesus!" Mama Jeanne insisted. That is, they attributed the common factor in the healings not to themselves but to Jesus, who presumably acts the same elsewhere.

174. The interview was on July 31, 2008, in Brazzaville.

would live. As Pastor Mouko prayed in Jesus's name, he felt the power of the Spirit. Loudly, he shouted, "Lord, Lord, Lord, show your will!" Suddenly the man lying there opened his eyes and started wondering where he was. Pastor Mouko ordered, "Give him some water; he's weak." After the man drank water, he stood up and said, "Who brought me here?" When they told him what had happened, the man began to praise God. Pastor Mouko also told of a healing in a village during war in 1997. They brought him a woman who had not been able to defecate for two weeks; she was extremely sick and crying, "I'm going to die soon." This was indeed a potentially serious situation, especially if it continued.¹⁷⁵ After they prayed, he felt that they needed to give her a liter (just over a quart) of water. Immediately after drinking it, she needed to eliminate her wastes, which he estimated took about ten minutes.

Papa Albert Bissouessou, a deacon at my brother-in-law's church, told of miracles he had seen in his ministry, especially when he had worked as a teacher in the north of the country, in Owondo and Etoumbi, in 1985 through 1987.¹⁷⁶ "Because I feared Jesus Christ from my youth," he explained, "God gave me some spiritual gifts—healings and miracles" in various parts of the country, but especially when he was in that less evangelized area.¹⁷⁷ Women over fifty conceived, he noted;¹⁷⁸ on one occasion, someone who died some time earlier was brought to him and healed¹⁷⁹ (I elaborate on this and other accounts in ch. 12). Accounts could be multiplied;¹⁸⁰ I have supplied accounts randomly from some of the people known to my family whom I was able to see when visiting Congo. Many of these accounts could be explained without appeal to anything supernatural; I am reserving the most dramatic examples, some of which are very difficult to explain on purely naturalistic terms, for chapter 12.

Examples in Latin America and the Caribbean

Some standard reference works on global Christianity indicate the pervasiveness of healing claims, ranging from Catholic to Pentecostal, in Latin America.¹⁸¹ Because

175. Dr. Nicole Matthews (personal correspondence, April 1, 2009), explained to me, "Bowel obstruction is a surgical emergency and people typically die without surgery" (the seriousness confirmed again in personal correspondence, April 14, 2009).

176. I interviewed him on July 29, 2008, in Brazzaville. He was happy to give the testimonies but insisted that I not misunderstand the point: "It's God who worked the miracles," he explained, "not us."

177. Personal correspondence, Dec. 17, 2009.

178. Interview, July 29, 2008. Women over fifty can conceive, but only rarely spontaneously (usually fertility drugs are involved; Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009).

179. Interview, July 29, 2008; I presume that the written version, which I employ in ch. 12, refers to the same incident.

180. The president of the denomination, with whom we met on July 21, 2008, intimated that he also had some accounts, and we knew other ministers there who had accounts, but we did not have time to meet with them. Thus I emphasize again that the accounts I have included are merely samples.

181. See Rivera-Pagán, "Transformation," 193–95. On the importance of testimonies to Latin American Pentecostalism, see Chaván de Matriuk, "Growth" (e.g., 218–22); among mainline North American Hispanic and Latino Protestants, Pedraja, "Testimonios."

my access to sources is fairly limited (partly for linguistic reasons), a majority of the cases that I cite in this section will be from evangelical, Pentecostal, and Baptist circles, but reports of miracles cannot in any way be limited to these examples. Nor are reports of healings new. Already a generation ago healing campaigns were catalyzing evangelical church growth in Latin America.¹⁸²

Indeed, this new paradigm already appeared in the mixed but especially Latino Pentecostal healing meetings of Mexican-born minister Francisco Olazábal (1886–1937) roughly a century ago.¹⁸³ Tens of thousands, and in one crusade reportedly more than one hundred thousand, attended his meetings.¹⁸⁴ Claims were not limited to such well-known figures. In the early twentieth century, a preacher noted that many healings were occurring, among them a man's inability to walk properly.¹⁸⁵ Such testimonies readily crossed borders;¹⁸⁶ when the sister of Nava Ocampo, from Mexico, was reported healed from cancer in Arizona in 1919, a number of Mexican Protestants there joined Nava's movement.¹⁸⁷

I will sample a few of the Latin American claims here.

Researchers have offered many reports on signs and church growth in Latin America,¹⁸⁸ and again it should be noted that I offer only the barest summary below. For example, prayer for healing is said to have united previously fractured evangelicalism in Argentina.¹⁸⁹ Evangelism meetings featuring healing in Buenos Aires, attended by an estimated nearly two million people in 1954, offered a "major

182. Read, Monterroso, and Johnson, *Growth*, 323; on signs and church growth in Latin America, see further De Wet, "Signs," 100–108: Argentina, 101–3; Ecuador, 104–5; Chile, 105–6; Brazil, 106–7; Dominican Republic, 107–8.

183. See Espinosa, "Olazábal"; discussion also in idem, "Borderland Religion"; idem, "Healing in Borderlands"; idem, "Revivals," 238; De Leon, *Pentecostals*, 23–30 (among other major figures); Sánchez Walsh, *Identity*, 25–31; Deiros and Wilson, "Pentecostalism," 302–3; Ramirez, "Faiths," 94, 99–102, 165. For the Latino contribution to Azusa Street, see Espinosa, "Contributions"; cf. Ramirez, "Faiths," 76, 81–83. Vast numbers of healings were claimed (Espinosa, "Healing in Borderlands," 139, 141; for some specific reports where the information would have been securely known to him, see 135, his wife; 136, a deaf person from a known family; 140). His emphasis, however, was on evangelism and he claimed that God was the healer (139). His Latino-led movement sent out vast numbers of missionaries throughout the Spanish-speaking world (142, emphasizing the movement's indigenous character).

184. See Espinosa, "Healing in Borderlands," 137.

185. Ruesga, "Healings."

186. This is even more the case today, given the massive migration (both legal and illegal, both permanent and temporary) at the border of these countries today (see Durand and Massey, *Miracles*, 2).

187. Ramirez, "Faiths," 90–91.

188. De Wet's sources for Latin America include McGavran, "Healing and Evangelization," 289–99; Enns, "Profiles," 103–17; Platt, "Hope," 61–65; Nyberg, "Field," 81–85; Bennett, "Multiplication," 85–87; Weld, "Impasse," 100–117; Larson, "Migration," 304–14; Alsop, "Analysis," 27–28; Aspinall, "Church," 31–35; Mast, "Training," 61–63; Reed, "Componential Analysis," 21–22, 49–52, 136–37; Wiebe, "Persistence of Spiritism," 122–42; Baird, "Analytical History," 60, 134–36. For Mexico, see Gaxiola, "Serpent," 99–101; Bennett, "Tinder," 176–77; cf. Aulie, "Movement," 128–85. In Mexico, Pentecostals, Catholic charismatics, spiritists, and traditional indigenous healers compete, encouraging distinctive qualities in their respective approaches to cures (Garma Navarro, "Socialization," on Pentecostals).

189. Marostica, "Learning"; cf. Devadason, "Missionary Societies," 188.

breakthrough" for Argentinian Protestants,¹⁹⁰ but prejudice remained among many groups. When Argentinian Protestant evangelist Carlos Annacondia began leading healing crusades, however, he insisted on evangelical unity.¹⁹¹ His approach now pervades Argentinian Protestantism.¹⁹² Healing is "now far and away the primary tool for evangelizing and church growth" in Argentina.¹⁹³ When urban migrants in one Argentinian church were interviewed, 37.7 percent of them claimed that healings had led to their accepting the gospel message; among the conditions they reported healed were blindness, cancer, deafness, heart disease, paralysis, and tuberculosis.¹⁹⁴

Various Cases from South America

Protestants now compose roughly one-eighth of Latin America's population, a preponderance of them from groups emphasizing healing.¹⁹⁵ Though Pentecostalism's growth in Latin America has been phenomenal,¹⁹⁶ healing is by no means limited to it; thus, for example, one Methodist ministry in Bolivia experienced phenomenal growth (including 160 of 170 families in a village) because their preaching was accompanied by healings.¹⁹⁷ Likewise, among Roman Catholics, Father Ralph Rogawski, O.P., and Sister Helen Raycraft, O.P., "estimate that about 80 percent of the sick who ask for prayers in the poorest barrios are healed,"¹⁹⁸ and newspapers reported widely on the healings occurring in conjunction with Julio Cesar Ruibal's evangelistic preaching.¹⁹⁹ In another setting, one boy "was suffering from very severe burns and sores," but after prayer for him in Mass, he was completely healed and found playing with the other children.²⁰⁰ Another boy with

190. McGee, "Strategy in Mission," 89–90 (on Tommy Hicks); cf. Marostica, "Learning," 209; the contemporary report in "Argentina Campaign."

191. Marostica, "Learning," 210–12, 224. Some appear to have borrowed Annacondia's methods contextualized for an Argentine setting (such as deliverance for those who have been involved with the occult; cf. 215–17) without sufficient consideration of their own, different contexts.

192. *Ibid.*, 217–19.

193. *Ibid.*, 207.

194. De Wet, "Signs," 103–4, following Larson, "Migration," 312. Cf., e.g., the healing testimony from Colombia in Brusco, *Reformation*, 62.

195. Escobar, *Tides*, 88–89 (noting Pentecostals, Nazarenes, and others).

196. Many writers comment on the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America (e.g., Alvarez, "South," 148; González, *Guide*, 94; Escobar, "Scenario," 40–41; Taylor, "Future," 642; Deiros and Wilson, "Pentecostalism," 308; Pirouet, *Christianity*, 120; Balling, *Story*, 284; Freston, "Contours," 221–22; Dyrness, *Theology*, 83). It may represent perhaps roughly 10 percent of the population (or as many as two-thirds of Protestants), but some have estimated that fully active, as opposed to more nominal, Catholics represent less than 20 percent (Davies and Conway, *Christianity*, 76–77; cf. 10 percent in Edwards, *Christianity*, 521; cf. Protestantism's growth from 1 to 10 percent of Latin America, with Pentecostalism dominating, from 1930 to 1960, in Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 109). For academic essays on Latin American Pentecostalism, see, e.g., Cleary and Stewart-Gambino, *Pentecostals*; D'Epinay, "Conquest"; Gill, "Veil"; Rivera-Pagán, "Transformation"; see also discussion in Martin, *Tongues*.

197. McGavran, "Healing," 73–74.

198. MacNutt, *Healing*, 26–27.

199. *Ibid.*, 27.

200. McKenna, *Miracles*, 59–60, praising the simple faith of these impoverished believers.

a facial deformity was healed during the same Mass.²⁰¹ I have not even included here the more traditional shrines where pilgrims leave votive tablets to convey their gratitude for miracles or favors (finding work, legal solutions, resolutions with in-laws, protection from injury, and so forth).²⁰²

Nevertheless, Pentecostals, who are said to compose a majority of Latin American Protestants in many countries and overall, provide many stories.²⁰³ This is partly because healing appears to be the most characteristic spiritual gift in Latin American Pentecostalism,²⁰⁴ and one of the most common factors in persons joining Pentecostal churches in Latin America is experiencing healing after prayer.²⁰⁵ Pentecostalism as it appears most commonly in Latin America is also usually strongly adapted to local culture.²⁰⁶ Various books by Pentecostal and charismatic ministers in Latin America report miracles taking place.²⁰⁷ My examples below come from a variety of different denominations (my sources sometimes varying

201. Ibid., 60, the author noting that she, and not the Latin American believers present, was the one shocked.

202. See, e.g., Durand and Massey, *Miracles*, 45–66; see a breakdown of some categories on 71.

203. Many also argue that Pentecostals roughly rival Roman Catholics in church attendance in Latin America, since only about one-tenth of the population attends each regularly (Edwards, *Christianity*, 521). Catholics, of course, still far outnumber Protestants in terms of total membership in Latin America. While a number of Pentecostal converts were formerly nominal Catholics, Catholics have their own stories, e.g., the California Pentecostal who became a Catholic evangelist (in DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 47), the Protestant seminarian healed when a Jesuit prayed (ibid., 17), and the Protestant converted after miraculous healing from a leg injury (Duffin, *Miracles*, 45). Catholicism has also grown in Latin America (Shaw, *Awakening*, 141n16).

204. E.g., Kwon, “Foundations,” 188.

205. Chiquete, “Healing,” 480–81; cf. Kamsteeg, “Message”; idem, “Healing”; idem, *Pentecostalism*, 4; Sánchez Walsh, *Identity*, 29, 41, 43; McGavran, “Seeing,” 67. Chiquete notes (“Healing,” 481) that many of those who are not healed also join these churches because of their care and concern for their wholeness. Cf. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 52, on physical illness being the most common cause of affiliating with Pentecostals in Brazil.

206. Pentecostalism is well adapted to many aspects of Latin American culture (see Chaván de Matviuk, “Growth,” 211–12); note also Freston, “Contours,” who even contends (249) that the Pentecostal movement, virtually newborn and thus flexible when it arrived in Latin America, is more contextualized in some respects than “both Catholicism and historical Protestantism”; similarly, for a narrower geographic setting, Ramirez, “Faiths,” 266–68, 394–96, 420. While some Latin American Pentecostalism has North American ties, it is mostly indigenous (Tombs, “Church,” 312; cf. Wilson, “Revival”; Espinosa, “Healing in Borderlands,” 142). Cox, “Miracles,” 93, notes the view that from a sociological (as opposed to theological) standpoint, Latin American Pentecostalism has more affinities with folk Catholicism than traditional evangelical Protestantism; Rivera-Pagán, “Transformation,” 193–94, compares miracles in folk Catholicism, arguing (194, 196) that it is now radically democratized and popularized; Sánchez Walsh, “Santidad,” 161, compares Latino usage of neocharismatic Word of Faith confessions with “Catholic liturgical prayers”; Tennent, *Christianity*, 176–77, notes connections between Pentecostal and Catholic spirituality. Escobar, *Tides*, 100, suggests that Latin American Protestantism in general is “closer to the Pietists and revivalists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than to the sixteenth century reformers.” He further notes (89–91) that Pentecostalism has often been misrepresented by those lacking direct acquaintance with it. Its emphasis on healing and deliverance are part of its appeal (Davies and Conway, *Christianity*, 77).

207. E.g., Freidzon, *Spirit*, 91–98; Silvano, *Perish*, 133. For an outside perspective on Freidzon’s ministry in Argentina, see Marostica, “Learning,” 219–24.

by country) but with a higher proportion of specifically Pentecostal examples than I have provided for some other continents.

Many desperately poor people in Brazil lack adequate health care²⁰⁸ and are attracted to Pentecostalism through its emphasis on healing;²⁰⁹ 86.4 percent of Brazilian Pentecostals in one study claimed that they had experienced divine healing.²¹⁰ They compete with Spiritists for the attention of those needing treatment.²¹¹ While misdiagnosis, the placebo effect, and occasionally religious deception may be factors in some cases,²¹² literally “millions of Pentecostals” in Brazil believe that God heals, so that the Western researcher discussing the data acknowledges that their belief in healing is at least a subjective reality that has effects.²¹³ Thus in Brazil one interviewee recounted that a chronic liver disease had been increasingly destroying his health over a period of four years, but then Jesus appeared to him and healed him.²¹⁴ A dying person in the same country was healed from advanced terminal cancer and a coma following a simple prayer.²¹⁵ Another source reports that when two workers in Brazil prayed for a boy who had “a softball-sized hernia protruding from his abdomen,” it vanished in front of them, and he was healed.²¹⁶ After doctors sent Sylvia, a television news anchor with cancer of the

208. For the health care crisis in Brazil, see Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 54–56; idem, “Exorcising,” 169–70.

209. Chesnut, “Exorcising,” 182; on divine healings in Brazil, cf. also Brown, “Awakenings”; as a major cause of Pentecostal growth there, McGavran, “Seeing,” 67. Healings occurred from the start of Pentecostalism there in 1910 (Shaw, *Awakening*, 138); for Pentecostalism’s massive growth there (e.g., the Assemblies of God reported more than half a million new members in 1993), see, e.g., César, “Babel,” 25; for its global connections today, see, e.g., Oro and Semán, “Pentecostalism”; Freston, “Transnationalisation.” For the history of Brazilian Pentecostalism, see, e.g., Shaw, *Awakening*, 135–57; briefly Deiros and Wilson, “Pentecostalism,” 311–13; one Pentecostal movement there came in response to a prophecy about a certain “Para” given to Swedish immigrants to the United States (see McGee, “Regions Beyond,” 93; idem, *Miracles*, 166–67; Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 75–84; Deiros and Wilson, “Pentecostalism,” 312; Shaw, *Awakening*, 138). For Catholic charismatics there, see Csordas, “Global Perspective,” 336–38.

210. See Chesnut, “Exorcising,” 175–76 (though noting on 176 that only 11.4 percent, mostly pastors and particular women, claimed to have been used in others’ healing; followed also by Brown, “Awakenings,” 361). In Pew Forum’s wider but less exploratory “Spirit and Power,” the percentage is 77 percent.

211. Greenfield, *Spirits*, 141, 145–47, 202.

212. While some spiritual fakery occurs (most often noted with respect to some IURD, Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus, circles), “medical malpractice, misdiagnosis, and a general disregard for the health of the poor, more than fraud, account for a significant amount of what Pentecostals present as faith healing” (Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 86, not addressing but also not ruling out supernatural factors; idem, “Exorcising,” 180). For one sociological study of healing discourse in the IURD, see Corten, “Obéissance.”

213. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 87 (allowing for the placebo effect); he offers examples of claims (81–82, 86–88).

214. *Ibid.*, 81–82. For a wife healed in conjunction with a husband’s vision, see 87–88. Much of the liver can be restored within three to four weeks; the testimony could be understood as an extraordinary expediting of that process (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009).

215. Johnson, “Work.”

216. Moreland, *Triangle*, 169. A different story from Brazil, the partial healing of Davi Silva from Down syndrome, is suspect despite potentially relevant physical features of his face and palms, because Silva has admitted to falsifying elements in testimonies but has not yet clarified which ones (<http://casadedavi.wordpress.com/davisilva/#ingles>; accessed Jan. 1, 2011; cf. personal correspondence with Candy Gunther Brown, May 22, 26, 28, 2009; Jan. 1, 2011).

thorax, home to die, she attended a healing conference. She was coughing up blood and weighed just eighty pounds. Nevertheless, she believed herself healed after an hour of prayer at the conference; no longer showing signs of the cancer, she quickly regained weight and resumed her broadcasting role. As of two years later, she remained well.²¹⁷ Such claims are not limited to Pentecostals; I am told that a Baptist church in Brazil, for example, reports many dramatic healings and has grown more than forty times over in less than a decade.²¹⁸

Likewise, the pervasive emphasis on healing among Colombian Pentecostals meets important social needs among the desperately poor for whom health and hope are sometimes in short supply.²¹⁹ One scholar observes, "Every single believer in this study spoke of some miraculous event they had experienced," and "occurrences such as a healing, resurrection, spiritual encounters," and so forth, with "divine healing" being most common, were the primary factors in conversion.²²⁰

In Colombia, Rose at age twenty-one suffered from a terrible skin infection that inflamed her face, with sores oozing "blood and pus"; she covered her face when outside. The night that she accepted Christ, she slept well for the first time in three months and awoke to see "clearly. My face was not inflamed," and after her grandmother expressed amazement, she looked in the mirror herself to discover that she had been completely healed.²²¹ In the same country, a woman named Olga recounted that her daughter had been dying, and doctors had given up hope. A pastor in the barrio prayed, and the next day the child began recovering, ultimately recovering fully.²²² Another person in Colombia was healed of a blood condition.²²³ Catholics in Colombia also testify to experiences with charismatic healing, such as the cure of a skin condition and other ailments.²²⁴

Suriname is a multicultural nation in South America whose national language is Dutch. When I met with Dr. Douglass Norwood in 2006, he recounted his eyewitness experience with an aged skeptic instantly healed of a lifelong paralysis, without human intervention, during his preaching in Nickerie, Suriname, in

217. Brown, "Awakenings," 351–52. North American minister Randy Clark led the team that prayed for her; "Sylvia" is a pseudonym (365n1).

218. Randy Clark, personal correspondence, April 1, 2011.

219. See Bomann, *Faith in Barrios*; cf. idem, "Salve," 190: "a pivotal strategy for coping"; also 203. For the traditional association of Pentecostals with the poor and marginalized in Latin America, see Escobar, "Scenario," 40, 42; idem, *Tides*, 79–81, 134; Bonk, "Engaging," 53; on Pentecostal roots and the poor generally, Hollenweger, "Elites," 201–3. Prosperity teaching came not with the original Pentecostals but with the neocharismatics (Escobar, *Tides*, 81; Corten and Marshall-Fratani, "Introduction," 5).

220. Bomann, *Faith in Barrios*, 62; cf. idem, "Salve," 190, 194; for specific instances, see 194–99, 201–2.

221. Bomann, *Faith in Barrios*, 62–63 (Rosa was recounting her healing thirty years later). Presumably the same story is recounted in idem, "Salve," 201–2 (where Bomann gives her the name Mariela).

222. Bomann, *Faith in Barrios*, 63. Although the quantity of such testimonies has increased, healing claims in Colombia are not new (cf., e.g., the Nov. 12, 1969, claim of healing from acute sinusitis in an interview in Palmer, "Growth," 62).

223. Redpath, "Change"; also reported in Harris, *Acts Today*, 92–93. Involving a transformation of the blood, this healing cannot be explained in terms of current medical knowledge.

224. See MacNutt, *Healing*, 233–39.

November 1994. The skeptic had no faith or psychological factors contributing to the healing; he had never been a Christian and was defying the Christians at the moment he was healed. Nevertheless, he recognized that it was the name of Christ that healed him and he became a Christian immediately after his unexpected healing. This event contributed to sudden and massive church growth in a region that previously had few Christians.²²⁵

Healing is often reported among indigenous peoples as well. Thus, for example, the healing of a priest is reported to have led to wide receptivity in a Mayan village.²²⁶ *Jesus Film* workers report that they prayed for a non-Christian village chief in the Amazon basin who had been gasping in agony for hours and would clearly soon be dead. Suddenly, he leaped from the bed, went dancing around his home joyfully, and started shouting to his elders.²²⁷ In another case, Atabacдора, a Motilone Indian from Colombia, broke his neck in a fall and was ordered to lie still for three months. As a hunter, he found it difficult to lie still even for a week. His friend Bobarishora, who like Atabacдора was fairly new to the Christian faith, insisted on praying for him. He and their friend Bruce Olson anointed him and prayed a simple prayer, then left. When they learned that Atabacдора was up and about, they hurried to reprove him, convinced that his neck would never heal with such behavior. Since Atabacдора had no pain, however, they persuaded the doctor to take another X-ray. The doctor was astonished, because there was now not even a sign of the slightest fracture; he could only describe it as “some kind of miracle.” To Bobarishora, it was no different from the healing of a headache; to North American Bruce Olson, who knew more about Western medicine, the healing of this broken neck was naturally more astounding.²²⁸

Other reports are frequent. One researcher reports a Latin American mother’s claim that doctors had once given up her daughter’s eyesight for lost, but it has improved so much since her conversion that she no longer even needs glasses.²²⁹ Another notes one’s conversion after “his mother was cured of a brain infection.”²³⁰ Another informant claims that in his thirty years of ministry “he has ‘seen numerous healings and resurrections.’”²³¹ Byron Klaus, a U.S. seminary president whom I know personally, prayed for a four-year-old girl in Caracas, Venezuela, with a deadly “immune deficiency similar to HIV”; so convinced was the widowed mother that the child had been healed that she took her for another blood test. In contrast to previous tests, the child’s immune system was now normal (he sent me the

225. Interview, June 6, 2006; also in Norwood, “Colloquium,” 24–26. He immediately offered the names of eyewitnesses when I inquired.

226. Clark, *Impartation*, 126.

227. *Jesus Film* Project mailing, Oct. 30, 2009, p. 1.

228. Olson, *Bruchko*, 148–51. Olson also testifies about his own remarkable recovery (122–23).

229. Lehmann, *Struggle*, 197.

230. Sánchez Walsh, *Identity*, 43.

231. *Ibid.*, 44.

improved test results); she is now sixteen.²³² Other sample claims include partial healing of hearing in Peru,²³³ or (in Central America) the healing of ten years of infertility in Belize,²³⁴ and so forth. Some of these accounts are believable from a naturalistic perspective because they are known to happen naturally; others would be classified by most observers as extraordinary.

Accounts from Cuba

A friend of mine has worked closely with Carlos Alamino, a Baptist pastor in Cuba. This pastor offers many testimonies of dramatic healings in the setting of evangelism or prayer, some of which I include in chapter 12.²³⁵ Courtesy of the hospitality of the churches and government in Cuba, I was able to teach some gatherings of pastors there during this book's editing. At that time, a number of church leaders freely shared with me their accounts of healings; even my reliable translator, David Gomero Borges, reticently shared some accounts from his earlier work as a Baptist layman and then minister.²³⁶

For example, Mirtha Venero Boza, a Baptist, has been a Christian for six years and reports that she has seen many miracles in her evangelistic crusades. She chose to share with me especially a story close to her, however. The hand of her baby granddaughter was severely burned by a hot iron; it was swollen and skin was peeling off. Within less than half an hour of prayer, and without medical intervention, the baby's hand was restored completely, as if it had never been burned. Because Mirtha is a medical doctor, who would recognize the severity of burns, her observations appear especially striking.²³⁷

Likewise, Lutheran pastor Ismael Laborde Figueras, bishop of Iglesia Evangélica Unida en Cuba Sínodo Luterano, shared with me that he experienced a liver tumor

232. Byron Klaus, personal correspondence, July 6, 2009. He provided copies of the original faxes of the new blood tests sent to him from Venezuela (sent to me July 10, 2009; the tests are dated in 1998, from Aug. 10 and 17; Sept. 9; Oct. 15 and 22). For some earlier claims of healings in Venezuela, including a paralyzed leg, muteness, and deafness, see Ollson, "Healings."

233. A case study from the WCDN website including the original, signed audiogram reports (http://www.wcdn.org/wcdn_eng/case/case_content.asp?id=38&page=3; accessed May 6, 2009). If we allow a margin of error in the audiograms of 10 points (the hearing threshold moved only from 75 to 59 dB), however, some might construe the significance as less certain; duration of hearing loss is also a factor. Cf. also possible partial recovery of sight in Honduras, a case study from the WCDN website noting that only partial documentation was available (her condition after prayer and the mother's testimony about her previous state; the hospital no longer had her records because they were too old; http://www.wcdn.org/wcdn_eng/case/case_content.asp?id=22&page=4; accessed May 6, 2009).

234. Rance, "Child."

235. See Alamino, *Footsteps*, *passim*. In addition to accounts in the book, he reports the instant healing of a person's condition of kidney failure (in a sermon at First Baptist Church, Everett, Washington, Feb. 1, 2009; cf. also Brian Stewart [personal correspondence, June 7, 2010]).

236. David Gomero Borges, interview, Aug. 12, 2010. These included two instant recoveries (one case of fever and pain, in 1990), and one the full recovery of a baby whom doctors said would certainly die, barring a "miracle." The baby's mother, a professor, was not a believer but acknowledged that recovery as a "miracle."

237. Mirtha Venero Boza, interview, Aug. 6, 2010.

in early 1995, coinciding with a period of severe anger toward another church leader. Many people were praying for him, and he devoted himself to praying and fasting, with no medical treatment. Coinciding with his forgiving the man, new films a year later revealed that the tumor was gone. He has shared this account widely, and others who walked through these events with him were able to verify them.²³⁸

In 1998, Yamilka Hernández Guzmán was working as the psychologist for the oncology hospital in Santiago. This was when doctors informed her that her uterus was misformed, too far out of place in two areas and barely larger than a child's; it was therefore impossible for her to have children. Pastor Laborde prayed for her to be able to conceive, and two months later she was pregnant. The doctors could not believe that she was pregnant when she missed her first period, but after she missed her second one they checked her. Her healthy daughter was present during our interview, enjoying hearing again the story of her conception.²³⁹

Eusbarina Acosta Estévez, now a church planter in the Christian Assemblies, recounted her experience in 1988. Her heart was in such poor condition that she could walk only three steps; additionally, she had been hospitalized three months due to kidney problems. Her extremities were swollen and she had been urinating blood. Although she had been invoking other spirits, a cousin pointed her to Christ. When ministers prayed for her she fell to the ground and in the next few minutes was dramatically converted; simultaneously, she was immediately and completely healed.²⁴⁰

Raúl Regueiro Sánchez told me that when he was a young and very immature Christian, Eusbarina took him around the neighborhood where she was evangelizing and had him pray for the sick. To his astonishment, a woman with a flow of blood was immediately healed, as was a woman with chronic headaches. Although he did not continue to experience the same sorts of events when he was on his own, this seminal experience later stood him in good stead as a mature Christian. His wife had been bleeding for a month after contracting hemorrhagic dengue fever. When he laid hands on her and prayed, she was instantly healed.²⁴¹ He also reported the healing of a person's skin cancer in less than a week after the prayer, the difference being visible; the witness to whom he referred me confirmed the report.²⁴²

Pentecostal minister Rhode González Zorrilla is the former president of the Cuban Council of Churches and a published expert on Cuban Pentecostalism. She recounted that when she was doing studies in Costa Rica in 1993, she fell into

238. Ismael Laborde Figueras, interview, Aug. 7, 2010 (also briefly his wife, the same day).

239. Yamilka Hernández Guzmán, interview, Aug. 8, 2010. I did not have to go far to find this account; Yamilka was the only other person present with us for a long time in the office with Pastor Laborde on the second day that I interviewed him.

240. Eusbarina Acosta Estévez, interview, Aug. 7, 2010. Before we finished, Eusbarina also shared a healing of a different, more recent chronic problem. This healing had occurred just three days earlier, when we first met, in connection with a recent vision.

241. Raúl Regueiro Sánchez, interview, Aug. 7, 2010; afterward I consulted Eusbarina again, who confirmed the account.

242. Raúl Regueiro Sánchez, interview, Aug. 7, 2010; Juan Carlos Riestra Matos, interview, Aug. 7, 2010.

a drainage ditch when exiting a bus, all her weight landing hard on her right foot. Immediately she discovered that her metatarsal bones, instead of lying flat, were visibly pressing up against the skin, and her foot quickly began to swell. Because she had no insurance, she could not go to the hospital and get a cast, so she persuaded a friend to drop her off at where she was staying. She took a painkiller, but the pain remained unbearable, and she cried out to God that she had no one to help her but him. Somehow she fell asleep, but when she awoke, her foot was completely normal, and she has never had any problems with it subsequently. Although she had prayed, she was so astonished that she checked with her friend to confirm that the foot had been as badly hurt as she remembered, and her friend confirmed this.²⁴³

Alternán Claro Pupo, executive secretary of the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba, reported that his adolescent back problems sometimes nearly paralyzed him. At the age of sixteen his doctor indicated that he had a slipped disk; though he was not allowed to do any athletic activities, he refused surgery. The next year the doctor found a heart problem as well, causing chest pains and shortness of breath. By the time he was twenty, however, he had become a Christian and he began praying for healing. One night he spent several hours in prayer and was convinced that God healed him. For more than a quarter century after that day, he lacked any further symptoms. Immediately after the healing he served two years in the army with all its exercises.²⁴⁴

Leonel Camejo Tazé recounted that about two years ago, after four months of continuous headaches, an MRI located the problem in his brain, and medicine was prescribed. Soon after this, however, he was converted, and a month later he believed that God had healed him. He discontinued the medicine; he testifies that the headaches stopped instantly that night and never returned.²⁴⁵

Dorka R. Rojas Cruz, rector of the Elim Bible Institute, interviewed for me several people she knows who were healed in her church in Las Tunas.²⁴⁶ In 1956 doctors found that the condition of Felipe Rojas Rojas, after forty-three days of fever and being too weak even to sit, was beyond hope. They sent him home to die, warning that he probably had just five or six days left to live. Dying and desperate, he begged his mother to invite two women known for prayer, María Machín and Gisela; on the way to his home, the women felt that he would be healed, and without even praying directly simply informed Felipe's mother that God would

243. Rhode González Zorrilla, interview, Aug. 11, 2010. She notes that doctors recently X-rayed her extremities due to arthritis in her hands; her foot remains completely well. She has published articles on Cuban Pentecostalism with the Center of Sociological and Religious Research of Cuba's National Academy of Sciences.

244. Alternán Claro Pupo, interviews, Aug. 3, 6, 2010. Alternán noted that twenty-seven years later, he still lacks symptoms of these conditions. While he was well when we met, however, he did have one heart attack about seven months before our meeting (at least twenty-six years after his cure). He was active when we met and no back problems were evident.

245. Leonel Camejo Tazé, interview, Aug. 11, 2010.

246. Dorka R. Rojas Cruz, personal correspondence, Sept. 1, 2010 (with some details clarified and confirmed Oct. 29, 2010). She provided not only names but addresses for many who were healed.

raise him up. A few seconds later, before they could even leave the house, he got up healed, and he quickly became a Christian. He is now seventy-three years old, and happens to be Dorka's father.

Likewise, multiple doctors had confirmed the colon cancer of Rosa Torres Salas nine years earlier. After prayer, her pain and bleeding stopped; the doctors realized that she had been healed when they went to do surgery.²⁴⁷ After three severe heart attacks, doctors warned Aurelia Rodríguez Pérez that she might live anywhere from six hours to six difficult months. After extended prayer, new electrocardiograms showed no sign that she had even experienced heart attacks, and she lived on for three more decades.²⁴⁸ She eventually died of old age; she was the mother of Dorka's mother.²⁴⁹

Dorka also interviewed Marciano Jiménez Castro, executive treasurer of the ICPC (Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba), for cases he knew directly.²⁵⁰ Doctors diagnosed him as suffering from chronic diabetes mellitus. One day, laid up at home sick, he heard a radio preacher praying for the sick. He was healed and later went into ministry. He also recounted that when his grandson Gisángel Curvelo Jiménez was three, in January 1999, doctors determined that the boy was dying from meningoencephalitis. On Gisángel's third day in the hospital, doctors warned that he would die that afternoon. After Marciano, then a pastor, prayed with him at midday, the child began to improve; by night the boy was feeling well and playing with a ball. Doctors predicted that he would be blind and disabled both mentally and physically. Instead he is now a healthy fourteen-year-old musician in the church.

Dorka provided further historical cases from a research thesis involving their church in Imías, Guantánamo. For example, América Oñate Brabet was sent home to die; when people prayed, she was healed. Erculina was instantly cured of uterine cancer as they prayed. Miriam Díaz Brabet, who lives in front of the church, reported how her eighteen-month-old son Arquímedes would convulse fifty times a day; he was healed within three days of prayer, and is now twenty.²⁵¹

Various Other Latin American and Caribbean Examples

Many examples are possible from Mexico and from Mexicans on either side of the U.S.-Mexico border; I offer several samples. The first person who an eyewitness reported healed in the early Pentecostal revival at Azusa Street was a Mexican believer, in this case of something like clubfoot.²⁵² In 1924 a Mexican woman named

247. Dorka interviewed her directly and provided further details (personal correspondence, Sept. 1; Oct. 5, 12, 2010). Those who prayed for her are also closely known to Dorka: Marciano Jiménez Castro, noted below, and Noemí Eunice Rojas Cruz, Dorka's sister.

248. Dorka R. Rojas Cruz, personal correspondence, Sept. 1, 2010.

249. *Ibid.*, Oct. 29, 2010.

250. She interviewed him on Sept. 26, 2010; I have the information in personal correspondence, Oct. 12, 17, 2010.

251. Dorka R. Rojas Cruz, Oct. 12, 17, 2010, citing Quintero Pérez, "Folleto."

252. Espinosa, "Borderland Religion," 130. Espinosa cites other Mexican-Americans who testified to witnessing healings at Azusa Street (in one case, of the recounter's father) on 131.

María Rivera Atkinson was diagnosed with cancer in her mid-forties, according to her account; after she found herself cured through the prayers of two Pentecostal women, she became Pentecostal and eventually started the Church of God in Mexico.²⁵³ One theology professor from the United States recounts healings that he had witnessed in Mexico years earlier as a college student, including blindness, deafness, and muteness.²⁵⁴ A dentist prayed for a child with impetigo, who was visibly healed within fifteen minutes.²⁵⁵ A Mexican believer trained by a Swedish missionary tried to attract a crowd by street preaching and found little evangelistic success in this method. It occurred to him to go to the pharmacy and ask people coming out if they would like to meet someone who could heal them. He would go home with them, pray for the sick person in the name of Jesus, and people were healed. Through this method he was able to start a church. The missionary admitted that he would not have thought of this method, but it worked.²⁵⁶

When I asked Eduardo Lara Reyes, one of my Baptist students from Mexico, if he had any stories, he introduced me to his wife, Nimsi Arcila Leal. She noted that several tests in 2003 revealed that she had pre-cancer at the highest level in her cervix, a diagnosis repeatedly confirmed by internal camera and a biopsy, and confirmed by another doctor. The tests also showed that the medicine applied externally was not having any effect (there was no radiation or chemotherapy), so the doctor went in to remove the precancerous tissue. Nimsi and her family had been praying. When the removed tissue was examined, no precancerous tissue was there; the doctor apologized and said that maybe the surgery had not been needed after all. No medicine was necessary, and subsequent checkups revealed that the problem never recurred.²⁵⁷ Even cancers that have not spread are known to remit, but for Eduardo and Nimsi, this occurrence fits a pattern of answers to important but humanly difficult prayers.

Included in this larger pattern was a testimony that Nimsi's father, Wilbert Arcila Gonzalez, provided concerning her mother, Febe A. Leal Piña.²⁵⁸ In 1985, she fell sick with recurrent fever that was originally misdiagnosed as typhoid; a range of doctors failed to discover what was causing her debilitating sickness, but eventually the IMSS Hospital²⁵⁹ offered the probable diagnosis of lupus erythematosus, warning that this disease was irreversible. No medicine availed, and each day before work, Wilbert had to carry his wife to the bathroom, because she was

253. Avalos, *Health Care*, 1. Avalos points out that she suffered ill health the rest of her life despite the cure; nevertheless, we may note that she lived almost four more decades, to well over eighty years old (1879–1963), despite the diagnosis in 1924. Atkinson brought the movement she pioneered into the Church of God movement (McGee, *Miracles*, 169).

254. Alexander, *Signs*, 86 (the mute girl was healed when prayed for in her home).

255. Llewellyn, "Events," 250, recounting a friend's experience.

256. McGavran, "Seeing," 68.

257. Eduardo Lara Reyes and Nimsi Arcila Leal, interview, Sept. 17, 2009.

258. Wilbert Arcila Gonzalez (personal correspondence, as translated for me by Eduardo Lara Reyes, Nov. 30, 2009).

259. The Mexican Social Security Institute Hospital.

unable to walk. Because treatment was not helping, they stopped, though she had pain medicine available. She refused to complain about her pain, but eventually it hurt too much even for the sheets to touch her legs. One night, she prayed that she would not take any medicine and that she depended on God to either heal her or take her home, because the suffering was too great. The following morning, she suddenly realized that her pain had disappeared, along with the bumps on her legs. She praised God joyfully, and the sickness never returned.

Their friend Yazmin Hommer also provided me her testimony.²⁶⁰ Shortly after returning from West Africa, she fell sick in 1998 with a high fever (40° C/104° F) and pneumonia, and then she fell into a coma for forty days. She was experiencing severe cerebral malaria, and her organs were beginning to fail. The doctors did not offer a high likelihood of her survival. After significant intercessory prayer from many believers, however, she began recovering. The planned tracheotomy proved unnecessary. While the doctors had expected three months in the intermediate care unit with some returns to the intensive care unit, instead she was discharged from the hospital a week later. Her doctor was shocked and regarded her recovery as astonishing.²⁶¹ Yazmin has provided me much of the copious medical documentation that attended her situation.²⁶²

Others have documented such claims much more widely. A parasite was destroying the liver of a third-grader in Costa Rica named Sara Rodríguez; when she finally went for testing, X-rays revealed that a third of the liver had been destroyed. Realizing that nothing more could be done for her medically, the doctor sent her home to die. Christians began praying for Sara, however, and she became convinced that God would heal her. "Within days," the interviewer notes, "the child improved. Her mother returned with Sara for further medical examinations and X-rays. The X-rays, in contrast to those taken earlier, clearly indicated that Sara's liver was completely normal." She remained well and continued in school.²⁶³ Another person in Costa Rica was healed of advanced, untreated lung cancer.²⁶⁴ When DeLonn Rance "was twelve in Guatemala City, a car door crushed the fingers on my right hand." Before his father could get him to medical treatment, local Bible school students prayed and his hand "was instantly healed."²⁶⁵

260. Yazmin Hommer, personal correspondence, Oct. 26–27, 2009. Eduardo and Nimsi referred me to her in personal conversation and in correspondence (Oct. 23, 2009).

261. Yazmin Hommer, personal correspondence, Nov. 20, 2009.

262. Sent to me Dec. 1, 2009, with further correspondence.

263. Petersen, *Might*, 100–101 (based on his interviews with the mother and her pastor, Sept. 25, 1990, and further knowledge from 1992). For the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism in Costa Rica, cf. Bastian, "Pentecostalism," esp. 167.

264. Klaus, "Miracle." Byron notes that the healing was confirmed by X-rays and that the boy has remained well (personal correspondence, July 7, 2009).

265. Personal correspondence, Sept. 27, 2010. He also shared the 1992 healing of his daughter's abscesses, surprising the doctor who had planned to operate (Sept. 27, 28, 2010, with the testimony on their website, <http://delonnandvalerierance.com>; accessed Sept. 27 and 28, 2010).

I earlier cited Loida Martell-Otero, one of my colleagues in theology. She shared with me several accounts of cures in the context of prayer, of which I recount one here.²⁶⁶ (Because Loida was trained as a veterinarian before becoming a theologian, her accounts are more medically informed than most others.) A woman from the Dominican Republic came to the United States for treatment of keratitis sicca, a condition in which the cornea dries out, potentially leading ultimately to ulceration of the eye and blindness; doctors planned to surgically route a salivary duct to the eye. While in the United States, she visited the Spanish Baptist Church of Soundview, pastored by Loida's father, Rafael Martell; Loida was then the associate pastor. When Loida's father called for prayer, the woman started to make her way forward down the long aisle and then began shouting and crying before anyone could even pray for her. Tears were streaming down her eyes, and the surgery was canceled.

One early twentieth-century evangelist in Puerto Rico claims that in their annual conference, "many who had been ill for years and had been given up by the doctors were perfectly healed in answer to prayer."²⁶⁷ Bonnie Ortiz, a Latina Pentecostal and trusted colleague at my seminary, tells me that she was present when a Puerto Rican evangelist told a close friend of hers that two of this friend's teeth had just been miraculously filled. Bonnie witnessed the shock on her friend's face and examined the teeth, finding two of them filled—although the friend was convinced that she had never had any teeth filled by natural means.²⁶⁸ Personally, I would prefer not to have to include reports like this one. But while many readers may wonder about the value of filling teeth, we might wonder less if we had less access to dentists or to resources with which to pay them.

Healing claims in Puerto Rico are by no means limited to Pentecostals. For example, returning again to my Baptist colleague Loida Martell-Otero, a close relative of hers in Puerto Rico had visible skin tumors diagnosed by tests as malignant. The family kept praying for her, and the tumors began to disappear as new tests indicated no cancer; many years later, the woman remains well.²⁶⁹

More pervasively, Puerto Rican Baptist minister Marilú Dones de Reyes has exercised a ministry of praying for the sick.²⁷⁰ Among the healings reported are a medical doctor with histoplasmosis, whose lungs had been able to receive only 51

266. Discussion, Feb. 23, 2010; interview, April 22, 2010; follow-up correspondence, April 23, 2010. Her other accounts include those of close family members and recoveries that are medically unusual.

267. Otero, "Convention." During a major healing revival in Puerto Rico in 1950, massive numbers of healings of blindness, deafness, inability to walk and other serious problems were reported (Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 42–43, often supplying names).

268. Interview, Jan. 10, 2009; the evangelist was Jiye Avila. Obviously, enamel does not reform naturally and teeth do not fill naturally without dental intervention (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009). Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 59, reports that a dentist, finding a patient's teeth miraculously filled before their appointment, initially assumed (as one would) that she had gone to another dentist.

269. Interview, April 22, 2010.

270. Gutierrez, *Mujer de Milagros*, 78–79. My colleague Dr. Mayra Picos-Lee located and interpreted for me the relevant material in this book (personal correspondence, Sept. 30, 2009). Histoplasmosis is a disease involving fungus in the lungs.

percent of the needed oxygen; he was healed after prayer at Marilú's church.²⁷¹ In another case, Don Ramon Rivera Adorno was sick in the hospital for seventy-four days, at which point doctors warned him that he would probably live for at most another week. Although the doctors refused to allow him to leave the hospital, he signed release forms and went away healed, explaining to them that God had healed him.²⁷² Marilú both asks God freely and recognizes that God does not always heal, citing Dan 3:17–18;²⁷³ she herself welcomed surgery for a different disease.²⁷⁴

On the Caribbean island of St. Lucia, a twenty-one-month-old boy named Adé Lewis had his left index finger partly amputated in an accident in May 1986. The nail was ripped out, and the tip and part of the bone were severed. To the mother's horror, no accessible medical facilities had the requisite resources to sew it back on. Father Ralph DiOrio, a figure in the Catholic healing ministry, prayed and urged them to give glory to God. The mother testified that not only the nail but also the rest of the finger grew back quickly until it was almost as long as his right index finger.²⁷⁵ People from the African and Caribbean diaspora also offer reports of healing experiences in Western settings like the United Kingdom.²⁷⁶

Dr. Horace Russell, former president of the United Theological College of the West Indies and for many years one of my senior colleagues at Palmer Theological Seminary,²⁷⁷ shared with me some of his experiences. He noted that experiences that believers would construe as miracles are common in Jamaica, where he began his ministry; they are less common in the West, where God has provided gifts like medical technology, but occur especially where people have nothing else to depend on. He noted that they are nevertheless not limited only to believers. An agnostic professor at the University of the West Indies in Kingston was dying of cancer; though she did not believe, she allowed him to pray for her. The next day, she recovered and has remained well, though she has chosen to remain an agnostic.²⁷⁸

Ecuador

As I have noted, healing reports are in no wise limited to Pentecostals and charismatics (or Protestants).²⁷⁹ Nevertheless, in this section I will devote extensive

271. Gutierrez, *Mujer de Milagros*, 78–79.

272. *Ibid.*, 79.

273. *Ibid.*

274. *Ibid.*, 95–97.

275. DiOrio, *Signs*, 130–35. In contrast to other forms of regrowth, a bone would not grow back like this naturally without medical intervention (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009).

276. See, e.g., Michel, *Telling*, 64; cf. Schaefer, "Miracles."

277. He is also known for his work on the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Baptist Heritage and Identity and his scholarship on the history of Jamaican Baptists in mission.

278. Horace Russell, interview, July 2, 2009.

279. Catholic miracle claims are not limited to charismatic circles; unlike some Protestants, who reacted against what they considered Catholic excesses, Catholic and Orthodox theology never adopted a cessationist stance (e.g., Mullin, *Miracles*, 133; Kselman, *Miracles*, 197).

space to some examples from Joseph Castleberry's Columbia University dissertation. It treats the development of one Pentecostal denomination (the Assemblies of God) in Ecuador and includes surveys and interviews of large numbers of church leaders and members there.²⁸⁰ Early mass meetings surrounding the founding of the church in Guayaquil, Ecuador, yielded numerous healing claims;²⁸¹ one of these involved Marco Palomeque. People had called him El Manco ("the one-handed") because his right arm was known to be paralyzed; after his healing, he joined the movement and eventually became the first Ecuadorian superintendent of the Ecuadorian Assemblies of God.²⁸²

During an evangelism campaign in Quito in 1972, "a blind girl and a deaf child were healed," leading to rapid church growth and many other reports of healings.²⁸³ An eyewitness and church leader provided more extensive reports for the evangelistic campaign of 1982. He reported that though the evangelist did not pray for the sick, people began being healed unexpectedly. A number of people with arthritis, previously unable to raise their arms, were healed. Then people's teeth started being filled, some disabled persons could walk, and cancer and blindness were healed.²⁸⁴ One of the converts at this time was a professor of educational research at Quito's Central University of Ecuador, Dr. Luis Flores. Although he had been an atheist, Flores experienced the permanent healing of a number of chronic conditions, including "deviation of the fifth lumbar vertebra, chronic pharyngitis," allergies "and a duodenal ulcer." He joined the movement and became a pastor in 1985, a position in which he has continued.²⁸⁵

A physician there reports that she prays for her patients and has often seen them healed. She also reports that at one point she felt something like fire burning inside her and was convinced that some healing was about to occur; then, she claims, God filled the molars of her little son and nephew.²⁸⁶ Of the church members surveyed, 22 percent "reported that a healing was instrumental in their decision to convert," and this factor was more common among men.²⁸⁷ More generally, 90 percent of all who responded reported that they had experienced

280. Castleberry, "Impact." The dissertation uses both documents and interviews with eyewitnesses, usually including those whose healing testimonies I have cited. I have known the dissertation's author for more than twenty years; he is now president of Northwest University in Kirkland, Washington.

281. *Ibid.*, 106 (citing, e.g., Walker, *Siembra*).

282. Castleberry, "Impact," 106.

283. *Ibid.*, 108 (citing Walker, *Siembra*).

284. Castleberry, "Impact," 112, citing Benjamin LaFon, who reiterated that even the interdenominational campaign's most enthusiastic supporters had not expected this. The sorts of afflictions mentioned here do not normally simply disappear without medical intervention (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009, on the filling of teeth and healing of cancer).

285. Castleberry, "Impact," 112–13 (the conditions are elaborated on 113n20), quoting communication from Dr. Flores (Nov. 24, 1998).

286. Castleberry, "Impact," 143.

287. *Ibid.*, 151. The proportion of university graduates was also slightly higher, but given the relatively small sample size the difference was probably not statistically significant. For the entire section on "Conversion Due to Healing or a Miracle," see 151–52.

miraculous healings;²⁸⁸ the list of conditions reportedly healed included, among others:²⁸⁹

- A bowel occlusion
- Cancer
- Delirium
- Facial paralysis
- Gallbladder stones
- Heart and lung problems
- Hemorrhaging during pregnancy
- Infertility
- Knee problems
- Near-fatal aplastic anemia
- Paralysis due to stroke
- Suicidal tendencies
- Tooth cavities
- Uterine problems

A number of professionals reported healings or divinely blessed treatments. Thus “a male university professor of sociology testified of divine protection when a bus ran over his leg and divine healing in his subsequent speedy recovery. . . . Several of those who reported healings were medical professionals. A dentist testified that she witnessed the immediate healing of her own injured finger, in which the swelling was instantly reversed.”²⁹⁰ Although the recent history of the Assemblies of God in Ecuador is distinctive for this denomination in Latin America in some respects, the frequency of claims to have experienced and witnessed divine healing seem more pervasive.

Chile

Carlos and Mayra Bonilla, Baptist missionaries in Chile, noted that they had numerous stories but shared with me a recent recovery of someone close to them

288. *Ibid.*, 166.

289. I am using the exact words in Castleberry, “Impact,” 166, but rearranging them in list form and omitting some examples. One example I omit is ovarian cysts, which can resolve naturally (by painful but survivable bursting; Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009), though the same may be said of some of the examples I have retained (e.g., the vague “knee problems”). The bowel obstruction, however, is serious and potentially fatal if prolonged (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 14, 2009). While minor strokes usually resolve within twenty-four hours, damage remaining after a few days is less likely to reverse, and progress usually is gradual and requires “intense physical therapy” (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009).

290. Castleberry, “Impact,” 167–68. An obstetrician also attributed her mother’s gradual improvement after stroke to divine healing (168).

in Chile. On Friday, April 27, 2007, Baptist minister Margarita Campos fell very sick. She shivered and vomited throughout the weekend and on Monday went into convulsions. She fell into a coma and was diagnosed with advanced meningitis. The doctor warned that she would never come out of the coma and that if she lived, she would be bedridden for the rest of her life. Noting the severe brain damage (according to the Bonillas, 50 percent of her brain was damaged and dark on the scans), five or six doctors conferred and agreed that if she survived, she would be a vegetable.

After an extended period of the church's prayers, Margarita started to move, eat, and speak. A month and a half later, she was asked to write something, and she wrote, "I am well because of my Lord." Her doctors, happy for her, responded, "You must have good connections up there, because you were supposed to be dead." She showed further improvement at every checkup. She began walking to church again, and some aspects of her health appeared even stronger than before she fell sick.²⁹¹ Their former colleagues Stephen and Sheila Heneise shared with me more recently that her doctors continue to express astonishment; now she is again preaching, singing, and doing things with the part of the brain that was supposedly destroyed. They have a photo of her lifting a baby high for a baby dedication.²⁹² Subsequently Mayra confirmed this report; Margarita has resumed duties as lead pastor at New Redeemer Baptist Church and "is back at her 'normal' . . . state" before the meningitis, apart from still recovering some of her physical strength.²⁹³ In contrast to earlier scans showing more than half her brain damaged, current tests show only scars, with the brain fully functional.²⁹⁴

Steve and Sheila shared with me some additional accounts of healings that they witnessed in Chile. They had other accounts available but narrowed their examples to several samples.²⁹⁵ One account involves Ruth Nuñez, who in 1998 became a student in Santiago's Baptist Theological Institute. She had birth defects; most problematic for her studies was her ability to hear only partially and in only one ear, but she also had difficulty walking. That summer a speaker from the Youth Department of the Baptist Churches of the Chilean Mission invited hearers needing healing to come forward for prayer, but Ruth balked. The next day she confessed to Sheila Heneise that she feared that God would heal her only if she accepted the call to ministry, with which she was struggling. That evening, however, she did commit herself to ministry.

Steve and Sheila describe what happened next: "Rising early the next morning, she went into the woods to pray and consider her decision. As she was praying and meditating she began to notice sounds around her in the woods—a rabbit rustling

291. Carlos Bonilla and Mayra Giovanetti Bonilla, interview, Sept. 13, 2008.

292. Sheila Heneise, interview, April 5, 2009.

293. Mayra Giovanetti Bonilla, personal correspondence, twice on July 9, 2009.

294. *Ibid.*

295. They noted that when they listed experiences they could share with me they "quickly filled a page. Of these many" they chose three (personal correspondence, Aug. 20, 2008).

in the grass; a bee buzzing overhead. She had never before heard these sounds. Her hearing was healed.” The Heneises have kept in touch with Ruth since that time. In January 2000, a Baptist pastor, “noticing her limp, asked her if he could pray for her. In a private place he began to pray and within minutes God healed Ruth’s hip and lengthened her short leg so that she could walk normally.”²⁹⁶ Her healings have remained permanent.²⁹⁷

They also note a healing that occurred during evening services at the Baptist convention in 1998. Sheila noted that people were being healed there regularly; on this occasion one person for whom they prayed was a woman named Dominga, who had serious head pain. Dominga was facing an operation because an injury had apparently caused a blood clot that was pressuring the brain. She was healed completely that night, removing the need for surgery.²⁹⁸ In another, more recent case Sheila prayed with a woman who needed to have an operation on her throat. Their immediate prayer was for her emotional healing; as she forgave, she was instantly released from deep-seated anger. Within the week her doctor found her physically healed as well and canceled the operation. The next year the family started a new church in another town.²⁹⁹

Steve and Sheila note an account from December 2002 in Pisagua, a small coastal town in northern Chile. The bus driver for the Baptist evangelism meetings there, Jorge, was a recent convert through the influence of his wife, Patricia, who had been healed from breast cancer during prayer in front of him. Jorge had enthusiastically invited a woman with uterine cancer for prayer, assuring her that God would heal her also. Steve Heneise was one of the ministers praying; Pastor Bernabe Amigo led the prayer and afterward asked her “if she had felt anything.” She said that she felt heat in her abdomen. A month later, Pastor Job Isla returned to Pisagua, and the young woman shared with him that further medical tests found no cancer.³⁰⁰

Finally, they shared a story from a new church in San Carlos planted by New Hope Baptist Church in Chillan Viejo in 2002. A recent convert, an older woman, asked for prayer for her dying husband, Manuel, “his body ravaged by a lifetime of dissolute living.” He had been sent home from the hospital to die, since nothing further could be done for him. Though he was close to death, he was able to understand enough of their message to invite Christ to forgive him and save him,

296. Steve Heneise and Sheila Heneise, personal correspondence, Aug. 21, 2008. They add, “For the past five years Ruth Nuñez has been pastor of the Baptist Church in Diego de Almagro, Chile.” Leg lengthening has often been faked in public meetings, but fakery would not produce permanent healing of an organically impaired gait.

297. Steve Heneise and Sheila Heneise, personal correspondence, Aug. 22, 2008, noting that “she has had other health issues, but her hearing and hip/leg healings were permanent.”

298. Sheila Heneise (interview, April 5, 2009), who was present during the prayer and to whom Dominga later corroborated this account. On another occasion that year, they prayed along with Margarita for a woman who had suffered years of chronic back pain, sometimes fainting and sometimes needing injections in the hospital. After this time of prayer, she never had any more trouble (Sheila Heneise, interview, April 5, 2009).

299. Sheila Heneise, interview, April 5, 2009.

300. Steve Heneise and Sheila Heneise, correspondence, Aug. 21, 2008.

and Steve Heneise prayed with him. The next week, Pastor Carlos called Steve and mentioned “old Manuel.” Steve asked when the funeral would be. “You won’t believe this,” the pastor responded, “but he walked to church last evening to give his testimony about how God had raised him from his deathbed!”³⁰¹ Manuel did eventually die within a year,³⁰² but the immediate turnaround that extended his life impacted the community, where he was “very well known.”³⁰³ As a result, “today the New Hope Baptist Church of San Carlos is several times larger than its mother church in Chillan Viejo.”³⁰⁴

One should keep in mind that these examples are fairly random ones; they appear here simply because I have had contact with the Bonillas and the Heneises. Baptists are only a small proportion of Christians in Chile, where the majority of people are Catholic and the largest Protestant denomination is easily the Pentecostal Methodist Church.³⁰⁵ Ninety-eight percent of Chilean Pentecostal pastors reported that God had used them in healing, even though only 57 percent had “spoken in the ‘tongue of angels.’”³⁰⁶ Even from among the Baptists, I include only a small number of testimonies from two families I know. In other circles, an Anglican priest testifies that he prayed, without much faith, for a baby that had been sent home from the hospital to die. Three days later he learned from the mother that the baby had been completely healed.³⁰⁷

Thus a researcher could likely fill a book with healing claims based on interviews in that country alone. For example, healings of deafness, inability to walk, and other afflictions are reported in interdenominational evangelical meetings more than half a century ago.³⁰⁸ These examples should, however, suffice to make the point that the belief that God heals remains common in Latin America, and that eyewitness testimony is often cited in support of this belief. I have drawn my Latin American examples especially from the Protestant minority there because I have more sources there, but Catholics, in contrast to some Protestants, have

301. Ibid.

302. Idem, Aug. 22, 2008.

303. Idem, Aug. 20, 2008.

304. Idem, Aug. 21, 2008.

305. On one Catholic account from 1990 in Chile, see Duffin, *Miracles*, 155, and her source. On the history of the Pentecostal Methodist Church, from which I also have a healing testimony (Claudia Palma, interview, April 19, 2011), see, e.g., the surveys in Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 239–41; McGee, “Regions Beyond,” 92–93; Deiros and Wilson, “Pentecostalism,” 310–11; Synan, *Grow*, 45–47; Escobar, *Tides*, 79. Since 1967 this movement has been associated with the Pentecostal Holiness Church in North America (Synan, “Churches,” 113). My statistics are estimates, but in rough terms Pentecostal Methodists have outnumbered Baptists more than fifteen to one; all Pentecostals have outnumbered Baptists roughly forty to one; and Catholics have outnumbered them more than one hundred fifty to one (Mandryk, *Operation World*, 210–11).

306. Chesnut, “Exorcising,” 175.

307. Pytches, *Come*, 121–22. Pytches, whose firsthand account it is, was then or later bishop of Chile, Bolivia, and Peru.

308. See Doleshal, “Healings.” Wagner, “Genesis,” 43, notes that even when he was a cessationist, he was impressed with Chilean Pentecostal growth, adding that he “witnessed healings,” prophecies, and other phenomena that had not been part of his experience or belief system.

never taught that miracles ceased and could therefore provide more numerous claims than I had available.

Conclusion

In chapter 7, I noted that from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, many tens of millions of people claim to have witnessed miraculous healings. Beyond that larger observation, I have tried to illustrate that point in these two chapters (chs. 8 and 9) with some more concrete examples of various kinds. In circles that accept the reality of supernatural phenomena, these healing claims include both the sorts of recoveries that most Westerners would explain naturalistically (from headaches to even some deathbed recoveries) and those recoveries that cannot easily be so explained (such as immediate healings of long-term blindness and deafness or the instant and visible disappearance of goiters). I will offer more of the latter sort of examples in chapter 12.

What I can say without any concern of contradiction is that eyewitnesses can and do claim to have seen or experienced healings, some of them dramatic. In view of this observation, there is no reason to suppose that such claims in the first century must represent legendary accretions from a later generation; they could as easily reflect the substance of eyewitness reports from those who experienced Jesus's or his followers' ministries. I defer fuller discussion of the question of supernatural causation for chapters 13–15 (esp. ch. 15) but turn now to healing claims in the West.

Supernaturalism in Earlier Christian History

A miracle that happened at Milan while I was there, when a blind man had his sight restored, succeeded in becoming more widely known because Milan is an important city. . . . In contrast with this, there are surely only a very few at Carthage who know about the healing of Innocentius, sometime counsellor of the vice-prefecture. But I was present as an eyewitness. —Augustine of Hippo¹

I have been concerned that such accounts should be published because I saw that signs of divine power like those of older days were frequently occurring in modern times too. . . . It is not yet two years since the shrine we have been speaking of was established at Hippo and, to my certain knowledge, many miracles have occurred there which are not recorded in the published documents; and nearly seventy of these documents have been produced, at the time of writing. —Augustine of Hippo²

Claims of supernatural activity are not simply the domain of the modern non-Western world. They appeared frequently in early Christian sources that the West traditionally counted in its cultural heritage, in church history, including but not limited to the West, from early to current times.³ Egypt, Carthage, Syria, and other early Christian spheres of influence in Africa and Asia were not Western, geographically or culturally, but the entire church draws on such sources as part

1. Augustine *City of God* 22.8 (trans. Bettenson, 1034, 1035).

2. *Ibid.* (trans. Bettenson, 1043).

3. I regret not having located fuller resources that could have illustrated the case far more thoroughly than can my collection of data here, at some points dependent on a painfully limited number of sources, in a way that is not the case where working from my own discipline. I am grateful for resources (cited below) on whom I could confidently draw, such as Porterfield, Curtis, Opp, Mullin, Baer, Kidd, Alexander, Hardesty, and Kydd, among many others.

of its general Christian heritage.⁴ Even in Hume's day, his assurance that uniform human experience was against miracles required him to simply dismiss abundant claims without prior investigation. As we shall see, Hume was able to do so by drawing on an earlier Christian tradition that did just that, framed in a reactionary, polemical context. Nevertheless, in this historical chapter I have given greater attention to reports more recent than Hume because more records remain available, because many of these reports are more fully documented, and because these examples more immediately inform the contemporary context.

Some examples are from eras more difficult to reconstruct, with the sorts of stories sufficiently distant from the events reported in the Gospels and Acts for us to treat them more cursorily. I am convinced that a number of the cases reported in history may well illustrate their reporters' unhealthy credulity (see especially appendix C and the distinction between hagiography and more dependable historiography), but in numerous other cases genuine, unusual recoveries appear sufficiently attested at a stage close to eyewitnesses. Relevant for our later discussion, it also appears to me that in some of these cases a supernatural explanation, if not a priori ruled out, seems more plausible than a nonsupernatural one. For now, however, the more important point is that while legend can create and augment stories about miracles, they can also stem from the level of eyewitnesses.

Perspectives from the Premodern World

The church has a long supernaturalist tradition. I start by noting such views in history, because these approaches remained at home with supernaturalist readings of the accounts in the Gospels and Acts, not unlike those readings in much of the Majority World today.⁵ W. D. Davies and Dale Allison, for example, cite various eyewitness claims through history and today and contend that such claims cannot be dismissed as merely "antique naïveté."⁶ While the areas treated are not by

4. By standards of the Roman Empire, Hellenistic culture that prevailed in the dominant Christian regions was Eastern; western North Africa included both Latin and Berber influences; Christianity was an Asian faith (cf. Keener, "Asia"). Lines of demarcation here are arbitrary; I am using them as a means of dividing the material and showing that antisupernaturalism is not even a dominant feature of traditional Christianity, hence of much of historic Western culture outside the modern academy, while treating most of Christian history, Western or not, in a single chapter.

5. Given the ambiguity and in some cases the falsehood of postbiblical revelatory or healing claims, some cessationist defenders of biblical miracles have found it simpler (by virtue of eliminating all ambiguity) to distinguish biblical miracle claims from subsequent ones, preserving the former but dismissing the latter. But I believe that the claims in subsequent history and today are too pervasive and sometimes too compelling to attribute them all to fabrication or imagination. More difficult for this position, appealing as it is for the reasons noted, it requires a great deal of hermeneutical ingenuity to make biblical texts support it. Indeed, it perhaps challenges some of the NT theology of miracles, and that while arguing for the Bible and against ambiguity.

6. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:62–65.

any means all strictly Western, a large proportion of them inform the heritage of Western Christendom and hence of Western culture prior to Hume's era.⁷

The Gospels' claims about signs and public response hardly seemed novelistic to most Christian readers in history, including most believers on a popular level after the Enlightenment.⁸ In contrast to my work in sources from the Gospels' own period, my area of expertise, I depend here mostly on secondary sources; yet I trust that the examples will prove sufficient to make the minimal point that I am arguing. Most of these healing claims come from popular and anecdotal sources, since until recently scientific studies have not been as interested in such claims. They do, however, illustrate popular beliefs, and historians typically use popular reports to document beliefs.

Most Christian reading communities in history accepted miracle reports in the Gospels and Acts as authentic indications of divine activity, and many sincere eyewitnesses claimed to see such activity. Later in the book, I will look briefly at some proposed explanations, both natural and supernatural. My primary point here, however, from the perspective of historical analysis,⁹ remains that many of those people reporting such phenomena directly experienced them and interpreted them in supernaturalist terms. Without yet trying to explain either kind of claim, it is fair to doubt that there is any logical reason to a priori assume that the Gospel writers must have either fabricated their miracle stories or depended on sources that must have done so.

The Patristic Era

Christians were widely associated with claims of healings and exorcisms in antiquity. Not only early Christians but also rabbinic sources associated some Christian contemporaries with healing miracles.¹⁰ Second- and third-century

7. A larger proportion of the sources most readily available for my reports in history are from regions that the West today considers related to its religious and intellectual heritage; nevertheless, similar reports also appear historically in medieval Ethiopia and elsewhere. For comments on the arbitrariness of traditional cultural boundaries, see, e.g., the discussion in Usry and Keener, *Black Religion*, 41–44.

8. Successive centuries of Christians continued to report miracles (see, e.g., Irvin and Sunquist, *History*, 145–47; McGee, "Strategy," 50–52; idem, "Miracles and Mission," 146–48; through history, Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 67–92); for some views through history, see Muzur and Skrobbonja, "Healings" (summarized in Kub, "Miracles," 1273). Early Christian art featured Jesus's miracles prominently (Freund, *Rise*, 416), suggesting the same interest attested in the literary sources.

9. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 4–5, notes that most historical approaches to faith healing (whether by its supporters, such as A. B. Simpson; from a Jungian perspective, Morton Kelsey; or, more nuanced, Ronald Kydd; or its detractors, such as G. B. Cutten or Keith Thomas) are essentialist, presenting the phenomenon as the same over time. While such approaches have weaknesses in their particulars and do differ among themselves, they can nevertheless illustrate the basic thesis here: namely, that an antisupernaturalist approach is not the only, and indeed not the dominant, reading of healing in Christian history.

10. Christians healed in the name of Yeshu (*tos. Hul.* 2:22–23; see also Urbach, *Sages*, 1:116; Herford, *Christianity*, 103–11; Klausner, *Jesus*, 40; Pritz, *Nazarene Christianity*, 96–97), though the rabbis often associated their powers with magic or fakery (e.g., *p. A.Z.* 2:2, §3; Urbach, *Sages*, 1:115–16; Herford, *Christianity*, 115–17; Lachs, *Commentary*, 178; cf. *Deut* 13:1–5). In some apocryphal stories, holy rabbis destroyed miracle-working Christians with greater magic (see Herford, *Christianity*, 112–15).

Christian apologists depict not only apostolic leaders but also ordinary Christians as miracle workers.¹¹ Before the 300s, exorcisms proved to be a major factor in the spread of Christianity;¹² in the 300s, exorcisms and miracles are the most explicit cause of conversion to Christianity mentioned in early Christian sources.¹³

Christians themselves appealed to exorcisms and miracles for evidential value in public discourse. Thus Origen, arguing against Celsus and addressing pagans, claimed that Christians were still expelling evil spirits and performing cures and that he had witnessed some of these incidents.¹⁴ Similarly, Athanasius in the 350s portrays the Egyptian hermit Anthony as confronting skeptics by challenging them either to cure these demoniacs with their ideas and idols or to just observe Christ's power healing them; then, Athanasius declared, Anthony himself cured them.¹⁵

Far from being merely incredulous about a distant and unverifiable past,¹⁶ various church fathers noted that miracles and healings continued in their own day.¹⁷ In ad-

11. See discussion in Kelhoffer, "Miracle Workers."

12. MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 40–41, 60–61. Cf. also Brown, *Late Antiquity*, 55, as cited in Jenkins, *Next Christendom*; "Miracles, Miracle-Workers," 54. Christianity initially spread fastest in urban areas, which would have been most susceptible to epidemics (cf. Avalos, *Health Care*, 4); miracle reports also spread faster (for understandable reasons) in more densely populated areas (see, e.g., Lawal, "Psychology," 135).

13. MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 61–62; Frend, *Rise*, 566–67 (also emphasizing the prevalent fear of demons in this period); idem, "Place of Miracles" (on 11 noting Sozomen's explanation that his family was converted in his grandfather's day through a successful exorcism). Without denying the prevalence of healings and exorcisms, Hart, *Delusions*, 153–55, challenges MacMullen's approach as one-sided (viewing him as hostile on 147–58); but while other means of persuasion existed, our best inferences from extant sources suggest that this approach was the most popular. On the patristic church's ministry in healings and exorcisms, and growth thereby, cf. also Burgess, "Proclaiming"; Cho, "Foundation," 31–35; more popularly, MacNutt, *Crime*, 82–88; Baxter, *Healing*, 29–48. Even in Justin *Dial.* 35.8, signs perform an authenticating function. Culture apparently influenced to a degree the form taken by such signs (as also more recently; see, e.g., Love, *Stewart*, 5, as cited by McGee, "Miracles and Mission"). Miracle reports grew from the mid-third century, in conjunction with saint-veneration ("Miracles, Miracle-Workers," 54; cf. analogous pagan hero veneration in the same period).

14. *Cels.* 1.46, 67, in Kelsey, *Healing*, 136; further on Origen, see Woolley, *Exorcism*, 20–23 (citing *Cels.* 1.22; 4.33; 7.4, 67; *Hom. Jos.* 24; in *Matt. comm. ser.* 110). Kelsey notes (*Healing*, 137–38) that "Origen once commented that there were many instances he could set down from his own experience, but he saw no point in giving nonbelievers another chance to ridicule Christians for imagining things like healing" (*Cels.* 1.46).

15. *Life of St. Anthony* 80, in MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 112. The work may imitate a Pythagorean model (Judge, *Athens*, 223), though to some modern ears Anthony sounds schizophrenic (Toner, *Culture*, 54). On illness and healing in Athanasius, see Barrett-Lennard, *Healing*, 167–96 (for possession and exorcism in Athanasius, see 197–225); cf. briefly Darling, *Healing*, 42–53 (for Jerome, 54–66).

16. The modern theological argument that excludes all postbiblical miracles while accepting biblical ones (often for anti-Catholic reasons) rests on theological a priori and philosophic inconsistency (see Ruthven, *Cessation*, 83–92; cf. 35–40, 64–71; cf. Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 38).

17. Woolley, *Exorcism*, 13–25 (here esp. 13); Young, "Miracles in History," 106–8 (emphasizing on 106–7 that they reported miracles despite their tendency to play them down); Kelsey, *Healing*, 149; see evidence arranged topically in Frost, *Healing*, 61–110 (with translations of ante-Nicene texts, mostly relevant to healing, in 71–110). For references to continuing healings and exorcisms in the Fathers' day, they (and esp. Kelsey) cite Quadratus *Apol. frg.*; Justin 2 *Apol.* 6; *Dial.* 30.3; 39; 76.6; 85.2; Theophilus *Autol.* 1.13; 2.8; Tertullian *Scap.* 4; *Test.* 3; *Spect.* 26, 29; *Apol.* 23, 27; *An.* 57; Tatian *To the Greeks* 17–18, 20. Kelsey, *Healing*, 135–99, addresses claims of healing in the early Fathers through Gregory; on related matters, see Kydd, *Gifts*. More briefly, De Wet, "Signs," 62–70, addresses sources in the period 100–400

dition to Origen, just noted, Cyprian noted that Christians were sometimes cured by baptism;¹⁸ Tertullian named prominent pagans who had been cured from evil spirits and became grateful to Christians.¹⁹ Irenaeus gives the fullest list of signs, almost the same range as in the Gospels and Acts, noting that such signs were converting pagans.²⁰ Cyprian complained that the church's worldliness had sapped its spiritual power in his day,²¹ but elsewhere he too affirmed continuing healings.²² Reports continued among church fathers like Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus,²³ Gregory of Nyssa,²⁴ John Chrysostom,²⁵ and also among the desert monks.²⁶ Irenaeus and Athanasius used claims of healings and exorcisms apologetically to defend the orthodox as God's movement.²⁷ Likewise, Athanasius invites skeptics to come witness the efficacy of exorcism for themselves.²⁸ Strange as it appears to many readers today, though, church fathers like Basil, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine believed that the healing often was mediated through relics.²⁹

c.e.; also Woodward, *Miracles*, 146–56; Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 157–65; bibliography in Ruthven, *Cessation*, 18–19; cf. more generally Porterfield, *Healing*, 43–65.

18. Woolley, *Exorcism*, 29–30, cites Cyprian *Ep.* 69.15, but at least in my edition this is 75.15.

19. Tertullian *Scap.* 4, in Kelsey, *Healing*, 136–37; further on exorcism in Tertullian, see Woolley, *Exorcism*, 20–21 (citing *Idol.* 11; *Ux.* 2.5; *Cor.* 11; *de Spectac.* 26; *Praescr.* 41). Woolley, *Exorcism*, 21, and Kelsey, *Healing*, 150, note that *Acts of S. Eugenia* 10–11 tells how Eugenia would cast out demons; Minucius Felix *Oct.* 27 also notes Christians casting out demons.

20. Kelsey, *Healing*, 150–51 (citing Irenaeus *Haer.* 2.6.2; 2.10.4; 2.31.2; 2.32.4–5; 3.5.2); cf. also Woolley, *Exorcism*, 14–15; much more fully, Barrett-Lennard, *Healing*, 89–135 (on possession and exorcism in Irenaeus, see 137–65). The *Apostolic Constitutions* includes prayers that presbyters be filled both with healing and teaching gifts (8.16; Dawson, *Healing*, 147).

21. Kelsey, *Healing*, 151, citing Cyprian *Laps.* 6–7. By Cyprian's time, exorcism had shifted from a charisma to being part of an order (Woolley, *Exorcism*, 27).

22. Kelsey, *Healing*, 151 (citing *On the Vanity of Idols* 7; *Ep.* 75.12–13, 15–16), also citing on continuing healings, Hippolytus *Scholia on Daniel* 10.16; Dionysius of Alexandria *Ep.* 12, *To the Alexandrians* 4; Clement of Alexandria *Quis div.* 34; Origen *Cels.* 1.6, 25, 46–47, 67; 2.8, 33; 3.24, 28, 36; 7.35, 67; 8.58.

23. Woolley, *Exorcism*, 45; Kelsey, *Healing*, 167–71. See also Gregory Thaumaturgos in Basil *On the Spirit* (cited by McGee, *Miracles*, 5).

24. Kelsey, *Healing*, 171–75.

25. *Ibid.*, 175–77. A number of healing reports historically came through sacraments (Dawson, *Healing*, 146–59; in recent times, Kerin, *Touch*, 8; White, *Adventure*, 73–78; Oursler, *Power*, 125 [Episcopal]; MacNutt, *Healing*, 163–64; Neal, *Power*, 33–34), and through bishops and elders visiting the sick to anoint them and pray for them (147). Chrysostom mostly relegated gifts to the past (Woolley, *Exorcism*, 54). For anointing in the patristic era, see Rogge, “Relationship,” 179–227; for its different meaning later, see Rogge, “Relationship,” 228–42 (in the Carolingian era), 242–66 (the scholastic era); and for the revised rite (e.g., Vatican II), see 333–70.

26. Woolley, *Exorcism*, 45–47 (note stories of Pachomius and Hilarion, though these are not eyewitness claims); Kelsey, *Healing*, 163–67 (including, on 166–67, Athanasius's *Life of St. Antony*); Lietzmann, *History*, 4:160–62 (emphasizing hagiography); cf. Frend, *Rise*, 575; Ellingsen, *Roots*, 1:96. For mid-fourth century Egyptian monks, see also Porterfield, *Healing*, 48.

27. See Barrett-Lennard, *Healing*, 329. Apologetic use of miracles won important converts such as Arnobius (Lietzmann, *History*, 3:174).

28. Woolley, *Exorcism*, 47 (citing Athanasius *Inc.* 48.3). Lietzmann, *History*, 4:135–36, complains about Athanasius's miracle stories; in 3:136, he suspects Athanasius's interpretation of Arius's death as judgment, remarking that “the more critical reader” will judge him as poisoned.

29. MacMullen, *Second Church*, 65, 90, 108. Exorcism was expected at tombs with martyrs' relics (*ibid.*, 29, citing Chrysostom *Jul.* 2 [PG 31.489A]); Ambrose was an eyewitness of healing through relics (*ibid.*, 90, citing Ambrose *Ep.* 22.1f.).

Reports remain abundant in the early fourth century and are not limited to the church fathers.³⁰ Personal fourth-century letters that have survived from Christians in Egypt testify that Christians were seeking healing from God through the prayers of trusted holy men.³¹ Other probably fourth-century sources likewise indicate that a ministry of healing continued in other parts of the church, although this activity may have become a clerical rather than a lay prerogative.³² We have no way to verify these reports today, but they do illustrate continuing belief in miracles and in many cases first- or secondhand claims of having witnessed them.

On a popular level, most people in ancient Egypt approached their sicknesses primarily in terms of symptoms or demonic causes. Coptic texts regarding Christian cures there thus address a range of symptoms, usually those issues that doctors had not been able to treat: demon possession; migraines; breast inflammation; pains in various parts of the body; hemorrhoids; and also “nine instances of crippled persons, lame and infirm, fractures, dislocations, one case of gout, skin diseases . . . one case of fever, and a snakebite.”³³ Most of these recoveries are believable even from a purely naturalistic perspective, since people naturally recover from many health problems, though some recoveries, such as those of persons unable to walk, appear at least potentially more dramatic.

The North African theologian Augustine at one point sounded like he thought that miracles had ceased, but he later retracted that view, or at least the way that he had articulated it. True, he now granted, not everyone today speaks in tongues when hands are laid on at baptism, nor are the sick always healed.³⁴ Yet he notes that even when he had written his apparent denial he knew of a blind man healed in front of many witnesses by approaching martyrs’ bodies when he was in Milan, and countless other miracles.³⁵ In *City of God* 22.8, Augustine notes that they had

30. Kelsey, *Healing*, 152, cites among church leaders Lactantius *Epit.* 51; *Inst.* 2.16; 5.22; Arnobius *Against the Heathen* 1.48ff.; Victorinus of Petau *On the Creation of the World*. Some of these references or citations close to them also appear in Woolley, *Exorcism*, 28–29.

31. See Barrett-Lennard, *Healing*, 44–86.

32. See the probably fourth-century *Sacramentary of Sarapion* (Barrett-Lennard, *Healing*, 277–323, with summary on 322–23).

33. Godron, “Healings,” 1212–13.

34. On the widespread early Christian expectation of gifts, including prophecy and tongues, during baptism and other initiation rites, see McDonnell and Montague, *Initiation*, 314 (summarizing information detailed throughout the work, regarding Tertullian, Hilary, Cyril, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Severus, and others).

35. Augustine *City of God* 22.8 (“before all those witnesses,” trans. Bettenson, 1034); Kelsey, *Healing*, 185 (citing *Retract.* 1.13.7, in Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae* 32, cols. 604–5; *Util. cred.* 16.34; *Conf.* 9.7.16; Larmer, “Manuscript,” cites *Retract.* 1.12.7; 1.13.5); Brown, *Miracles*, 8 (noting the “discomfort” this caused Warfield); Houston, *Miracles*, 9; Darling, *Healing*, 67–82; Dearmer, *Body and Soul*, 237–38 (citing Ambrose of Milan). He attributes many of these miracles to the relics of St. Stephen (Bentley, *Relics*, 66; Woodward, *Miracles*, 162), though we have reason to doubt whether those relics actually had historical connection to Stephen (“discovered” through a dream, Bentley, *Relics*, 34–35); the bones of supposed martyrs through which a blind man was healed in Milan may have been actually from Paleolithic burials (Frend, *Rise*, 623; though cf. the alleged “incorruption” in Augustine *Conf.* 9.7), so that faith rather than the relics themselves is probably the main cause. Already in Scripture unusual

established a depository of documents recording miracles in Hippo only two years earlier, and already they had more than seventy published documents. He further knew of many miracles not recorded among these. Moreover, another shrine in the area, having kept records longer, had a much larger collection.³⁶ Previously more skeptical, through experience he had grown to affirm continuing healings.³⁷

Augustine's many examples of miracles of which he was certain include dramatic cases like healing of long-term paralytics; he freely cites eyewitnesses. Sometimes he expresses his annoyance when someone healed had not yet publicly given testimony to what God had done, because they were acting as if the healing were only for their private edification and not also for God's glory. He recounts a less dramatic recovery of his own that he regards as miraculous. He reports his own suffering for several days from tooth pain so severe (perhaps due to an abscess, in the days before root canals) that eventually he could not speak. No sooner had his friends prayed for him than it vanished (*Conf.* 9.4.12).³⁸

He elaborates at special length on a case involving one of his friends, citing also another close friend who, along with Augustine, was a witness of the event. A former official named Innocent was suffering from a long-term painful anal abscess that a previous surgery and ointments had failed to correct. As anesthesia was not available in those days, patients suffering painful surgeries sometimes went into shock and died, and Innocent was terrified at the prospect of another surgery. Augustine and others prayed for him, but Augustine found himself unable to concentrate on prayer, distracted by Innocent's wailing to God. If the Lord did not respond to such desperate cries as Innocent's, Augustine wondered, what sort of prayers might move him? The next morning Augustine and the others returned for Innocent's surgery. The doctors removed the bandages and then began searching for the abscess that they had repeatedly observed—only to discover completely healthy tissue.³⁹

means of healing appear (cf. 2 Kgs 13:21; Acts 19:11–12); Gaiser, *Healing*, 166, connects relics with Mark 6:56 and Acts 19:11–12.

36. Regularly noted, e.g., Kelsey, *Healing*, 185; Ruthven, *Cessation*, 30; cf. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 136; Dearmer, *Body and Soul*, 239 (but wrongly listing the reference); Martin, *Healing*, 28–29; Kirby, "Recovery," 112; MacMullen, *Second Church*, 65; for a translation, see Bettenson and Knowles, *City of God*, 1043. In 22.8 he also claims to have been an eyewitness to many of these supernatural healings. Warfield, *Miracles*, 43, seems to imply that apologetic needs motivated Augustine's later interest in miracle shrines; we would have to regard Augustine as wholly disingenuous, however, if he fabricates his eyewitness testimony on this basis.

37. Kelsey, *Healing*, 186–88; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 135–37; noted earlier in Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 174–76. Cf. Daston, "Facts," 96. Warfield, who thought Augustine otherwise trustworthy, condemned Augustine's belief in miracles as reflecting his era (Herum, "Theology," 9, cites Warfield, *Miracles*, 77–78), not considering whether Warfield's skepticism might similarly reflect his own era. For Augustine's theology of the miraculous, see especially Herum, "Theology"; he surveys scholars who stress Augustine's possible pragmatic reasons for supporting miracle claims (15–19) as well as those more apt to emphasize Augustine's belief in the events he reports (19–24); for a list of many passages regarding miracles and spirits in Augustine, see 85–94.

38. Brought to my attention in Herum, "Theology," 26.

39. Augustine *City of God* 22.8. This story about Innocent is elaborated more fully in Larmer, "Manuscript."

Reports appear also in the Asian churches east of the Roman Empire. According to a report attributed to a written second-century source, the first bishop of Arbil in Mesopotamia was converted through witnessing a Syrian evangelist raising someone from the dead in 99 C.E.⁴⁰ Although the relevant sources lack the hagiography of medieval accounts, a healing and possible nature miracle also appear.⁴¹

*The Medieval Period*⁴²

Healing reports continued, though their typical character shifted further from what we find in our earliest Christian sources.⁴³ Healings were said to follow Martin of Tours,⁴⁴ the early fourth-century Northumbrian saints,⁴⁵ Benedict,⁴⁶ and others. Undoubtedly, many of these reports are shrouded in hagiography, but one modern doctor accepts many of them because he can cite as parallels to such reports analogous accounts of recoveries in answer to prayer today.⁴⁷ Though miracles were often associated with the intercession of deceased saints,⁴⁸ some of these miracles were recorded by contemporary witnesses. Thus, for example, at a festival of St. Martin in November 579, both a disabled man and a blind man were healed.⁴⁹ Some living healers were more obscure; Gregory of Tours speaks

40. Young, "Miracles in History," 110, citing Mashiha-Zakha, *Chronicle of Arbil*, 2–3.

41. Young, "Miracles in History," 110–11, citing Mashiha-Zakha, *Chronicle of Arbil*, 32–33; and (for the possible nature miracle) *The Life of Mar Aba*.

42. Academic treatments of medieval learning are much more positive than the dominant popular stereotypes today (see discussion in Hart, *Delusions*, 33–35).

43. On medieval miracle reports, see, e.g., Ward, *Miracles*; Woodward, *Miracles*, 156–71; Platelle, "Miracle" (on Sigal, *L'homme*); Martin, "Resisting," 51–52; for the late Middle Ages, see, e.g., Goodich, *Miracles*.

44. See Woolley, *Exorcism*, 48; Kelsey, *Healing*, 189–91; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 67–72; briefly Frend, *Rise*, 709; Rapp, "Saints," 553.

45. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 72–78; see especially idem, "Miracles" (the revised version of his presidential address to the Newcastle and Northern Counties Medical Society, Oct. 1982). His focus is Celtic Christianity there, which continued to flourish even after 664. Anglo-Saxon miracle accounts focus on "the promise of salvation conveyed by" divine miracles (Fadda, "Miraculous," 65).

46. In Gregory the Great's *Dial.* 2, on which see, e.g., Cavadini, "Note." Gregory recounts supernatural stories even in gardens (e.g., the demon on the lettuce in *Dial.* 1.4.7; see Müller, "Power," 47–48).

47. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 71–72, 74, 76–77. Gardner's paper on the topic in the *British Medical Journal* captured some attention (Bridge, *Signs*, 163–64).

48. Originally associated with martyrs' relics, miracles came to be associated at times even with deceased bishops whose social rank had garnered their position (MacMullen, *Second Church*, 100). Despite efforts of Augustine and others, many felt more comfortable seeking divine help through the cults of saints than directly from the Triune God (ibid., 106). The concerns of the uneducated for articulate prayers (cf. Duffin, *Miracles*, 148) may have encouraged dependence on other intercessors.

49. See Van Dam, *Saints*, 70, citing Gregory of Tours *Hist.* 5.47 and other sources. Van Dam reports Gregory's appeal to cures, including, perhaps not too impressively for most modern readers, Gregory's own sore throat (81). For Martin's posthumous cult, see Van Dam, *Saints*, 13–28, 68–70, 81; for primarily posthumous miracles, see Van Dam, *Saints*, 50–151 passim; the translation of Gregory of Tours's *Miracles of the Bishop St. Martin* in Van Dam, *Saints*, 199–303; for Fortunatus *Miracles of St. Hilary*, see Van Dam, *Saints*, 155–61; for Gregory of Tours *Suffering and Miracles of the Martyr St. Julian*, see Van Dam, *Saints*, 162–95; *Suffering of the Martyr St. Julian*, 196–98. Regarding his relics, promoted by Gregory, see Bentley, *Relics*, 57–58 (French revolutionaries destroyed the relics in 1793; 59).

of an ascetic rural Christian healer. This healer roughly applied consecrated oil to a fevered young man, whom the fever had made deaf and mute, and the young man was healed.⁵⁰ The fifth-century Syrian bishop Philoxenus believed that God still granted the charism of healing to some ascetics;⁵¹ healings and exorcisms are also associated with Symeon the Stylite, an ascetic Syrian monk.⁵²

Nevertheless, late antiquity witnessed a general transition away from emphasis on current miracles by living intercessors, especially on the official level.⁵³ This diminution of reports perhaps not surprisingly also coincided geographically with regions where new evangelism was less emphasized.⁵⁴ Signs claims do appear most commonly in history in the context of groundbreaking evangelism;⁵⁵ this pattern has persisted through history, for example, in the cases of earlier Christian missionaries like Augustine of Canterbury;⁵⁶ Columba, missionary to Scotland;⁵⁷

50. Porterfield, *Healing*, 67–69 (citing Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, ca. 592 C.E.). For a proposed source for a healing miracle by Eugenius in Gregory, see Cain, “Miracles.”

51. McDonnell and Montague, *Initiation*, 289.

52. Rapp, “Saints,” 555. For suggestions about Simeon’s ironic inversion of the new ascetic ideal, see Blowers, “Interpreting,” 623.

53. Kelsey, *Healing*, 191–217. Gregory the Great’s interest differed here from many others (Müller, “Power,” 49), but Dal Santo, “Gregory,” argues that he was defending the cult of the saints. Emphasizing the beginning of the fifth century as a major transition and suggesting that the emphasis on the divine presence in the sacrament largely displaced the emphasis on exorcism, see Woolley, *Exorcism*, 54–68 (noting, e.g., the transition from the exorcist to the bishop, 63). See also Gardner, “Miracles,” 1932 (noting from Bede *H.E.G.A.* 1.31 that Gregory the Great seems not to have encouraged events such as the missionary Augustine’s healing of a blind girl). But prayer was still made using oil (following Jas 5:14–15); see Woolley, *Exorcism*, 63–64. On views that gifts dominated in earlier times, see, e.g., Theodoret of Cyr *Comm. 1 Cor.* 240 (Bray, *Corinthians*, 117). Some argue that medieval physicians were not even allowed to dissect humans to learn anatomy (Kelsey, *Healing*, 211), but this is a myth invented by Andrew Dickson White (see Park, “Dissection”). On the decline in the medieval period (of the gift through living intercessors), see also MacNutt, *Crime*, 117–37; somewhat earlier, Frost, *Healing*, 180–83, 235; also the further decline during the Reformation (MacNutt, *Crime*, 139–44) and especially the Enlightenment and Christian cessationism (145–52; see further Ruthven, *Cessation*). The decline was not always viewed as an ideal state, some speaking wistfully of the past (see Theodoret of Cyr *Comm. 1 Cor.* 240, in Bray, *Corinthians*, 117; Chrysostom *Hom. Cor.* 36.7, in Bray, *Corinthians*, 146); some interpreters, such as Bengel and Christlieb, viewed periods of decline as merely “temporary” for “periods of dulled faith” (Dod, “Healer,” 173; McGee, *Miracles*, 42).

54. Medieval Europe saw itself as evangelized (Ward, “Monks,” 134). Associating signs with evangelism, Severus of Antioch *Catena on Acts* 10.44 (Martin, *Acts*, 140) averred that signs were no longer necessary, the gospel having been widely spread.

55. Ammonius *Catena on Acts* 28.9 (Martin, *Acts*, 314) notes that “miracles are mostly performed among and for unbelievers” (cf. Bede *Comm. Acts* 28.8; Martin, *Acts*, 314). Such an approach today would expect signs to predominate in less evangelized regions. Sociologically, signs and wonders tend to characterize a revivalist movement’s initial phase but decline as the institutionalization necessary for functioning denominations progresses (see Tomlinson, “Magic Methodists,” 389, 398), though oversimplified contrasts between charismatic and institutional reflect a misappropriation of Max Weber (see Kee, *Miracle*, 52–54).

56. Young, “Miracles in History,” 115, citing in Bede *H.E.G.A.* 1.31 a letter of 601 from Pope Gregory the Great to Augustine, warning him not to be proud of evangelistic success due to miracles, since they do not accompany all believers (cf. also Gardner, “Miracles,” 1932).

57. See Latourette, *History of Christianity*, 344; Tucker, *Jerusalem*, 41. Some scholars use modern miracles to challenge skepticism about all miracles attributed to Columba (Finlay, *Columba*, 173; followed also by

Willibrord, missionary to the Frisians and Denmark;⁵⁸ Boniface, missionary to Germany;⁵⁹ in the early twentieth century;⁶⁰ more recently;⁶¹ and even in some relatively neglected nineteenth-century missions reports.⁶² While the early medieval West was not fully schooled in Christian faith, many treated it as Christianized.⁶³ The emphasis generally shifted from healings and concern to improve health toward exalting affliction “as a discipline from the hand of God.”⁶⁴

Even so, reports of healings continued to occur⁶⁵ and remained prominent in the medieval Western church.⁶⁶ For example, Tainard, an oblate in northern France, experienced a debilitating paralysis in 1085 but is said to have recovered abruptly after a vision in 1088.⁶⁷ Around 1100, Bernard of Clairvaux (1091–1153)

Gardner, “Miracles,” 1929). Finlay does, however, recognize the elaborations of hagiography (*Columba*, 171–72, 184–85; cf. also Wilson, “Miracles,” 23–24).

58. Kelsey, *Healing*, 230.

59. *Ibid.* Among those lesser known in the West, Georgia’s conversion is attributed to a foreign slave girl who prayed for the healing of the nation’s queen mother (McGee, *Miracles*, 5–6, following Lang, *Lives*, 13–19).

60. See, e.g., Warner, *Evangelist*, 161. A minister present at Hickson’s 1921 meetings in China reported that many more nonbelievers than Christians were healed, just as reported earlier in India, perhaps because non-Christians came “in simple, childlike faith that they will be healed” (Hickson, *Heal*, 76). Out of an estimated ten thousand at one meeting in South Africa where 70 percent were not Christians, phenomenal cures were reported: thirty-six “cases of blindness alone being cured . . . and that two of the blind people who were cured had been born blind” (Hickson, *Heal*, 141).

61. E.g., Pullinger, *Dragon*, 123, 142; Osborn, *Healing*, 282–83, 286, 306.

62. See McGee, “Miracles and Mission,” passim (e.g., 146, noting Mason, *Ko Thah Byu*, 160). See, e.g., Gordon, “Ministry of Healing,” 196–97, citing reports for the Native Americans of Greenland (for the early eighteenth century; see also Garnett, *Mountains*, 120–21, cited by McGee, *Miracles*, 9) and local believers in southern Africa in a report of 1866, and the supernatural protection of a missionary in a report of 1873; also Gordon, “Ministry of Healing,” 198–99, for healings in Burma (now Myanmar). An apparently dying missionary in India was immediately healed after prayer in 1879 (199–200).

63. Ward, “Monks,” 134.

64. Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 140, attributing this shift away from a holistic perspective to the Platonic and Gnostic emphasis on the soul (from Augustine’s era and later).

65. Kelsey, *Healing*, 225–30. Gregory the Great says he was himself healed (*ibid.*, 228) and believed that such signs would continue until the rise of the antichrist (Bredero, *Christendom*, 69). Venerable Bede reports “a number of eyewitness accounts of healings by John of Beverly, who was Bishop of York” in the late seventh century (Kelsey, *Healing*, 229; see further Young, “Miracles in History,” 114, noting witnesses in Bede *H.E.G.A.* 5.3 and that John was “an older contemporary” apparently having “a gift of healing”; details and nuanced presentation in McCready, *Miracles*, 40–43). Bede’s works reflect a tension between doubting that miracles continue in his own day at a biblical level and his reports of such (see McCready, *Miracles*, esp. 230–31); McFadden, “Elements,” 443–50, argues that Bede and his sources were more concerned with community faith than with verifiability of details (with McCready, *Miracles*, 199–202, 214). Gardner, “Miracles,” however, argues that many of Bede’s miracle accounts are in fact historically plausible in light of subsequent, medically documented analogies. In some locations Bede reports no miracles, and miracles are missing in these locations also in other sources from the era (Gardner, “Miracles,” 1932). While some of Bede’s accounts may be legends and others natural events, Young, “Miracles in History,” 113–14, contends that at minimum some seem reliable healing reports.

66. See Porterfield, *Healing*, 67–91; cf. Cho, “Foundation,” 35–37. Narrations often involved the church’s monastic emphasis; see, e.g., vindication stories about nuns (see Pilsworth, “Miracles”) and claims of monastic miracles (1040–1140; Loud, “Miracles”).

67. Karnofsky, “Vision,” 15–16 (on a work composed three years after the event).

reportedly placed a boy's withered hand on a dead saint's hand and the boy's hand was healed.⁶⁸ Bernard wrote about Malachy (1094–1148), whom he knew and whose coworkers he consulted, recounting twelve healings attributed to him.⁶⁹ Traditions have often attributed miracles to St. Francis (1182–1226),⁷⁰ such as the immediate cure of a leper's flesh.⁷¹ Sometimes descriptions of the conditions healed are detailed enough to allow tentative diagnoses by modern specialists.⁷²

Some of the reports diverge from mainstream Christian views today, although modern parallels for many kinds of claims could be cited. In the medieval period, exorcism and belief in demonic ailments proliferated as local European cultures exposed Christians to more specific traditional deities.⁷³ Hagiography elaborated many medieval accounts freely (see appendix C); moreover, even first- and second-hand reports are naturally filtered through the ideology of the reporters, though they may well retain the substance of the events.⁷⁴ Many healings were attributed to relics, by which uneducated Christians felt able to connect with past eras of God's working;⁷⁵ medieval Christians often associated healing also with sacraments like penance and the eucharist,⁷⁶ and with particular shrines.⁷⁷ (Although these

68. De Wet, "Signs," 73. Others later attributed miracles to Bernard himself (e.g., Darling, *Healing*, 137–44). A contemporary source reports the recovery of King Henry II after prayer in September 1170 (see Mason, "Rocamadour," 39).

69. Darling, *Healing*, 144–48.

70. Often recalled by writers on miracles on various levels today; see, e.g., Young, "Miracles in History," 115; Synan, *Voices*, 61; Cho, "Foundation," 36–37; Darling, *Healing*, 149–55.

71. Jørgensen, *Francis*, 253, recounting a story in the *Fioretti*, ch. 25. We cannot be sure with whom the story originated. Given Francis's reputation for humility, it is not surprising that such events are not the interest of his own writings (on these writings, see Jørgensen, *Francis*, 278–91). But while Francis is not likely the direct source for such a story, it is not beyond possibility that it would have been preserved, if based on authentic tradition, by some of the Brothers who had, according to the account, been caring for the leper.

72. Thus the neurological approach in Moog and Karenberg, "Francis."

73. Porterfield, *Healing*, 85–87. On exorcism in antiquity and in various cultures today, see appendixes A and B.

74. Cf. comments in Midelfort, "Possession," 118–19, on exorcistic dialogues of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, some medieval accounts *reduced* earlier miracle reports (Crostiti, "Miracles," esp. 86–87); moreover, from the time of Pope Innocent III (1198–1216), witnesses had to swear under oath (Bolton, "Signs," 165). McGee, "Miracles," 252, notes the mix between fanciful stories and likely historical ones.

75. Porterfield, *Healing*, 69–70; Kydd, *Healing*, 117–29; Woodward, *Miracles*, 160–62; Dearmer, *Body and Soul*, 256–73; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 78–81. Such claims were not limited to Christianity; cf. the head of Muhammad's grandson Husayn (Sindawi, "Head"). Some tales emphasized the efficacy of devotion to Mary even above penance (Price, "Marian Miracles," though noting that their original audience probably understood the stories as edifying fiction). "Miracles" such as the temporary incorruption of a corpse could be explained naturalistically along the same lines as the twenty-five-hundred-year-old "bog oam" discovered in 1984 (Bentley, *Relics*, 65), provided similar conditions obtained.

76. See Porterfield, *Healing*, 81–83, 87–88, respectively; earlier, cf. possibly 1 Cor 11:28–30; Jas 5:16.

77. Woodward, *Miracles*, 163–65, with special focus on Cuthbert (163–64). The Roman Catholic Church today allows natural causes to explain incorruption (Woodward, *Miracles*, 163; a sort of natural mummification, Duffin, *Miracles*, 100–102), though the incorruption of Cuthbert's body when checked more than three centuries after his death (163–64) seems unusual. For medieval claims of posthumous miracles surrounding Cuthbert's cult, see Crumplin, "Cuthbert." Reports of stigmata are also more common in medieval sources (see, e.g., Purkis, "Stigmata"); note also miraculous crucifixes, such as the one that spoke to Francis (see Jansen, "Crucifixes," esp. 203; on speaking statues in pre-Christian Mediterranean antiquity,

practices were widespread then, many of them are not limited to the medieval period.⁷⁸) Critics uncomfortable with power in the relics themselves, including many modern readers,⁷⁹ might nevertheless allow that they sometimes served as a contact point for supplicants' faith in God.⁸⁰

The Eastern churches also continued to report healings, for example, in Constantinople⁸¹ and Ethiopia.⁸² Thomas of Marga, a ninth-century Eastern writer, recounts the activity of four missionaries active in Asia in the prior generation. While explicitly noting that he lacked miracle reports for three of them, he notes healings and some exorcisms reported concerning one, Elijah, who was evangelizing Moqan.⁸³ More educated and holistic than the West, Eastern Christendom continued to embrace medical as well as miraculous healing.⁸⁴ Monks were sometimes involved in medical work despite the limitations of medicine in their era;⁸⁵ asceticism sometimes gained them a reputation as specially empowered healers.⁸⁶ In the East, icons were often used as agents of healing.⁸⁷

see my 92n55); and the flowing of blood from a tomb (Piroyansky, "Bloody Miracles," on a figure of the early fourteenth century; cf. a similar blood miracle in earlier Jewish sources in *b. Git.* 57b; *p. Taan.* 4:5, §14; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15:7; *Lam. Rab.* 2:2, §4; 4:13, §16; *Ecd. Rab.* 3:16, §1; 10:4, §1; cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1:559; human blood appearing at a Catholic mass in Brownell, "Experience," 221–22). Krippner and Kirkwood, "Bleeding," recognize the attested phenomenon of stigmata, explaining it psychogenically. Church authorities often tolerated popular syncretism with pre-Christian shrines in Europe and (later) Latin America, viewing it as superstition but at least "Catholic superstition" (Kassimir, "Politics," 257). Some argue that even some medieval Jews may have visited Christian shrines for healing (Shoham-Steiner, "Healing").

78. E.g., for contemporary healing through sacraments, which may mediate Christ's presence or constitute a point of contact for faith (depending on one's theology), see, e.g., Duffin, *Miracles*, 61 (blindness in 1915); DeGrandis, *Healing* (for some accounts, see, e.g., 138–43); idem, *Miracles*, 131–32; Heron, *Channels*, 20–34; McKenna, *Miracles*, 59–61; discussion in Maddocks, *Ministry*, 113–16; cf. claims of healing at the Lord's Supper even in nonsacramental Pentecostal circles (e.g., Glover, "Healings," 15; Harris, *Acts Today*, 7). For relics, see Duffin, *Miracles*, 156–60.

79. E.g., Saucy, "View," 116; but cf. Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 74. Cf. Warfield, *Miracles*, 94–96, on miracle cures by relic milk of the Virgin Mary, and 96–97 on the liquefaction of blood.

80. Second Kings 13:21 seems to presuppose power still in the bones of Elisha, and other passages may imply power through contact, as in Luke 8:46; Acts 5:15; 19:12. Cf. also Gaiser, *Healing*, 166. The question of faith in God aside, there do remain serious questions of how many of the purported relics actually belonged to the saints to whom they were attributed.

81. Some figures of the Eastern church are less cited in the West, e.g., Athanasios I of Constantinople; for healings attributed to him (even posthumously), see *Oration on the Translation of the Relics of Our Holy Father Athanasios, Patriarch of Constantinople* passim, e.g., 31–34 (Talbot, *Healing in Byzantium*, e.g., 83–85). For ritual healing practices of the early Orthodox Church, see Harakas, "Sacrament"; for healing forms in the East involving anointing the sick, see also Woolley, *Exorcism*, 69–76. Eastern Christendom has traditionally approached Jesus's miracles in the context of Orthodox theology (see Hargreaves, "Miracles").

82. E.g., the thirteenth-century Ethiopian hermit Gäbrä-Seyon (Michael, "Gäbrä-Seyon"); also the Ethiopian saint Abba Estifanos (1380–ca. 1450; Menberu, "Estifanos"). I discuss Takla Hāymānôt at greater length in appendix C.

83. Young, "Miracles in History," 112. Thomas wrote the *Book of Governors* ca. 840, concerning the patriarchate of Timothy I (780–823).

84. Porterfield, *Healing*, 75–77; cf. Constantelos, "Physician-Priests"; Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 44–45.

85. Porterfield, *Healing*, 79–80.

86. *Ibid.*, 80.

87. *Ibid.*, 77–79.

Over the course of several centuries, people believed that the touch of the divinely appointed English and French monarchs could produce healing.⁸⁸ Many of the cures that are described as occurring through the royal touch were probably simply natural recoveries, and apparently a number of the rulers themselves doubted this power. Nevertheless, at least some extraordinary cures are reported, including a cure of blindness after three days, where the supplicant desperately invoked Jesus.⁸⁹ At this remove it is difficult to evaluate these stories, except to say that many supplicants undoubtedly believed in the divine efficacy of the royal blessing, at least some were depending on God to work through it, and, according to some contemporary reports, a number of supplicants notably recovered.⁹⁰

The Reformers' Reaction

Some medieval practices pervasive by the time of the Protestant Reformation, such as traffic in inauthentic relics⁹¹ for pecuniary motives,⁹² are rejected by virtually all churches today. Medieval relics of various sorts⁹³ include a piece of the bread from which Jesus fed the five thousand;⁹⁴ competing sites' claims to hold Jesus's robe;⁹⁵ the (strangely multiplying) remains of the "true cross";⁹⁶ its somehow multiplying nails;⁹⁷ the crown of thorns;⁹⁸ multiple versions of the holy lance that pierced Jesus's side;⁹⁹ his holy tears;¹⁰⁰ some of his hair;¹⁰¹ some of the

88. See Gusmer, *Healing*, 86–90 (citing sources from the 1500s through the 1800s); Schwarz, *Healing*, 110–14 (following nineteenth- and early twentieth-century academic sources cited in 201n1).

89. Schwarz, *Healing*, 112; cf. Dod, "Healer," 175; on the doubtful cases, see also Bishop, *Healing*, 46. Many report one king's prayer that God would grant both health and better sense (e.g., Charnock and Broch, *Debunked*, 131).

90. E.g., Gusmer, *Healing*, 89, cites a royal physician from the reign of King Charles II.

91. Cf. briefly Heinze, *Reform*, 38. Cologne houses the relics of Queen Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins (Bentley, *Relics*, 15–17), plus the crowned skeletons of the three magi (17–19); the former can only be described as bizarre (cf. 21), and the bones were probably supplemented in the twelfth century by skeletons from a cemetery (82). Angels supposedly relocated the virgin mother's Nazareth birthplace to Italy in 1296 (137). The Christian cult of martyrs' relics (esp. from the third century forward) resembled pagan cults of mythical heroes' relics (40–41, 43); Christians sometimes discovered the bodies based on dreams (34), like pagan parallels (41).

92. Relics generated wealth for localities that controlled them (*ibid.*, 89–116).

93. St. Thomas's bones have long been claimed in India—and Chios (*ibid.*, 19–20). The cathedral in Naples has kept for more than four centuries two vials of dark fluid supposed to be the seventeen-hundred-year-old blood of the martyr St. Januarius (*ibid.*, 23), which miraculously liquefies periodically, providing the petitioning Naples with omens regarding its prosperity (*ibid.*, 24–25; it does seem to liquefy, whatever the cause, 26). (Warfield, *Miracles*, 96–97, complained about such liquefaction.)

94. In one twelfth-century abbey (Bentley, *Relics*, 26).

95. The basilica of Saint-Denis held a robe thought to be Jesus's for twelve hundred years (*ibid.*, 116, noting that scientific tests in 1982 do allow that it could date to the first century; French terrorists kidnapped the robe), though fortuitously the alternate robe in Trier boasts more popular support (126).

96. See *ibid.*, 118–22.

97. *Ibid.*, 122–24.

98. *Ibid.*, 124–26.

99. *Ibid.*, 129–31.

100. *Ibid.*, 134–36.

101. *Ibid.*, 134.

Savior's mopped-up blood;¹⁰² still more splendid, one of Jesus's baby teeth;¹⁰³ his newborn umbilical cord;¹⁰⁴ and last but not least, eight sites' claims to possess the holy prepuce left over from his circumcision.¹⁰⁵

Reacting against such abuses, Luther joined other critics in his day¹⁰⁶ and earlier¹⁰⁷ who denounced relics: "One man claims to possess a feather from the wings of the angel Gabriel, and the Bishop of Mainz has a flame from Moses's burning bush. And how does it come to pass that eighteen apostles are buried in Germany when Christ chose only twelve?"¹⁰⁸ His opposition to relics influenced his approach to supernatural claims more generally. Luther did not oppose all revelations in principle (especially in visions and dreams), but severely tested all such claims in view of his antipathy to the proliferation of medieval revelations purporting to stem not from Christ but from Mary, the saints, and the deceased.¹⁰⁹ Despite his reaction to relics, in his later years his pastoral interests seem to have opened him up to healings.¹¹⁰

Luther's emphases in his pastoral teaching vary according to the issues that he is addressing. Thus on the one hand he viewed miracles, once necessary to attest the apostolic church in the beginning, as no longer necessary, and he held that most miracle claims associated with monks contradicted Scripture and thus should be rejected.¹¹¹ On the other hand, he averred that any Christian can work miracles

102. *Ibid.*, 131–33.

103. *Ibid.*, 133–34.

104. *Ibid.*, 134.

105. *Ibid.*, 138–42. In 1872, some women were kissing the reliquary (141), but the Vatican opposes such doubtful relics (clear by Aug. 3, 1900; *ibid.*).

106. Woodward, *Miracles*, 171–72, addresses the Reformation rejection of relics and posthumous miracles of saints and the consequent rejection of postbiblical miracles more generally.

107. Note, e.g., the twelfth-century Benedictine abbot Guibert of Nogent (Bentley, *Relics*, 174–75; others on 176); early fourteenth-century French surgeon Henri de Mondeville (McCleery, "Curing," 201–2). Without rejecting relics altogether, many sought to limit their abuses, including at the Fourth Lateran Council (Bolton, "Signs," 158).

108. Bentley, *Relics*, 177.

109. Föller, "Luther on Miracles," 337–39, 347–48. He avoided revelations himself because of the difficulty of discernment (*ibid.*, 339, noting a similar tendency in Augustine) and insisted on testing every claim by Scripture (338, 340–41, 347–48). Luther's emphasis usually ended up identifying the current gift of prophecy with Scripture interpretation (347–48), an approach not unlike ancient rabbis, who also viewed themselves as normative interpreters as against less text-based challengers (Greenspahn, "Prophecy"; Keener, *Spirit*, 12–13, 20–23 and sources cited there; cf. also *Tg. Jon.* on 1 Sam 19:23–24; 2 Kgs 6:1; 9:1, 4). Special revelations involved personal issues, whereas necessary eternal issues were covered in Scripture (Föller, "Luther on Miracles," 340); new revelations could not conflict with canonical revelation and should be attested with signs (341–42). Luther reacted partly against the subjective charismatic revelations of some Anabaptists (348; cf. revelation claims in Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 49, 164, 177, 189, 199, 263, 692, 759), at least some of which revelations are universally agreed, including by Anabaptists and those who share their orientation, to have been spurious (cf. more generally 1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:20–21).

110. Kelsey, *Healing*, 233, noting a man healed in Christ's name through following the instructions of Jas 5:14–15.

111. Föller, "Luther on Miracles," 342–44. Luther regarded saving faith as normative, and miracle faith as secondary (335–37).

where needed, “especially in a missionary situation”;¹¹² God will still do miracles “whenever they are required.”¹¹³ In practice, he thought them unnecessary in his time, but acknowledged that extraordinary times might require them.¹¹⁴ On one hand, he regarded sickness and suffering as normal and a means of grace.¹¹⁵ On the other, he notes miraculous healings of himself, his wife, and Melancthon in answer to prayer; Melancthon returned from apparent death following Luther’s own prayer.¹¹⁶ A year before he died, Luther taught on prayer for the sick, both privately and in churches, following Jas 5:14–15. In a letter he noted “prayer for healing by the laying on of hands” occurring in Wittenberg.¹¹⁷

One could reject much of the medieval abuse of relics yet believe that God had often intervened on supplicants’ misinformed level; Calvin rejected the cult of the saints,¹¹⁸ yet it is said that he “believed that prayers to St. Genevieve had saved his life when he was stricken with fever.”¹¹⁹ Believing that apostolic miracles had ceased did not make him doubt that God could still answer prayer for healing.¹²⁰ Before the influence of the radical Enlightenment, many Protestants did continue to affirm and experience miraculous healings (e.g., in the first generation of Scots Reformers;¹²¹ note also Friends and early Baptists).¹²² Some have also cited healing claims for reforming groups before Luther, such as the Waldensians and Hussites.¹²³

112. Ibid., 342. Cf. also 344: in extraordinary times, “without exception each Christian would have the power to perform miracles.”

113. Ibid., 344. Some interpreters, like Bengel and Christlieb, viewed periods of decline as merely “temporary” for “periods of dulled faith” (Dod, “Healer,” 173).

114. Föller, “Luther on Miracles,” 344.

115. Ibid., 345.

116. Ibid., 346; Kidd, “Healing,” 149; Kirby, “Recovery,” 113; Dod, “Healer,” 174; on a popular level, Baxter, *Healing*, 76–77; Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 40, 57–58; Oursler, *Power*, 45. Gordon, “Ministry of Healing,” 177–79, reports multiple stories involving Luther and healing.

117. Föller, “Luther on Miracles,” 346; cf. Kelsey, *Healing*, 233; despite Luther’s view of James!

118. For Calvin’s ridicule of relics, see Bentley, *Relics*, 169–74. Calvin recognized that the Catholic Church had supernatural miracles, but he attributed these to Satan, in contrast to biblical miracles (Brown, *Miracles*, 15). For the cessationism of Calvin and Bucer, see, e.g., Gusmer, *Healing*, 71–73; for Calvin’s biblicentric theological approach, see further Jensen, “Calvin.” Some noncessationist Protestants today continue to attribute at least some or many medieval miracles to Satan (e.g., Baxter, *Healing*, 61, 64), while allowing for genuine (albeit later embellished) healings through Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Francis, and others (68–69). They are particularly sympathetic with healings among groups they see as proto-Protestants such as the Waldensians (70–71).

119. Porterfield, *Healing*, 97–98.

120. Pink, *Healing*, 25, citing Calvin and Jas 5:15.

121. For the first generation of Scots Reformers, see Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 81–89; Gordon, “Ministry of Healing,” 163–66.

122. Norman, “Healing”; Kelsey, *Healing*, 234–35; also Buskirk, *Healing*, 72. Early Pentecostals were happy to point out this element of the earlier Baptist heritage (“Healings among Baptists”). George Fox’s *Book of Miracles*, apparently compiled about two years before his death, recounts “over one hundred and fifty Quaker miracles, mostly healings, many performed by George Fox himself” (Moore, “Quakerism,” 335). Such cures were controversial, because opponents associated them, as Jesus’s adversaries had his, with witchcraft (336–37); later Quaker intellectuals soon played down the importance of miracles, without denying them as many other Protestants did (340–41).

123. Norman, “Healing”; Young, “Miracles in History,” 115–16.

When reading the Reformers' reaction against most miracle claims, we should take into account their context; often they were reacting against relics or against Catholic apologetic.¹²⁴ Miracle claims were particularly popular shortly before the Reformation; more than 12,500 miracle stories from Bavaria, from 1350 to 1520, remain extant, and most of these stem from the three decades immediately before the Reformation.¹²⁵ Luther and especially Bucer blamed Catholic miracles on the devil,¹²⁶ and later Protestants carried this reproach even further.¹²⁷ The Reformers' antisupernaturalism, never adopted by Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox Christians, served their immediate polemical situation against Catholic apologetic use of miracle claims.¹²⁸ Early Protestants sought to discredit medieval miracles, for the most part wholesale; while critical inquiry might have proved more helpful, the reaction against miracles associated with the traditional Roman church was predominantly polemical.¹²⁹

Today, in a very different sort of environment,¹³⁰ the majority of Christian scholars, Protestant as well as Catholic, recognize as tenuous putative biblical grounds for assuming that God stopped healing people at the close of the first century.¹³¹ For some to deny the possibility of current miracles based on particular Reformation traditions (rather than "always reforming" based on Scripture) would place some of Luther's heirs in a hermeneutically and epistemically ironic position—though not a novel one—of making tradition normative for interpreting Scripture.¹³²

124. Harrell, "Divine Healing," 215, notes that Reformation Protestants still believed in prayer for healing in principle but were reacting against the medieval Catholic use of relics.

125. Soergel, "Legends," 21.

126. *Ibid.*, 22; for Calvin, see Brown, *Miracles*, 15.

127. Soergel, "Legends," 22–29. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century emphasis on demonic causes (Daston, "Facts," 98) served well the purposes of sectarian polemic (101) but also undoubtedly fed into the witch hysteria that led to thousands of killings (mentioned in appendix B). Witchcraft and demonic concerns led to first demonic and then more naturalistic explanations (106–7).

128. E.g., Harrison, "Miracles," 500–501; Daston, "Facts," 114; for the same purpose for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Anglican cessationism, see Walsham, "Miracles," 279, 283.

129. See, e.g., Parish, "Histories"; Mullin, "Bushnell," 460–61; Lovelace, *Dynamics*, 269.

130. Indeed, the polemical situation would be if anything reversed in Latin America, where, as I noted in ch. 9, miracle claims have been fueling Protestant growth. Some might see a threat from extreme charismatic claims from circles weak on teaching, but would not an ideal response be to try to serve those circles with teaching while working to discern which sorts of claims tend to be authentic?

131. For Protestant noncessationist arguments, see, e.g., Green, *Holy Spirit*; Snyder, *Renewal*, 140–41; Grudem, *Theology*, 355–75; Turner, *Gifts*, 286–302; Ruthven, *Cessation*; Fee, *Paul, Spirit and People*, *passim*; fuller comment in the note in ch. 7. But even most cessationists today would not deny that God can still heal.

132. Those who feel compelled by their churches' tradition to follow the Reformers' anti-Catholic cessationism with respect to miracles rarely observe today the same compulsion with respect to their general hesitancy toward missions, then a primarily Catholic practice (cf. Neill, *History of Missions*, 220–23; Tucker, *Jerusalem*, 67–68; Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 94; qualified in Sweeney, *Story*, 80–82, 86; cf. also academic Protestant antipathy to missions when Pietist missions began flourishing, in Syrdal, *End*, 11), and would surely never repeat the persecution of Anabaptists. An approach solely from Scripture might have distinguished flourishing miracles associated with deceased saints from answered prayers to God (or even allowed that God sometimes simply showed compassion on misinformed Christian supplicants), but it is probably difficult for most of us to appreciate the intensity of the polemical situation in which European Christians of this period found themselves.

During and after the early Reformation period, Roman Catholics continued to claim healings. The letters of Francis Xavier (1506–52) reveal firsthand details of several miraculous healings.¹³³ Less dramatically, in the sixteenth century Teresa of Avila (1515–82) suffered long-term paralysis and was apparently dying but gradually recovered and regained full strength; her contemporaries regarded this restoration as miraculous.¹³⁴ Healings also continued to be claimed at various shrines.¹³⁵

In response to the Reformers' and others' criticisms, Catholics were also undertaking reforms. They maintained more continuity with medieval spirituality than Protestants did but now approached it more critically than previously.¹³⁶ Thus, for example, some observe that while far fewer miracle claims were certified in late seventeenth-century France than earlier, those that survived scrutiny have stronger historical documentation than the vast majority of other events from this period.¹³⁷

Perspectives from the Earlier Modern West

Although I have been arguing so far concerning perspectives of the non-Western world (i.e., the majority of the world) and the premodern world (i.e., most of the world's history to date), I should observe that a significant subculture even in the modern West¹³⁸ has always dissented from antisupernaturalistic assumptions and thus has emphasized extranormal phenomena and interpreted them with reference to theological or other spiritual causes.¹³⁹

Polemic against Miracles

Developing the magisterial Reformers' reaction against abuses, some Protestants eventually selectively adopted the dogmatic antisupernaturalism of the

133. Kelsey, *Healing*, 233 (also noting accounts of Catherine of Siena and others; on her, see also Hebert, *Raised*, 95, 105–7; Darling, *Healing*, 156–65).

134. Recounted in Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 60–61. Miracles are reported of others, e.g., St. Maria Maddalena (see Morrison, "Miracles").

135. See, e.g., the mid-seventeenth-century "Jesus Oak" in the forest near Brussels (Harline, "Miracles").

136. Porterfield, *Healing*, 106–7; cf. 180. The Council of Trent assigned investigating miracle claims to bishops, to provide more control to "the deviations of popular religion" (Daston, "Facts," 121). The bishop of Châlons prohibited further veneration of Jesus's holy umbilical cord in 1707 (Bentley, *Relics*, 180). For more than eight hundred years a site preserved Jesus's supposed sweat cloth, brought back from the Holy Land by crusaders, and popes declared indulgences for those who prayed before it; in 1934, the writing on it was shown to invoke Allah and to date to the period 1094 to 1101 (*ibid.*, 225–26). Nevertheless, plaques still commemorated the relic's help (227).

137. Viguerie, "Miracle," 316, as cited in Daston, "Facts," 121–22.

138. Many of my examples below are not restricted to the West (such as Hickson's global activities), but most originate in the West.

139. See especially Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 74–78, and the numerous sources they cite; besides many examples below, see also Shaub, "Analysis," 118–19.

radical Enlightenment (addressed in chs. 5 and 6). It proved convenient for them to embrace thoroughgoing naturalism in the present era, in order to reject the miracle claims of “papists” and “enthusiasts” while excepting those recounted in Scripture.¹⁴⁰ Belief that miracles had ceased offered a way to accommodate belief in biblical miracles with a current “orderly and rational universe,”¹⁴¹ though it could never ultimately satisfy a uniformitarianism that demanded the same hegemony of natural law in the past.¹⁴² This cessationist concession to deism was an internally inconsistent position philosophically.¹⁴³ Ironically, opposition to current miracles was one point at which early modern fundamentalism and modernism found common cause, often employing the same arguments, except that cessationists excluded (often comparable) biblical miracles from the critique.¹⁴⁴

This cessationist position inevitably made defense of biblical miracles difficult, since a number of subsequent miracle claims had similar attestation and were of similar kind as those in Scripture.¹⁴⁵ The exception for biblical miracles was necessarily essentially fideistic, since the grounds on which biblical miracles were granted should have allowed some subsequent historical claims that critics had simply rejected wholesale. Indeed, such a historically arbitrary division, playing by different rules from normal historiography, had facilitated Hume’s opposition to all miracles, since he could count on his audience to dismiss strong modern examples adduced against his case. As Protestants and Catholics dismissed miracles, no matter how well attested, that violated their theological constraints,¹⁴⁶ skeptics about miracles altogether, like Voltaire and Hume, felt no compulsion to recognize

140. For Enlightenment influence shaping thoroughgoing cessationism, see Ruthven, *Cessation*, 35–40, 71; cf. MacNutt, *Crime*, 145–52. Though acknowledging a Creator and eternal punishments (Brown, *Thought*, 281), Thomas Paine’s version of deism included antisupernaturalism (Noll, *History*, 166).

141. Mullin, *Miracles*, 30 (see more fully 9–30), on the settled compromise by the early nineteenth century. For this Protestant cessationism among sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English clergy, see Walsham, “Miracles,” 273–78; for its appeal to Enlightenment sensitivities, see 278.

142. See, e.g., Mullin, *Miracles*, 33. If deists granted God’s role as Creator yet denied his physical activity in creation outside of expected natural patterns, one might call them post-creation cessationists in a sense.

143. For its philosophic incoherence, see Ruthven, *Cessation*, 64–71 (esp. 70, on selective naturalism); Mullin, *Miracles*, 265–66 (also noting its general collapse); Tennent, *Christianity*, 178. Cf. the critique by John Henry Newman (noted in Brown, *Miracles*, 138).

144. See Curtis, *Faith*, 202–3; cf. Mullin, *Miracles*, 210–13.

145. Lawton, *Miracles*, 68 (offering church fathers’ testimonies as examples); Barnes, “Miracles,” 229–30; Mullin, “Bushnell,” 462 (noting that eighteenth-century deists happily exploited this observation); cf. Hume’s exploitation of the Protestant cessationist argument already for his case against miracles in Hume, *Miracles*, 38. Kant, among others, regarded the temporal distinction among miracle claims as inappropriate (Nuyen, “Kant on Miracles,” 311). Even today, May, “Miracles,” 147, denies the plausibility of natural spontaneous remission in the healing of someone deaf and mute in the Gospels yet claims it in a more concretely documented case today (150–51); he denies psychological elements in Jesus’s cures of blindness or skin diseases, yet some attribute these to psychological factors when the claims are modern (on 154 May suggests that in one case of sixteen years’ blindness cured, the woman may have simply been “depressed” previously).

146. Daston, “Facts,” 119. In the early seventeenth century, theologians used miracle claims to defend doctrine; because of sectarian polemic against others’ miracles, by the late seventeenth century association with proper doctrine was necessary to certify miracles as valid (*ibid.*, 120).

the evidence for any of them.¹⁴⁷ Conyers Middleton, for example, in his famous anti-Catholic work, dismissed all postbiblical evidence for miracles, rejecting the accuracy of the church fathers as well as more recent eyewitness testimonies. He prudently avoided discussion of NT miracles.¹⁴⁸

John Wesley, however, correctly warned that Middleton's critique, refusing all evidence, could be turned against the biblical record no less easily.¹⁴⁹ Thoroughgoing cessationism's assumed contrast between biblical and postbiblical miracle claims, each requiring "distinctly different rules of evidence and probability," could not easily survive external academic critique, and the collapse of such a division invited one of two responses: a denial of biblical miracles or the possibility of postbiblical ones.¹⁵⁰

Protestant Healing Reports in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Consistency in handling biblical and postbiblical miracles was where most of the philosophic ground regarding miracles was shifting by the late nineteenth century, but even earlier cessationism had not stifled all supernatural claims.¹⁵¹ (As I have noted, many *modern* cessationists refer only to the cessation of healing gifts through gifted individuals and do not claim that God has stopped healing miraculously, often in answer to prayer.) Whereas postbiblical miracles might be disallowed, Calvinists allowed for special providence as well as general providence, the former potentially accommodating miracles under another title.¹⁵²

147. *Ibid.*, 119–20. Because a Catholic archbishop condemned tremendously well-attested miracles for supporting Jansenism, Hume felt justified in rejecting such claims even while acknowledging the superior evidence for them (evidence he felt better confirmed than that in the Gospels; 122).

148. Brown, *Miracles*, 64–71; cf. *idem*, *Thought*, 212–13; Fogelin, *Defense*, 1. Warfield, *Miracles*, 28–31, praises Middleton.

149. Brown, *Miracles*, 72.

150. Mullin, *Miracles*, 30; Lawton, *Miracles*, 58. By the early twentieth century, various writers allowed that miracles declined in character after the subapostolic age while affirming that there was no *a priori* reason to deny them happening in any age (Maclean, "Miracles," 42; Bernard, "Miracle," 395–96; cf. Wright, "Miracles," 191, arguing that some claims after the subapostolic era "are far too well attested to be scornfully and summarily dismissed").

151. Warfield's influential defense of full cessationism (*Miracles*; cf. *idem*, "Kikuyu") provided a major bridge between earlier cessationism and that of twentieth-century fundamentalists, but countervailing trends now existed. For earlier Protestant miracle claims, see the discussion above; for seventeenth-century possession accounts, see, e.g., Midelfort, "Reactions."

152. Woodward, *Miracles*, 371; Kidd, "Healing," 150, 157; Walsham, "Miracles," 284–86; Lehmann, "Miracles," 328; McGee, *Miracles*, 9; cf. Deconinck-Brossard, "Acts of God," 360. Even the Westminster Confession of Faith, addressing the conceptions of natural laws in vogue at the time, notes that "God in his ordinary providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure" (5.3, cited in Sharp, "Miracles," 2). To argue that miracles continue, albeit on a lesser level than in the Gospels and Acts, or that they continue primarily in mission settings, seems much more modest than historic cessationism. Still, in Mullin, *Miracles*, *passim*, e.g., 14–17, 23, 35–36, "special providences" seem to typically involve God working through naturalistic means acceptable to an Enlightenment milieu to achieve the same effects. (Today, cf., e.g., Pullum, "Believe," 146–52, emphasizing [151–52] that "providence cannot be proven factually"; this approach removes divine action from the sphere of falsifiability.) Many called these "wonders" (as God or spirits manipulating nature) rather than "miracles" (as violations of nature; Freeman, "Famous Miracle," 311–12).

By drawing on arguments of the deists, David Hume gained a hearing in the wake of what may have remained the most skeptical period excepting that of his modern academic heirs. Miracle accounts became more abundant in the late seventeenth century, however, reacting partly against the deist approach.¹⁵³ Seventeenth-century Protestants “published books on the wonders God had produced on behalf of his persecuted people”;¹⁵⁴ their eighteenth-century apologists distinguished miracles God accomplished through nature’s laws from Catholicism’s claims that were against nature.¹⁵⁵ When not writing in a polemical context, Protestant clergy were often happy to recount healings that occurred through other clergy;¹⁵⁶ they also sometimes freely called their special providences “miracles,”¹⁵⁷ including in the case of an apparently actual event in the life of Protestant martyrologist John Foxe.¹⁵⁸

In the seventeenth century, Presbyterian Richard Baxter claims his own healing from a sizable tumor, as well as knowledge of others’ healings.¹⁵⁹ Scottish Covenanters report many miracles.¹⁶⁰ In 1644, a young woman unable to walk unaided suddenly found herself cured as a preacher was speaking about “the miraculous power of Jesus’s name.”¹⁶¹ One of the best documented cases for a person through whose prayers many were healed is the previously obscure Valentine Greatrakes (1628–83). Starting in 1661, he began curing various disorders, including deafness and paralysis. He became so effective that thousands flocked to him, with hundreds of claimed cures in London alone. Some cures took weeks to complete, and his own wife remained skeptical; moreover, Greatrakes himself did not understand how the healings were occurring. A contemporary eyewitness viewed the cures as psychological, regarding Greatrakes as sincere but uneducated.¹⁶² The witness nonetheless admitted witnessing “deafness cured by his touch,” “running sores . . . dried up,” “cancerous knots in the breast dissolved,” and so forth.¹⁶³ The results astonished even a number of skeptics, many of whom were themselves cured. Invited to demonstrate healings before the king’s court, however, he accepted quickly—and failed there. Shaken, he spent the rest of his life in obscurity.¹⁶⁴

153. Walsham, “Miracles,” 304–5.

154. Woodward, *Miracles*, 371 (citing Hall, *Worlds*).

155. Woodward, *Miracles*, 371. Nature miracles for judgment (what U.S. insurance companies still call “acts of God”) seem to have been particularly popular (see Walsham, “Miracles,” 289; for divine explanations for catastrophes in early modern Germany, see, e.g., Lehmann, “Miracles,” 332; for miraculous escapes of some within such catastrophes, see *ibid.*, esp. 327).

156. Freeman, “Famous Miracle,” 308.

157. *Ibid.*, 311–12, 318–19 (noting this terminology among Puritan commentators).

158. *Ibid.*, *passim*. Simeon Foxe may have attempted to tone down the earlier versions (cf. 315).

159. Gordon, “Ministry of Healing,” 181–83; Baxter, *Healing*, 86–88; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 89–90; briefly, Dod, “Healer,” 174; Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 78–79.

160. See, e.g., the survey in Baxter, *Healing*, 78–86; briefly, Dod, “Healer,” 174.

161. Baxter, *Healing*, 89, citing Johann Albrecht Bengel.

162. Cited in Henson, *Notes*, 67–72 (esp. 69, noting that many were not healed or relapsed).

163. Cited in Henson, *Notes*, 68–69. Like the witness, educated Bishop Henson treats such cures as psychological.

164. Rose, *Faith Healing*, 41–42; Robertson, “Epidauros to Lourdes,” 187–88; Major, *Faiths*, 164–69. Worcester honored Greatrakes for his many cures, which he offered without charge (Henson, *Notes*, 73).

The Enlightenment exercised a much greater impact on intellectual approaches to religion in the eighteenth century, but on a popular level healing reports continued. For example, in 1707 Anglican Josiah Woodward noted that French Huguenot refugees, who emigrated to England in the 1690s, claimed a number of miracles, including that of Mary Maillard in 1693. Her left leg had been weak from birth, but as she heard the account of the healing of a disabled man in Mark 2:1–12 being read, “she thought she heard a Voice saying, *“Thou art healed,”*” whereupon she found herself cured. While conceding that such events remained rare in his time, Woodward also noted other healings, “including one as recent as 1705 near Leicester.”¹⁶⁵ These accounts were well known; thus, Cotton Mather, recounting Huguenot miracles, in 1696 speculated that miracles, once restrained because of Catholic “Apostasy,” might now be being renewed in a new “age of miracles.”¹⁶⁶

I have treated elsewhere some miracles attributed to the Jansenists (an Augustinian Catholic sect later suppressed), including at their monastery and at the grave of one of their leaders. Jansenist claims continued long after the first reported cures. In January 1727, Agathe Leenders-Strouthandel, age forty-five, was cured of afflictions she had suffered for twelve years in Amsterdam, with attestation from “170 witnesses, including several doctors and many non-Catholics.”¹⁶⁷ In March 1727, a three-year-old child, blind since suffering smallpox, received sight.¹⁶⁸ In early July 1727, “Anne Augier, paralyzed for twenty-two years, suddenly” found herself cured at the tomb of a Jansenist priest, in front of “dozens of spectators”; but by this time Jansenism was in ecclesiastical disfavor, and the authorities refused to consider the miracle claim.¹⁶⁹ In May 1728, Jeanne Stupart was cured of eleven years’ blindness in her left eye, as well as paralysis, on the same site, and her appeal met the same fate.¹⁷⁰

Finally, cures began to occur at the tomb of François de Pâris. A widow whose arm had been paralyzed for twenty years, hoping that God would heal her, found

Though mistrusted by many academic apologists (Daston, “Facts,” 120), he was rediscovered by late nineteenth-century healing advocates (Mullin, *Miracles*, 284n30). Elsewhere, tradition ascribes miracles also to the Spanish priest San José Oriol (b. 1650; Oktavec, *Prayers*, 210n25). Miracles were attributed to Jesuit missionary to Brazil José de Anchieta (1534–97); Catholic apologists later used these accounts to embarrass Protestants over their own lack of miracle claims (McGee, *Miracles*, 8).

165. Kidd, “Healing,” 162. On Maillard, see also Walsham, “Miracles,” 303, who notes (303–4) that this account inspired “copy-cat cases among Baptists and Anglicans” (citing primary sources). Also in the eighteenth century, Father Johann Josef Gassner reported many healings (Major, *Faiths*, 172–80). Gordon, “Ministry of Healing,” 238, also knew of accounts of healings among French Protestants (citing Godet).

166. Kidd, “Healing,” 162; for some eighteenth-century radical evangelicals who continued to expect a restoration of miracles, see 170. Deists naturally found these miracle claims incompatible with their beliefs (e.g., Burns, *Debate*, 74). Though Jonathan Edwards allowed that trances “and even instant healings” could be the Spirit’s work (Kidd, “Healing,” 164), he disavowed any necessary expectation of their revival in the last days (165).

167. Kreiser, *Miracles*, 79.

168. *Ibid.*, 78–79.

169. *Ibid.*, 79–80. For prayers at tombs, e.g., Duffin, *Miracles*, 153–55; Cunningham, *Holiness*, 155.

170. Kreiser, *Miracles*, 80.

herself cured at the deacon's interment.¹⁷¹ The subsequent commission ordered by Cardinal Noailles provided thorough dossiers with depositions from scores of witnesses, attesting various cures such as a severely ulcerated leg, decades-old afflictions, and near-paralysis of half the body.¹⁷² Ecclesiastical politics, however, soon intervened and suppressed the cult.¹⁷³ In November 1730, sympathizer Anne Lefranc, for almost three decades blind in one eye and partly paralyzed, found herself cured within a few days of her prayer to God;¹⁷⁴ authorities, though, made counterclaims, charging that her cure was gradual and producing testimony that she had never been blind.¹⁷⁵ In this polemical situation, civil discourse naturally degenerated and Jansenist sympathizers produced increasingly weak or unsubstantiated claims, as well as convulsions.¹⁷⁶ Referring to the earlier miracles, however, John Wesley (in both 1750 and 1762) regarded the evidence of genuine Jansenist healings as compelling, undeniable "without invalidating all human testimony."¹⁷⁷

Anabaptists, Quakers, and Pietists all claimed healings.¹⁷⁸ English Baptists cited a dramatic deathbed recovery from this period.¹⁷⁹ Eighteenth-century Moravians also reported miraculous healings;¹⁸⁰ instantaneous miracle cures are especially reported in 1731, several years into the famous revival at Herrnhut. Count Nicolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf accepted such experiences but insisted that they be treated no differently than other gifts occurring among the Moravians.¹⁸¹

Another healer, an unlearned woman of about sixty-five or seventy named Bridget Bostock, was said to have a healing ministry to the sick in 1748 through 1749; she took no fees, fasted, used "fasting" saliva¹⁸² or red liquor to anoint, and briefly prayed. A number of cures were reported, and sometimes she apparently prayed for as many as six hundred supplicants in a day, from all social classes.¹⁸³

171. *Ibid.*, 91.

172. *Ibid.*, 94–95.

173. *Ibid.*, 95–139, 160–71. Respectful attempts to secure official certification of the miracles led to further repression for explicitly political reasons (131–35).

174. *Ibid.*, 122–23.

175. *Ibid.*, 128.

176. Cf. *ibid.*, 149–60; for the convulsions, 173–78 (for Jansenist theologian detractors, see 178–79). The first convulsions apparently occurred in one being cured of epilepsy (173–74), but eventually some imitated this behavior, believing it a prerequisite for a cure (211–12), though others believed that their convulsions were genuinely involuntary (212). The authorities condemned the thousands of pilgrims based on select physicians' interrogations of the few convulsionaries detained in the Bastille (212–13), meanwhile virtually ignoring the prior miracle claims (213–14).

177. *Ibid.*, 398 (noting Wesley's anti-Catholic use of the claims, in contrast to the Jansenists themselves, who were French Catholics).

178. Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 30.

179. See Crosby, *History*, 4:307–9 (referred to me by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary professor Lloyd Harsch).

180. So, e.g., Baxter, *Healing*, 77–78. These included healings through prayer of what were believed incurable cancers and tuberculosis (Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 40).

181. Snyder, *Signs*, 133.

182. "Fasting saliva" is a quite ancient folk cure (see Pliny *Nat.* 28.7.35–37; 28.22.76).

183. Rack, "Healing," 140–41; Rose, *Faith Healing*, 43–44.

Nevertheless, many who were not healed or who recovered only temporarily were apparently disillusioned, in contrast to those who testified of recovery.¹⁸⁴

Claims of supernatural phenomena accompanied the First Great Awakening in Britain's American colonies.¹⁸⁵ In the 1740s, evangelical leaders were emphasizing the Spirit's activity, and a few even allowed for instant physical healings.¹⁸⁶ Although earlier Reformed thinkers, including Puritans, had largely embraced forms of cessationism, some ideas began to shift during the later phase of the Great Awakening. Recognized events like the healing of Mercy Wheeler from her disabled state caused some critics of present miracles to rethink their views.¹⁸⁷ Bedridden since 1726,¹⁸⁸ she was instantly healed on May 25, 1743.¹⁸⁹ She trembled, shook, and could speak only what hearers regarded as gibberish as she felt God's presence. The shaking began with her hands but finally racked her whole body, until when it passed she felt the first strength she had experienced in many years.¹⁹⁰ Feeling then a compulsion to act, she got up and walked sixteen feet, crying out, "Bless the Lord Jesus, who has healed me!" to the amazement of all present.¹⁹¹ The preacher attempted to calm her, but she walked around the room a few more times, and over the next five months she kept walking farther and farther.¹⁹² Other healings in the revival included those reported by Presbyterian pastor John Moorhead,¹⁹³ and a number of evangelical ministers from this era noted their own remarkable recoveries.¹⁹⁴ Jonathan Edwards observed that a season of mental and physical health accompanied the revival, with a significant decline in depression and sickness.¹⁹⁵

Others allowed that such events occurred but hesitated to call them miracles lest Protestants stray into the "superstitions" of Catholics.¹⁹⁶ Puritan theologians

184. Rack, "Healing," 141–42.

185. See MacNutt, *Crime*, 171–76.

186. Kidd, "Healing," 149.

187. *Ibid.*

188. *Ibid.*, 152 (noting her own 1733 publication of that fact, and that she had recovered her ability to speak by 1733, which she attributed to God's grace). In 1726, she lost much of her vision, and she drooled, unable to eat solid food (155). By 1734 she could talk, see, "and sit up in bed," but still could not walk (155). By 1743 she could move a little with crutches, but had not walked unaided for sixteen years (*idem*, *Awakening*, 162).

189. *Idem*, "Healing," 153. Kidd notes her rising confidence in the days before the healing that God would do something (155). Evangelical Connecticut pastor Benjamin Lord publicized this healing, which he found valuable for promoting the revival (153); without calling it a miracle explicitly (153, 157), he compared it with the healings in the Gospels and Acts (155), a comparison that drew criticism (161, 163). The Gospels had spurred the faith of Wheeler before her healing (156).

190. *Ibid.*, 156; *idem*, *Awakening*, 163.

191. Kidd, "Healing," 157; *idem*, *Awakening*, 163.

192. Kidd, "Healing," 157; *idem*, *Awakening*, 163. Benjamin Lord reported in 1752 that she continued to walk, though she remained constitutionally weak ("Healing," 169), and in 1771 "reported that Wheeler continued with the 'free Use of her Limbs as ever'" (170).

193. Kidd, "Healing," 151.

194. *Ibid.*, 159.

195. *Ibid.*, 160.

196. *Ibid.*, 149. For the anti-Catholic concern, see also 151, 164 (noting here that "anti-Catholicism served as an essential component of British Protestant identity"); cf. Daston, "Facts," 118.

typically described such events as special providences, though the line between these providences and miracles was often thin.¹⁹⁷ Following Jas 5:14–15, contemporary Protestants regularly prayed for people's healing, but they expected recovery "through providential means," not an instant miracle.¹⁹⁸ (This approach may comport with the perspectives even of some later cessationists like Benjamin Warfield.¹⁹⁹) Mercy Wheeler's recovery seemed harder to accommodate within this framework, however, because, despite her progressive regaining of strength, it was viewed as instantaneous rather than as a gradual recovery.²⁰⁰

Critics of the Great Awakening rejected its bodily "enthusiasm," so that one critic in 1744 denounced the healing of Mercy Wheeler as mere enthusiasm and Catholic-like superstition.²⁰¹ In response, the *Boston Gazette* noted that her healing was "'well known and attested,'" and cited the 1693 healing of Mary Maillard noted above.²⁰² The critic then conceded that the cure was genuine, but protested the application of the biblical label "miracle,"²⁰³ despite the obvious similarity to biblical accounts of paralytics' healings (e.g., Mark 2:10–12; Acts 9:33–34). As historian Thomas Kidd observes, "Cessationism was so deeply rooted that evangelicals struggled with how not to call such astonishing experiences miracles."²⁰⁴

Although particularly famous, Mercy Wheeler's case was not isolated. On July 24, 1769, after Mary Read had been bedridden for three years, she heard a voice that seemed audible, repeating three times that she should rise and walk, and suddenly she found herself well.²⁰⁵ On July 10, 1794, Mary Spaulding, sick for many years,

197. Kidd, "Healing," 150, 157. Not at all genuine antsupernaturalists, Puritans believed that nothing was by accident and that God was active in the details of daily life (McKim, "View," 233) and in history (237). This approach was similar to Calvin's "providence" as God's governance of all (215).

198. Kidd, "Healing," 157; this was true even of Benjamin Lord in his view of Mercy Wheeler's healing, though some more radical evangelicals viewed it as a miracle pure and simple (170). To borrow the language I employed in ch. 5, they expected God to work *through* nature, rather than in apparent violation of it; that is, the primary difference between Protestants and Hume was the question of *biblical* miracles. Prayers regarding health were common fare (see the abundant evidence in *ibid.*, 158).

199. Warfield, *Miracles*, 191, affirms as universal Christian belief that God heals in answer to prayer but denies that this should be reckoned miraculous. Viewed in one sense, he may be accepting healing while rejecting signs, a special category of healing and other divine acts. In a sense, he could thus allow divine activity so long as it did not *appear* to violate the mechanistic view of nature held by the Enlightenment, hence challenge too directly a prevailing intellectual ethos of his era; but empirically, a number of healing claims, both biblical and postbiblical, cannot fit what most meant by this classification.

200. Kidd, "Healing," 150, 157. That she was able to make her way on crutches at times before the healing did reflect a previous, long-term, gradual reduction of a much worse paralysis earlier (155). After this healing, she walked progressively longer distances over the next few months, but her ankle bones, once "loose and weak" from inactivity, were now strong (157; cf. Acts 3:7).

201. *Ibid.*, 161; *idem*, *Awakening*, 163. Critics of the Great Awakening also criticized its claims by comparing accounts of Huguenot healings (including of kidney stones, an infected boil, and so forth), which they also rejected (*idem*, "Healing," 162–63).

202. Kidd, "Healing," 162.

203. *Ibid.*, 163.

204. *Ibid.*, 164. Many considered miracles' only purpose to be confirming the gospel (initially) rather than considering their benefit (as miracles) to those who were suffering (165).

205. *Ibid.*, 168.

felt an overwhelming impression that as Jesus healed the woman with the flow of blood, she too would be healed. Praising God, "I immediately arose from my bed of sickness," she testified, and "felt free from all my infirmities."²⁰⁶ Also in the 1700s, Hannah Coleman of New Jersey, disabled after a fall from a horse, one day felt touched by God and ran around the house, carrying her bed, moving furniture, and praising God.²⁰⁷ Not all who hoped for healing, however, experienced it.²⁰⁸

John Wesley, who, unlike some theologians of his era, spent more time on the front lines of evangelism than in academic circles, challenged some cessationist views of his contemporaries.²⁰⁹ His journal reports many healing miracles, often in response to his own prayers.²¹⁰ On one occasion, for example, a man apparently dead returned to life when Wesley prayed for him.²¹¹ Wesley's brother Charles was raised from a debilitating attack of pleurisy and apparently unconsciousness when a woman moved by a dream declared, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth arise and believe, and thou shalt be healed of all thy infirmities."²¹² A doctor denounced the emotion in Wesley's meetings until one of his own patients, convulsed by emotion, emerged completely cured.²¹³ One of his Methodist preachers, John Valton, cited both healings and rainfall that occurred in response to prayer.²¹⁴ Three different early Wesleyan sources recount the recent healing of Ann Brookes's blind eye after she prayed for healing and dreamed that Christ touched it.²¹⁵ Wesley expected

206. *Ibid.*, 168–69 (quotation from 169).

207. Reported by Baptist minister Morgan Edwards in Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 236–38.

208. See the tragic account of minister Charles Jeffery Smith from the 1760s (Kidd, "Healing," 167).

209. See Lawton, *Miracles*, 60–61; Mullin, "Bushnell," 462. He attributed the dearth of "extraordinary gifts of the Spirit" in his day especially to "the fallen state of the church," expecting that renewal would ideally restore such manifestations (Snyder, *Signs*, 216). Some Ghanaian Methodists hail him as a model for charismatic renewal in modern Methodism (Omenyo, "Healing," 241).

210. Kelsey, *Healing*, 235; Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 40–41; Rack, "Healing," 146, 149–50; cf. Mullin, *Miracles*, 89. Borrowing language from Acts 14:3; Luke 17:5; and Mark 16:17, Wesley prayed and was instantly healed from his pain and fever, remaining well for weeks (*Journal*, 2:455, for May 10, 1741; cf. the presence of the Lord's power to heal on June 7 [p. 461], alluding to Luke 5:17, if Wesley intends it literally). He was quite sick on Sept. 16, 1756 (*Journal*, 4:187); on Sept. 22, he realized that he should pray for healing, and instantly felt better (187–88); on Oct. 3, the sickness returned, and when he prayed he "found immediate relief, so that I needed no further medicines." He often trusted God to heal the sicknesses that his travels sometimes incurred (Tomkins, *Wesley*, 98), though on other occasions he had to suffer through it (98–99). Wesley's early movement included exorcisms as well as "dreams and visions for guidance or warning" (Rack, "Healing," 145; cf. more extensively Webster, "Salvation"), so that one could view earliest "methodism as a kind of preview of pentecostalism" (Rack, "Healing," 138); cf. similarly Noll, *Shape*, 46.

211. Kidd, "Healing," 159. See Wesley, *Journal*, 56 (Dec. 25, 1742). Tomkins, *Wesley*, 106, notes that Wesley "seems to have interpreted" the experience "as raising the dead or at least the dangerously ill," and that he challenges detractors to disprove this.

212. Tomkins, *Wesley*, 60.

213. *Ibid.*, 72. Wesley did, however, struggle with some extremists who seceded from his movement, exhibiting emotion and at least one case of healing (162–63).

214. Rack, "Healing," 146 (citing diary entries from 1788). Valton also claimed spiritually illuminating dreams (see Webster, "Salvation," 382–83). Accounts of healings, exorcisms, and visions proved even more characteristic of a movement that helped spawn the Primitive Methodists (Tomlinson, "Magic Methodists," 393–94), but extremes vitiated the former movement (394–97).

215. Rack, "Healing," 147. Cf. also early Methodist healing in Baer, "Bodies," 34–37, 43–47.

signs of the Spirit regularly in his meetings, though these were often anguished outcries or falling to the ground under the Spirit's conviction.²¹⁶

Lourdes and Roman Catholic Healing in the Nineteenth Century

Over the past four centuries, the Roman Catholic Church has reported more than fourteen hundred miracles, often with considerable testimony and medical documentation, associated with saints and other figures.²¹⁷ Here I focus on a few examples. In the United States, Catholics noted the restoration of Ann Mattingly in Washington, D.C., on March 10, 1824. Suffering for seven years "from an 'ulcerated back' and a 'tumor' the size of a pigeon's egg" and now considered unable to be helped medically, she recovered within hours after receiving the sacrament. Thirty-five affidavits affirmed the genuineness of her sickness and recovery.²¹⁸ Catholics also continued to emphasize recoveries at holy sites. Thus a Catholic bishop in 1805 recounted the recent cure of Winefrid White, who had been unable to walk and suffered great pain, pronounced incurable by her doctors. When she bathed in the pool at Saint Winefrid's well, she was healed and continued to maintain the authenticity of the healing eighteen years later on her deathbed.²¹⁹

In late nineteenth-century sources, fifteen people claimed to have simultaneously witnessed an apparition of three saints in Knock, Ireland, at 8 p.m. on August 21, 1879, during the Irish famine of 1879. This appearance was followed by a number of healings.²²⁰ These included a young woman's ear disease and the disabled state of two or three people who abandoned their crutches.²²¹ Reports of cures continued thereafter. When two anthropologists visited Knock in 1971–72, a man there told them of how he had been completely and instantly healed, able to walk unaided and touch the ground, after twelve years in bed from an injury.²²²

Alfred Besette, who became Brother André, was from near Montreal and had a gift of healing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²²³ By 1908, the crowds were so large that provisions had to be made for some of the pilgrims.²²⁴ An associate for fifteen years remarked that he witnessed miracles virtually every week: "Often a paralytic would be cured, or one blind, or someone who had to be brought here on a stretcher." Like some other healers we have noted (e.g., John

216. White, *Spirit*, 181 (though note White's cautions on 126–28); Tomkins, *Wesley*, 72–74 (on 73 comparing phenomena related to the "Toronto blessing" of 1994 and suggesting various factors).

217. See Duffin, *Miracles*, 7.

218. Mullin, *Miracles*, 117. Catholic missionaries working to "reevangelize" nineteenth-century Catholic immigrants to the United States reported large numbers of healings; see Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism*, 146, as cited in McGee, *Miracles*, 9.

219. Champ, "Holywell," 160. The cult of Winefrid had spread throughout Canterbury's province by the fourteenth century (154).

220. Turner, *Healers*, 108–10.

221. *Ibid.*, 110–11.

222. *Ibid.*, 111–12.

223. Oursler, *Power*, 78–81.

224. *Ibid.*, 81.

Sung), Brother André himself was not immune to affliction. In his nineties, Brother André suffered considerable pain and noted that he could not cure himself.²²⁵ The Medical Bureau established there considered many cases exaggerated or psychosomatic, but for others they lacked naturalistic explanations.²²⁶

In greater numbers, numerous healings began to be reported at Lourdes, starting in 1858,²²⁷ at a grotto that had apparently earlier been associated with mysterious phenomena.²²⁸ France's central government initially opposed events at Lourdes as charlatanism, but the local people of this impoverished mountain region resisted government control.²²⁹ Locals claimed that such enemies of the Lady of the Grotto were incurring judgments such as paralysis or nightmares, claims that the officials countered were unfounded rumors.²³⁰ Catholics had never adopted the cessationism of some Reformers, yet the French church leaders, like their secular counterparts, proved initially hesitant about the claims at Lourdes.²³¹

Even some local commentators, ready to believe reports of local peasants, discovered some of these reports to be inaccurate or, as in the case of supposed holy "dove" prints in the rocks, merely a matter of wishful imagination.²³² Moreover, the visionary Bernadette Soubirous herself apparently denied that she was a miracle worker, despite popular claims that quickly surrounded her.²³³ Likewise, in contrast to the outside world, locals apparently did not exalt Bernadette so much as the grotto.²³⁴ Other local visionaries in addition to Bernadette multiplied, but while they were initially respected

225. *Ibid.* (comparing Bernadette). Cf. Gen 11:30; 20:17–18.

226. *Ibid.*, 82.

227. See, e.g., Taylor, "Letters from Lourdes" (investigating letters from a local contemporary witness in 1858); Porterfield, *Healing*, 180–84; Mullin, *Miracles*, 120–23; Smith, *Comparative Miracles*, 80–96. For some other Catholic shrines historically reporting cures, see, e.g., Oursler, *Power*, 83–96, 99.

228. The grotto had apparently developed an earlier, local reputation as a frightening location when one was alone or at night, with mysterious groans hailing from it (Taylor, "Letters from Lourdes," 462–63, citing the letter of Adelaide Monlaur, March 8, 1858); some of these "haunted" aspects resurfaced among subsequent visionaries (472–73, citing Monlaur's horrified letters of July 16 and 29, 1858).

229. *Ibid.*, 459–60, 465. This included destroying government barricades in the summer of 1858 (473).

230. *Ibid.*, 475–77 (on the officials' denial, see 476). Taylor (477) compares already widespread French peasant beliefs about the Virgin avenging her honor, often associated with more obscure visionaries. Such elements were excluded from the final official version of the shrine's message (478).

231. *Ibid.*, 460. Cf. more recent hostility toward the "miraculous Thorn" of Kudagama in Sri Lanka (Stirrat, "Possession," 136–37).

232. Taylor, "Letters from Lourdes," 464.

233. *Ibid.*, 468–69 (assuming that the interview by the *commissaire de police* is accurate and not distorted by his interpretation or the fourteen-year-old visionary's submissiveness at the time); Garner, "Regressions," 1254 (suggesting that Massy did not believe her denial). Local officials were plainly opposed to the events (Taylor, "Letters from Lourdes," 474–76). Female companions apparently were anxious for her when she was in a trance state, as she became pale with labored breathing (Taylor, "Letters from Lourdes," 469); we do expect some physiological changes during an altered state of consciousness (cf., e.g., Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues*, 8, 58–86, 153–54; *idem*, "Glossolalia," 238), which religious groups can construe positively (Ludwig, "Altered States," 88; cf. Goodman, *Trance Journeys*; *idem*, *Ecstasy*).

234. Taylor, "Letters from Lourdes," 470. But cf. the claim of Bernadette's subsequent incorruption (with supporting information) in McInerney, *Miracles*, 82–85 (though the Catholic Church today allows that incorruption "can often be explained by natural causes," Woodward, *Miracles*, 163). Reported "incorruption" has attracted attention also in other cases, like a Cuban woman who died in childbirth in 1901 (Lawal,

locally, they were rejected by both the civil government and the church officials,²³⁵ and possession behavior quickly led to their rejection even locally.²³⁶

Nevertheless, some sources report unexpected and unusual healings. One of these was a paralyzed, feverish toddler whom Bernadette's own skeptical physician thought on the verge of death, and whom the doctor discovered completely cured.²³⁷ This child, Louis-Justin Bouhort, was a guest in good health, seventy-five years later, at Bernadette's canonization in Rome.²³⁸ After twenty years of blindness due to an accident that left an oozing sore, Pierre Bouriette regained his sight there.²³⁹ Against official skepticism, popular sentiments regarding the grotto and Bernadette's role ultimately prevailed; as a recent scholar puts it, "After eighteen visions, numerous healings at the spring, and a groundswell of popular devotion, Church authorities relaxed their disapproval of Bernadette's visions."²⁴⁰ A number of leaders in the hierarchy of the church "viewed the activities there as too much like paganism to be condoned," yet Bernadette's corroboration of the recent dogma of the "immaculate conception" won favor. Both church leaders and physicians cooperated in the investigation.²⁴¹ Starting in 1883, a medical bureau consisting of physicians with priests as advisors took over the process of certifying miracles, though "requirements were stiff and certification fairly rare."²⁴² When miracle claims did survive this rigorous process, they normally commanded widespread interest.

Despite the still somewhat polemical character of the age, even a number of prominent nineteenth-century Protestants, like A. B. Simpson, affirmed the genuineness and divine character of such Catholic miracles while demurring from Catholic theology.²⁴³ Such approval was, of course, by no means unanimous.²⁴⁴ Even

"Psychology," 135); closely analogous claims do not appear in the samples of miracles offered in biblical narratives.

235. Taylor, "Letters from Lourdes," 470–72.

236. *Ibid.*, 472–73. Shocked by what appeared demonic alongside the real, a local resident complained that events at the grotto must honor either God or the devil (473); this conjunction of approved and disapproved behavior also characterized most North American revival movements from the First Great Awakening forward, and the early radical Reformation also experienced such extremes.

237. Cranston, *Miracle*, 37–38; Garner, "Regressions," 1255; McNamara and Szent-Imrey, "Learn," 212–13.

238. Garner, "Regressions," 1255.

239. McNamara and Szent-Imrey, "Learn," 211–12.

240. Porterfield, *Healing*, 180–81 (quote from 181). Taylor, "Letters from Lourdes," 460–61, cites correspondence from the local bishop suggesting that the pilgrims' needs left him little choice.

241. Porterfield, *Healing*, 182. Despite tensions, the hierarchy found these popular miracle claims useful in combating skeptical modernity (Kselman, *Miracles*, 189–94, 198, 200, esp. 193).

242. Porterfield, *Healing*, 183; cf. also Mullin, *Miracles*, 120.

243. Mullin, *Miracles*, 100; in the early twentieth century, cf. 181; cf. even Dowie, 206; in the mid-twentieth century, the Methodist pastor Albert Day (Oursler, *Power*, 142, 145). G. K. Chesterton, who less than a decade later became Catholic, apparently embraced the claims at Lourdes as well (Mullin, *Miracles*, 219). A leading twentieth-century writer in support of miracles at Lourdes, Ruth Cranston, was Protestant (Cranston, *Miracle*, e.g., 30). Catholics and noncessionist Protestants tend to unite on the question of postbiblical miracles today (Mullin, *Miracles*, 265).

244. Warfield, *Miracles*, 71–124, challenges "Roman Catholic miracles," particularly (on 103–24) Lourdes. Henson, a British Anglican bishop, also treats Lourdes negatively (*Notes*, 41–62).

today, some other Protestants do question accepting divine miracles at Lourdes, in view of the role of Mary there.²⁴⁵ Yet even if one disagrees with aspects of the claims at Lourdes (and still more often with the local tourist industry that has grown up around it),²⁴⁶ no one doubts that many pilgrims exhibit a deep devotion and faith that, from a Christian perspective, might provide a setting for some medically inexplicable recoveries.²⁴⁷ (Some traditional Catholics have offered a similar perspective on miracles among non-Catholic Christians.²⁴⁸) Because the purpose of this book involves the sorts of healings reported in the Gospels and Acts, my focus is more on the prayers of individuals than of healing sites, just as I earlier focused more on the context of Jewish and pagan miracle workers in antiquity than on Asclepius's shrines. Nevertheless, the evidence for some cures at Lourdes seems very strong. Because of its strict standards for verification, I will return to Lourdes in greater detail in chapter 14.

Protestant Healing in the Nineteenth Century

Although, as I have noted, Protestants initially lagged far behind Catholics in claims of healings, emphasis ultimately grew among Protestants as well. Numerous scholars, among them recently Heather Curtis and James Opp, on whom I have depended heavily below, have documented the growing emphasis on healing among Protestants in the north Atlantic of the nineteenth century.²⁴⁹ Evangelical Protestantism dominated U.S. Christianity in the nineteenth century and took many cues from British and other European Protestants.

245. Baxter, *Healing*, 90–96; also Miller and Samples, *Cult of Virgin*, 126 (arguing on 134 that, against official church teaching, many at Lourdes worship the Virgin herself). The primary critique of Miller and Samples, however, is of revelations at Medjugorje, which they do distinguish from Lourdes (105). They note that Medjugorje has also concerned many Catholic leaders, not least the local bishop at the time, Bishop Pavao Zanic; much of their interview with him appears on 157–60, including his opinion (160) that no evidence confirms the miracle claims there (cf. also the suspicion of fraud in O'Connell, "Hallucinations," 87n65); by contrast, DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 135–38, recounts two recoveries there (see further the highly controversial Laurentin, *Medjugorje*). At the time of writing, the papal commission's report currently remains forthcoming. Here, as with other claims in this section, I am reporting views rather than seeking to arbitrate authentic from inauthentic claims. Theologically, one may question the plausibility of God granting healing effects to a cavern's water (Hambourger, "Belief," 602), but in this book my focus is the question of whether some people are extranormally cured, and many observers would answer affirmatively with respect to Lourdes.

246. Apart from what is written about tourism there today, tourism remained the one stable part of the economy of this mountainous region in Bernadette's day (Taylor, "Letters from Lourdes," 459–60).

247. While a theist *need* not attribute all extranormal cures to God, one could well attribute many to God (e.g., a Protestant recognizing some divine cures at Lourdes or a Catholic recognizing some through a Protestant evangelist) without endorsing all the particulars of the means, which vary widely among global healing reports (no Christian group endorses all the means claimed by all other groups).

248. Some have allowed these as genuinely Catholic miracles because they were performed by God (Monden, *Signs*, 138–39, though cf. his treatment of Jansenist miracles on 309–21). Naturally, since Vatican II and increasing ecumenical sensitivity, Catholics and Protestants would be even more often inclined to welcome reports of divine miracles among the others.

249. E.g., Curtis, *Faith*; for Canada, Opp, *Lord for Body*; for the nineteenth-century healing movement generally, see also helpfully Alexander, *Healing*, 8–63.

Starting as a village pastor in Germany and then continuing for nearly three decades in a special healing center in Bad Boll, Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805–80) had a controversial healing ministry. Emphasizing prayer alone, he strictly avoided folk healing forms,²⁵⁰ and he remained faithfully in his Lutheran tradition.²⁵¹ Blumhardt and others report various cures,²⁵² both partial and complete.²⁵³ Prayers for healing started with himself: suffering from fever and diagnosed with smallpox, Blumhardt as a young missions instructor prayed through the night and experienced sudden healing.²⁵⁴ In 1843, his dying baby recovered after prayer, as did his dying wife in 1844.²⁵⁵

I offer merely samples here of some of the other reports: in 1845, a dying woman, vomiting large quantities of clotted blood, began recovering within a few minutes of prayer, still tired but regaining strength.²⁵⁶ In 1846 a physician certified the healing of a previously incurable skin rash.²⁵⁷ Other eyewitness reports of cures include blindness,²⁵⁸ paralysis,²⁵⁹ epilepsy,²⁶⁰ and the like. When a woman whose “hand closed by seizures” found no help from her Tübingen physicians, she was cured after her first service at Blumhardt’s church; her physicians initially refused to believe that she was the same woman.²⁶¹ In 1872, after a young man clubbed a boy in the head, the doctor warned that the boy’s skull had been split open. Though expected to die within two hours, the boy recovered and from the next day forward treated Blumhardt like a grandfather.²⁶²

250. Ising, *Blumhardt*, 134–35, 165, 177–78, 196, 206, 222, 276, 333.

251. Kydd, *Healing*, 34–45; Kelsey, *Healing*, 235–36; Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 30; Wilkinson, *Health*, 168–69; idem, *Healing*, 277; Bundy, “Blumhardt”; Curtis, “Character,” 31; cf. MacNutt, *Crime*, 167–70; Gordon, “Ministry of Healing,” 220–23, 280–82; for exorcism, see Rüsch, “Dämonenaus-Treibung”; briefly, Collins, *Exorcism*, 9. Some rationalist critiques of his early ministry were very one-sided (see Ising, *Blumhardt*, 262–63), and many dismissed claims of eyewitnesses without investigation (263–64). While Blumhardt’s local revival is remembered, other more regional revivals appeared in nineteenth-century Germany (Reinhardt, “Movements,” 259). The influence of Pietism (e.g., earlier, the comments of J. A. Bengel on Jas 5: 14–15) is significant (Mullin, *Miracles*, 88–89; Dayton, *Roots*, 119–21; esp. Macchia, *Spirituality*). For renewal of such gifts in many Lutheran churches today, see, e.g., Synan, “Renewal,” 162–66; for more healing services, Schiefelbein, “Oil.”

252. E.g., Ising, *Blumhardt*, 206 (a burned child’s pain stopping only once Blumhardt prayed), 226, 351, and passim. Although I have not reproduced them here, Ising cites the primary sources (including contemporary private letters from Blumhardt and others’ eyewitness accounts).

253. *Ibid.*, 209.

254. *Ibid.*, 78. On multiple occasions he apparently needed to seek healing from conditions provoked by exhaustion (78, 133–34). He did not always experience healings (216).

255. *Ibid.*, 206–7. Cf. the dying baby instantly healed in Baer, “Bodies,” 46.

256. Ising, *Blumhardt*, 176.

257. *Ibid.*, 210. Pressed for time, he prayed concisely for a man with a severe skin problem; the man was offended by the prayer’s brevity (hence perhaps not likely cured psychosomatically), yet as he traveled home discovered his skin beginning to clear (329).

258. *Ibid.*, 209; partial blindness and deafness on 210; possibly partial healing of complete blindness on 329.

259. *Ibid.*, 212–13.

260. *Ibid.*, 329–30, noting two instantaneous cases (though also other cases where he was unable to help).

261. *Ibid.*, 267. People were sometimes healed during the church’s corporate prayer (279).

262. *Ibid.*, 328–29.

Some cures can be explained psychosomatically; others resist such explanations.²⁶³ Blumhardt viewed healings as foreshadowings of the kingdom,²⁶⁴ and initially hoped that the cures experienced in his ministry might be signs that the expected eschatological outpouring of the Spirit and renewal of gifts was at hand.²⁶⁵ Some, including some persons close to him, were not healed;²⁶⁶ though he struggled in prayer on behalf of the sick, he recognized God's sovereignty.²⁶⁷

Blumhardt's legacy remained well known into the twentieth century, and his son Christoph continued his ministry in prophecy and healing.²⁶⁸ Although Bultmann, consistent with his skepticism about miracles, naturally considered the "legends" about Blumhardt "preposterous,"²⁶⁹ Karl Barth criticized Bultmann for rejecting these accounts uncritically.²⁷⁰ Indeed, Blumhardt was one of just three persons that Karl Barth numbered among his "mentors,"²⁷¹ and he cites favorably an exorcism recounted by Blumhardt.²⁷² Jürgen Moltmann notes the influence of Blumhardt on both Karl Barth's dialectical theology and his own theology of hope.²⁷³

The work of Dorothea Trudel (1813–62) and her colleagues in Männedorf, Switzerland, was also significant and exercised a greater direct effect on the Anglophone world.²⁷⁴ A scholar even a generation later noted that her cures "were certified by

263. See *ibid.*, 211, 326, 329.

264. *Ibid.*, 234, 410; cf. Macchia, *Spirituality*, 76.

265. Ising, *Blumhardt*, 214, 229–31, 234–35, 329, 334, 342, 346, 349, 400–401, 405, 414; for opposition to his view of a promised future outpouring before Christ's return, see, e.g., 270–73. By the end of his life he understood that he would not live to see the time for which he hoped (395). Many other Protestants had long been expecting a future outpouring of the Spirit (see McGee, *Miracles*, 22–25) and sometimes miracles (50, 51).

266. Ising, *Blumhardt*, e.g., 161, 209, 267, 329, 334, 354–56, 363.

267. *Ibid.*, 333–35. Although for a time against medicine, he changed (213–14, 267, 337–38). In contrast to some later teachers on healing, Blumhardt was moderate, recognizing that God does not heal everyone supernaturally (Reyes, "Framework," 88); even Warfield, *Miracles*, 195, respected him.

268. Moltmann, "Blessing," 149 (citing here Ragaz, *Kampf*).

269. Kydd, *Healing*, 42n40 (citing Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, 120). In fact, firsthand letters and other sources, often from immediately after the cures (see the copious documentation in Ising, *Blumhardt*, *passim*), demonstrate that however we explain the experiences, they were not legends.

270. Kelsey, *Healing*, 236–37.

271. Kydd, *Healing*, 34; see Barth, *Letters*, 251 (cf. 270). Barth, who spent time in Blumhardt's community of Bad Boll, dedicated a book to Blumhardt's son Christoph, who carried on the father's work (Ising, *Blumhardt*, 420). Various scholars of Blumhardt's day stayed as guests in his healing home in Bad Boll (e.g., Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, Johann Jakob Herzog, and Immanuel Hermann Fichte; 303).

272. Barth, *Dogmatics*, 4.3:165ff., noted in Kauffman, "Introduction," 7–8; cf. Wilkinson, *Healing*, 2.

273. Moltmann, "Blessing," 149 (citing Barth, *Theology*). Other German theologians also cited Blumhardt's example positively (e.g., Heim, *Transformation*, 173–74; more conservatively, Koch, *Gifts*, 100), and Ising, *Blumhardt*, 413, who wrote his dissertation on Blumhardt under Moltmann, indicates the influence of the former's ideas on the latter. For Bonhoeffer, see Macchia, *Spirituality*, 1, 4.

274. Mullin, *Miracles*, 89; Kydd, *Healing*, 142–53 (including healings of insanity, tuberculosis, and other maladies, 152); Wilkinson, *Health*, 168–69; Bundy, "Trudel"; Curtis, "Character," 31–32; Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 17–19; cf. earlier Cullis, *Trüdel* (cited in Wilkinson, *Healing*, 323); Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 213–19. Warfield, *Miracles*, 184, complains that Trudel "suffered from curvature of the spine from an early age and died at forty-eight of typhus fever," but such complaints are better reserved for those in his day who believed that all who had faith would be cured; her suffering itself may have provided her special compassion for those who were hurting. The typhus was contracted from a

well-known physicians.”²⁷⁵ Neither Blumhardt nor Trudel opposed medicine or doctors.²⁷⁶ Various healings of individuals were also known elsewhere; thus one Miss Fancourt in England suffered from severe hip disease for nearly eight years, and was nearly bedridden for the final two. Finally, thinking of Matt 21:22, a friend prayed for her on October 20, 1830, and she arose completely healed.²⁷⁷ The circle of Edward Irving had already reported healings of tuberculosis in 1830,²⁷⁸ and eventually forty-six healings were reported in a single year “among the Irvingites of England alone.”²⁷⁹ (Ironically, most of the early claims were less directly associated with Irving’s circle.²⁸⁰) Other theological controversies, however, had rendered Irving’s testimony suspect in many circles,²⁸¹ and other movements proved more influential.

By the late nineteenth century, a much broader and more consistent healing movement than among earlier U.S. Protestants grew from the circles that were heavily emphasizing holiness. This holiness emphasis was interdenominational, and circles that advocated divine healing achieved great prominence in many of the churches in the United States.²⁸² Although Christians had often prayed for healing, the new movement often emphasized more specifically that healing was

patient she was helping (Wilkinson, *Healing*, 277). Although Blumhardt spoke well of her ministry, he felt that the sometimes repeated laying on of hands at Männedorf seemed like forcing God’s hand (Ising, *Blumhardt*, 335–36).

275. Dod, “Healer,” 174.

276. Wilkinson, *Healing*, 277.

277. Gordon, “Ministry of Healing,” 233–34, noting that she remained well. Gordon also notes the ensuing persecution, which compelled Fancourt’s father, a minister who had previously been cessationist, to add his own confirmation of her account (234–35). Gordon cites from a source about Irving but prudently does not emphasize Irving. Stunt, “Trying Spirits,” 401, cites the 1830 cure of “Eliza, the crippled daughter of the Revd Thomas Fancourt.”

278. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 93–98; Gordon, “Ministry of Healing,” 184–89; cf. Vidler, *Revolution*, 66.

279. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 91.

280. Stunt, “Trying Spirits,” 402: most of the early claims were not “formally associated with Edward Irving’s congregation.” Healing reports continued in late nineteenth-century England, though one Anglican bishop assigns them particularly to “Plymouth Brethren and other Bibliolatrous Protestants” (Henson, *Notes*, xi, emphasizing failures).

281. Warfield, *Miracles*, 125–53, uses Irvingite claims as a major example of what he considers false claims (see also Pink, *Healing*, 23). Irving and his early prophets emphasized a christocentric test (Stunt, “Trying Spirits,” 405–7), but at least some also came to affirm the element of his theology that outsiders deemed heterodox (408). Without disrespecting those honest among them, Blumhardt challenged their belief that the final outpouring of the Spirit and gifts had begun (Ising, *Blumhardt*, 235), though he hoped that it would be soon (214, 229–31, 234–35, 329, 334, 342, 346, 349, 400–401, 405, 414). Some have criticized a movement claiming the heritage of Irving for its heterodox beliefs (see Kuligin, “Church”).

282. See Chappell, “Healing Movement,” 1–80, esp. 58–86; Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 27–40; Curtis, “Lord for Body”; idem, “Houses of Healing”; idem, *Faith*; Cunningham, “Holiness”; more briefly, MacNutt, *Crime*, 176–78; Alexander, *Fire*, 62–63; cf. further Brown, “Tent Meetings”; Baer, “Bodies.” Among many influences, see Horace Bushnell’s antebellum influence in *ibid.*, 15–16; Chappell, “Healing Movement,” 1–4; Mullin, *Miracles*, 66–75; idem, “Bushnell,” 464–72 (noting on 473 that he was not a forerunner of “liberalism” but “proponent of a road not taken”; cf. also Finney, *Memoirs*, 416); Sweet, *Health*, 151; Lloyd-Jones, *Spirit*, 45 (although Bushnell’s approaches were not helpful on all points; see Bebbington, *Dominance*, 163–64).

in the atonement, hence, many argued, available to all.²⁸³ This movement reacted against the previously dominant nineteenth-century religious consensus that Christians should passively submit to suffering without resisting it.²⁸⁴ The new emphasis on seeking to actively resist sickness coincided also with an emphasis on serving God actively.²⁸⁵

Early leaders in the U.S. movement, like the Boston doctor Charles Cullis (1833–92), were influenced by recent examples of healing ministries in Europe, notably Trudel, as well as Otto Stockmayer and Blumhardt.²⁸⁶ In January 1870, grieved by his patients' sufferings and encouraged by the accounts of Trudel, Cullis prayed for his bedridden patient Lucy Reed Drake to be healed of her brain tumor. Not long afterward, the tumor was gone, Drake returned to work, and Cullis became a convinced practitioner of faith cures.²⁸⁷ In 1873 Cullis, Presbyterian minister William Boardman, and their wives Lucretia and Mary traveled to Europe to learn from the models of Trudel and Blumhardt.²⁸⁸

Boardman reports some early cures. For example, in an accident, the son of another physician broke both bones in his forearm; the physician's brother, a surgeon, set the bones and required that the splints and sling would be necessary for

283. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 9–10 (noting detractors, including in Holiness circles, on 32); Petts, "Healing and Atonement," 12–24 (e.g., Boardman, 12–13; Judd, 13–14; Gordon and Simpson, 14; and Carter, 15–17; Stephens, *Healeth*, 98–100). Stockmayer helped articulate this approach for the movement (Curtis, "Character," 33), which Elizabeth Baxter then helped propagate (33–34). Some continued to teach this approach (see, e.g., R. A. Torrey, who claimed to have been healed himself, in Witty, *Healing*, 209; but contrast Torrey, *Healing*, 63, as cited in McGee, *Miracles*, 192; nuanced in Baer, "Bodies," 318) and some do today (Witty, *Healing*, 129–42).

284. For the earlier consensus, Curtis, *Faith*, 11–12, 26–50 (including many physicians' support for "heroic" painful therapeutics, a minority practicing even bloodletting; see 30–32); for the reaction against this consensus, see 51–80; for challenging assumptions associating physical suffering with God's blessing, see 21. Thus, in the earlier period, many people would come to a long-term amputee for prayer and spiritual counsel (41). But the widespread use of anesthesia by the 1870s "made passive acceptance of suffering seem not only needless, but sometimes even pathological" (15). Cf. this emphasis on accepting suffering also in the 1700s (Kidd, "Healing," 165). Against the propaganda circulated by prominent nineteenth-century polemicists, hostility toward anesthesia was driven by physicians rather than clergy (Schoepflin, "Anesthesia," 129).

285. Curtis, *Faith*, 17–18. Curtis calls this new approach "physical Arminianism: revising the ethic of passive resignation" (59). Many believed that God willed for them to keep suffering (52–53), but Cullis objected that they actively sought medical help, so why not pray (53)? Physicians now "often encouraged their patients to pray for physical restoration" (67).

286. Ibid., 6; Opp, *Lord for Body*, 27–29, 31; Mullin, *Miracles*, 92–93; Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 213–25 (Stockmayer on 223–25; also Samuel Zeller on 219–20; one Pastor Rein, 225–27; in England, Lord Radstock, 227–28). Connected with prayer, individuals also reported earlier cures, e.g., the deathbed recovery reported in Finney, *Memoirs*, 36–37; cures and nature in Taylor, *Secret*, 118.

287. Curtis, *Faith*, 6–7; idem, "Character," 32. On Cullis, see further Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 228–30; Dayton, *Roots*, 122–24; Baer, "Bodies," 50–75; Alexander, *Healing*, 16–18; Hartley, *Evangelicals*, 53–64 (including on 58 Methodist holiness advocate John Inskip's claim to be healed through this ministry in 1871; emphasizing on 202–3n148 that faith cure was only one among Cullis's many activities). Some of the medical establishment affirmed elements in Cullis's approach (207–8n22). I borrow "faith cures" from some of the literature here; practitioners prefer the expression "divine healing," attaching faith to a specific object and healing to a higher cause than human faith (see Brown, "Introduction," 4–5).

288. Curtis, "Character," 32. On Boardman, see also Dayton, *Roots*, 124–25.

at least six weeks. That night, the child asked Jesus to make his arm well, and the next day asked for the sling to be removed. The father and uncle reproved him, but the boy was so insistent that the surgeon uncle finally undid the sling to show the boy that the arm was not yet healed—only to discover that it was. The uncle, who had wandered from the faith, was reconverted.²⁸⁹ Methodist involvement in the new movement was significant, including the influential and previously skeptical John Inskip after his own healing.²⁹⁰ Starting already in the 1860s, Phoebe and Walter Palmer promoted belief in divine healing in Holiness circles.²⁹¹ By 1880 the Boardmans and their colleagues, Elizabeth Baxter and Charlotte Murray, were spreading the message in England, and by 1885 voices throughout much of Europe emphasized divine healing, often citing the influence of Trudel and Blumhardt.²⁹²

In 1876, Jennie Smith published a work about how she had learned to submit to God's will and accept her sickness,²⁹³ in accordance with the traditional religious perspective of the era about humble resignation to suffering.²⁹⁴ Physicians, who had applied popular treatments of the era such as electric shocks, had not been able to help her rise from her bed.²⁹⁵ By the next year, however, she was wondering if perhaps God did desire to heal everyone, hence might heal her. She also wondered whether God perhaps expected her to exercise faith for healing.²⁹⁶ On Tuesday evening, April 23, 1878, her physician, her sister, some Methodist and Presbyterian ministers, and some others began praying with her, for two hours. She asked for God's will again, felt strength, and then sat up. Finally, she stood up, for the first time in sixteen years. She walked around the room and remained whole thereafter. She became an evangelist preaching to men on the railroad until she died in 1924 at the age of eighty-two.²⁹⁷

In 1880, Carrie Judd (1858–1946) was encouraged by the faith-cure belief of African-American Adventist Sarah Mix. Though bedridden for two years, she struggled to her feet and found herself healed.²⁹⁸ Although some aspects of her

289. Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 239–40, citing Boardman's account directly from the physician father.

290. Curtis, *Faith*, 8–10 (on Inskip, 8–9).

291. *Ibid.*, 64–65. Walter was a homeopathic physician, but the homeopathic and divine healing movements soon diverged (Opp, *Lord for Body*, 25). On the commonness of homeopathic approaches, see, e.g., Sweet, *Health*, 143–49. Healings are also reported in some apparently more locally isolated, individual groups such as the so-called "Gift People" in the mid-1870s (Menzie's, *Anointed*, 29). For the twin emphasis on holiness and healing in the interdenominational evangelical movement of the late nineteenth century, see, e.g., Curtis, "Character," 38; Dayton, *Roots*, 133–37; Choi, *Rise*, 10, 18–20.

292. Curtis, "Character," 32–33; on Baxter, see also Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 21–22.

293. Curtis, *Faith*, 1.

294. *Ibid.*, 11–12. This approach contrasted with the approach in the Gospels, where sickness was normally an enemy to be worked against, suggesting that pastoral care should also support the sick rather than resign them to suffering (see Seybold and Mueller, *Sickness*, 191–92).

295. Curtis, *Faith*, 1.

296. *Ibid.*, 4–5.

297. *Ibid.*, 5. See also the early summary of her account in Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 241–43.

298. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 46; Curtis, *Faith*, 81–82; Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 10–11 (on Mix), 11–12 (on Judd); Alexander, *Healing*, 24–27 (on Judd), 15, 26, 31–32 (on Mix); Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 31.

healing were immediate, she pointed out that it took several weeks to regain her full strength.²⁹⁹ She became a widely known advocate for divine healing. Less widely known, but encouraged by Judd's testimony, in 1882 Canadian Maggie Scott rose in faith from the bed where she had long been confined and then the pain departed.³⁰⁰ In 1885, the aged African-American woman Violet Edmunds, considered an invalid, accepted healing by faith and was instantly healed, now freed from pain and abscesses and able to speak.³⁰¹

Such occurrences continued in Europe as well. In 1894, two doctors, one of them a university professor, confirmed that Marie Hesse had a bone disease; she was bedfast through 1895, but on January 12, 1896, Herr Schrenk prayed for her. She found herself able to leave the bed, and over the course of four days she recovered fully, cured and without pain.³⁰² South African Dutch Reformed minister Andrew Murray, more widely known today for his writings about prayer, sought healing for his throat in faith healing centers in Europe; finding himself permanently cured, he published about healing in 1884.³⁰³

Baptist minister³⁰⁴ A. J. Gordon, for whom Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary are named,³⁰⁵ A. B. Simpson, founder of Chris-

For more detail on Sarah Mix, see Gooden, "Help," 148–50; esp. idem, *Faith Cures*. Mix's healing came through the ministry of Ethan O. Allen, descendant of his more famous namesake (Alexander, *Healing*, 15). In addition to Sarah Mix, African-American voices in the healing movement for a time included the prominent evangelist Amanda Berry Smith (Curtis, *Faith*, 10; for her reports of revival in Liberia, see Smith, *Autobiography*, 366, cited in McGee, *Miracles*, 28). Seventh-day Adventists reported many miracles on the mission field (see Spicer, *Miracles*, cited in McGee, *Miracles*, 11, 228).

299. Curtis, *Faith*, 91. In contrast to some, she opposed depending on medical means (Petts, "Healing and Atonement," 17–18).

300. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 46–47. She later contracted tuberculosis in China as a CIM (China Inland Mission) missionary, dying after two years, in 1893 (44).

301. Curtis, *Faith*, 96–97. Schrenk appears also in Curtis, "Character," 33, 38, 39, 42.

302. Heim, *Transformation*, 193–95, emphasizing that the cure, while working through an organic process, was unexpected. Hesse was the mother of poet Hermann Hesse (193).

303. Le Roux, "Le Roux," 50 (following Sundkler, *Zulu Zion*, 17); Wilkinson, *Healing*, 278–79; Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 115–16; Alexander, *Healing*, 23–24; Baer, "Bodies," 129–31. Otto Stockmaier of Switzerland ministered to him (Choy, *Murray*, 144–46), and after his healing (147) Murray ministered healing faith to others (151; for his views, see Murray, *Healing*; idem, "Healing," mentioning his own on 5; noting problems, van de Vyfer, "Theology"); during his lifetime, his interest in healing may have been his most controversial position (Ross, "Murray," 807). When the daughter of his disciple Pieter le Roux was healed of diphtheria without medical intervention, Le Roux left the Reformed Church (Le Roux, "Le Roux," 53).

304. Among Protestant groups in 1882 Boston, Baptists were a close second to Trinitarian Congregationalists (Hartley, *Evangelicals*, 67). Some early Baptists seem to have experienced various charismatic gifts (e.g., in records of the Philadelphia association ca. 1743), though by the early twentieth century the majority of Baptists had accepted the arguments of cessationists (Synan, "Charismatics," 185). Kidd, *Awakening*, 246, notes that some Baptists in the mid-eighteenth century reported many signs. Spurgeon and Gordon, who were not cessationists, were in the minority (186), though there were many other early exceptions (Free Will Baptists and even many Baptist pioneers in the early Pentecostal movement, 186–88), and far more Baptists today (187–92). Even earlier, few would have denied the possibility of God healing in answer to prayer.

305. Pastor of a prestigious Boston church, Gordon was also a popular speaker, including at the Bible institute of D. L. Moody in Chicago (Barron, *Gospel*, 39); he was a close friend of D. L. Moody and sometimes filled in for him at his conferences (Hartley, *Evangelicals*, 23).

tian and Missionary Alliance,³⁰⁶ Presbyterian William Boardman,³⁰⁷ and others became widely accepted figures in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century healing movement.³⁰⁸ Simpson and Gordon were major influences for “the radical strategy” in missions, that is, exercising faith for miracles to evangelize the world more quickly.³⁰⁹ Gordon in fact produced a much more extensive collection of healing testimonies through history than I have offered here.³¹⁰ Simpson claimed himself dramatically healed,³¹¹ partly inspired by the full and permanent recovery of a paralyzed and dying man in his congregation.³¹² Such signs also appeared in Christian movements outside the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including in Africa.³¹³ Healings and exorcisms are well documented even among many early twentieth-century missionaries supported by denominations or movements in which most Western members believed that all spiritual gifts ended in the apostolic era.³¹⁴

306. Founded in 1887, the Christian Alliance was an interdenominational network, but merged with Simpson's Evangelical Missionary Alliance in 1897 and became denominational in 1926 (Curtis, “Character,” 36).

307. See, e.g., Curtis, “Character,” 29–32; Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 16–17; Baer, “Bodies,” 121–27.

308. Chappell, “Healing Movement,” 192–283; Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 41–50; Alexander, *Healing*, 18–23; Cook, “Simpson,” 401 (Simpson); Alexander, *Healing*, 18–19 (Gordon), 19–23 (Simpson); Baer, “Bodies,” 83–96 (Simpson), 110–19 (Gordon); on healing in the life and theology of missions advocate A. T. Pierson, see 119–21; Robert, “Pierson,” 345–46 (noted in McGee, *Miracles*, 50–51, 242). Gordon was convinced through witnessing the instant healing of a jaw during Moody's 1877 campaign (Hartley, *Evangelicals*, 58). More eccentric, note John Alexander Dowie (Chappell, “Healing Movement,” 284–341; Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 51–53; Synan, *Voices*, 46–48; idem, “Healer,” 192–95); he distanced himself from the other leaders of the healing movement, who also distanced themselves from him (Alexander, *Healing*, 58; Curtis, *Faith*, 197, 200), though Dr. Lilian Yeomans, who knew him, claimed that genuine healings did occur in his ministry (*Healing*, 107–9). For some writings on the subject from the era, see accessibly Murray, Gordon, and Simpson, *Healing*. Warfield, *Miracles*, respected Gordon (159) and Simpson (195) but regarded figures like Dowie as negative fruit of the movement (196).

309. McGee, “Radical Strategy,” 76–77; idem, *Miracles*, 54–55.

310. Murray, Gordon, and Simpson, *Healing*, 156–203 (from Gordon's *Ministry of Healing*); earlier, cf. the recitation in Bushnell (Mullin, *Miracles*, 79); for others, see Mullin, *Miracles*, 93–94; briefly, Wright, *Miracle*, 136–39. On a popular level, Yeomans, *Healing*, 102–6; and Venter, *Healing*, 147–54, provide briefer lists. Gordon came in for attack from those who denied the possibility of contemporary miracles (Ruthven, *Cessation*, 105; cf. Mullin, *Miracles*, 98–99); he is a primary object of Warfield's critique (*Miracles*, 155–96 passim), though Warfield respects him as the “most rational” supporter of “faith-healing” (159).

311. For Simpson's healing testimony, see Fant, *Miracles*, 129–40; Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 11–12, 106; and esp. Simpson, “Gospel of Healing,” 359–69). Cf. also Yeomans, *Healing*, regarding Simpson's healing (109) and healing ministry (110–11). Simpson knew Cullis (Simpson, “Gospel of Healing,” 364) and was healed in 1881 through his ministry (Hartley, *Evangelicals*, 204n160; Baer, “Bodies,” 85). He viewed healing's purpose as part of empowerment for ministry (Curtis, “Character,” 35–36).

312. Simpson, “Gospel of Healing,” 361–62.

313. For a Ghanaian respected for healing powers who lived from 1834 to 1917, see Jenkins, “Reindorf”; Nigerian Anglican minister Emmanuel Moses Lijadu was associated with healings, especially during the 1895 influenza epidemic in Nigeria (Kalu, “Lijadu”).

314. See McGee, “Radical Strategy,” 90–91, and idem, *Miracles*, 191, with documentation (including for Southern Baptist missionaries in Shandong Province in North China, citing Crawford, *Shantung Revival*, 35; see also Bays, “Revival,” 173). In the wake of rising premillennialism (or remnants of postmillennial optimism), many groups reporting mission miracles shared eschatological enthusiasm; note, for example, miracle claims among nineteenth- to early twentieth-century Adventist missionaries (McGee, “Radical

Criticisms and Moderation

For the most part, late nineteenth-century faith healing, especially in its association with Simpson's Christian Alliance, was a respectable, interdenominational Protestant movement.³¹⁵ Among many, interest remained high even in the early twentieth century;³¹⁶ for example, R. A. Torrey, a severe critic of excesses, reported genuine healings in answer to his own prayers.³¹⁷ Nevertheless, times changed, and in reaction against the less culturally respected early twentieth-century Pentecostal movement,³¹⁸ even Simpson's Christian Alliance distanced itself from its own doctrine of healing in the atonement.³¹⁹ Indeed, the critique of Pentecostalism was one of the factors in early twentieth-century fundamentalism's renewed emphasis on the cessation of miracles.³²⁰ But even toward the end of the nineteenth century, various factors moderated some of the healing movement's initial enthusiasm.

John Alexander Dowie³²¹ was more radical than most contemporaries, opposing doctors and medicine and insisting on healing only through faith.³²² While

Strategy," 74, citing Spicer, *Miracles*). Once the subject began to be discussed, late nineteenth-century missionaries had their own testimonies (see McGee, *Miracles*, 54).

315. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 64–90.

316. See, e.g., Torrey, *Healing* (as cited in Baxter, *Healing*, 15).

317. See examples in Torrey, *Healing*, 27–32, 47–48, including healings of spinal deformities and his own perforated eardrum (recounted, quoting Torrey at length, in Baxter, *Healing*, 97–99).

318. One of the concerns was that early Pentecostals tended to emphasize that individuals might have healing gifts, whereas the earlier healing movement emphasized merely receiving healing from God by faith (Curtis, "Character," 39). While these approaches need not be incompatible, Simpson and others expressed concern lest the focus shift from God to healers (*ibid.*).

319. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 129; cf. Curtis, *Faith*, 201. For early U.S. and British Pentecostalism's adoption of the then-current healing-in-the-atonement theology, see Petts, "Healing and Atonement," 31–78; Synan, "Healer," 195–96; Reyes, "Framework," 83–84 (for some charismatics, Petts, "Healing and Atonement," 79–92; but it is now rejected by some Pentecostals [54–69] and neo-Pentecostals [92–95]). Ironically, Simpson had been a major influence on early Pentecostals like Boddy (see Hudson, "British Pentecostals," 284–86, on Simpson; 286–89, on Boddy).

320. Mullin, *Miracles*, 214 (noting also the old form of dispensationalism and noting exceptions within the movement, like Philip Mauro); again noting the older dispensationalism, which rejected the relevance even of Jas 5:13–14, see 259–60. The issue might be open for some reconsideration among progressive dispensationalists today, whose emphases lay elsewhere (on progressive dispensationalism, see, e.g., Saucy, *Progressive Dispensationalism*; Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*). Sweet, *Health*, 158, notes the reaction against Pentecostalism in evangelicalism; see also Lovelace, *Dynamics*, 121–23.

321. On Dowie more fully, see, e.g., Baer, "Bodies," 212–19; Mullin, *Miracles*, 203–8; Opp, *Lord for Body*, 91–120; Wacker, "Marching"; Major, *Faiths*, 208–22; Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 116–20; Alexander, *Healing*, 58–63. Kay, *Pentecostalism*, 47–49, suggests Irvingite influence. By 1906 his network boasted 200,000 members globally (Mohr, "Zion," 59, following Faupel, *Gospel*, 116). Dowie was in some ways ahead of most contemporaries, seeking his community to transcend class and supporting "racial and gender equality" and interracial marriage; he also opposed colonial exploitation of Africans.

322. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 52–53; Mullin, *Miracles*, 204; Blumhofer, "Apostolic Church," 129; Wilkinson, *Healing*, 280; Harrell, "Divine Healing," 217–18; Hudson, "British Pentecostals," 290 (claiming that doctors were from the devil); Synan, "Healer," 201; Brown, "Dowie," 145; others in the early healing movement in Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 76–81. A common mediating position was that medicine was fine but trusting God for healing without it was better (e.g., Shearer, "Believe," 5–6; in the early healing movement, see Curtis, "Character," 40–41). The refusal of medical treatment also appears in some syncretistic movements emphasizing healing (Ma, "Santuala," 81; Jules-Rosette, "Healers," 135; Shoko, *Religion*, 125; Githieya,

many cures are reported under Dowie's ministry,³²³ some of those who refused medical treatment died.³²⁴ (Although the qualification mitigates the problem only marginally, it has been pointed out that much of popular medical and pharmaceutical practice until the late nineteenth century had left much to be desired.³²⁵) Reacting against Dowie, most of the rest of the healing movement clarified their recognition that not everyone would necessarily be healed through faith.³²⁶ A. J. Gordon, in fact, while emphasizing that Jesus's atoning suffering had provided for healing, had never claimed that God would always heal everyone immediately (in contrast to many other voices in the movement).³²⁷ Most believers in healing then, like nearly all today, viewed doctors and medicine more positively.³²⁸

"Church," 241); in 1930s New Zealand A. H. Dallimore, who apparently held an adoptionist Christology, British Israelitism, and the expectation of a British ruler as a second Messiah (Guy, "Miracles," 457), rejected orthodox medicine (461–62).

323. E.g., Sadie Cody, previously paralyzed from the waist down (testifying in Cody, "Miracle," 20–22); Lydia M. Markley (Reiff, "Asleep," 2). Some witnesses affirmed that he still retained a gift to heal even after his stroke (Wacker, "Marching to Zion 2," 9). Boddy, "Experiences," 38, noted that one of Dowie's workers estimated perhaps forty thousand healed under his ministry.

324. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 103–11, 115 (despite the flimsiness of most of the court cases by today's standards; the individuals could have died even with treatment). Dowie was inflexibly consistent, blaming even his daughter's burning to death on sin (Baer, "Bodies," 249; Barron, *Gospel*, 42–43, though not associating this with lack of medical treatment).

325. See helpfully Kselman, *Miracles*, 38–40; Schwarz, *Healing*, 147–52, 171; Sweet, *Health*, 142–47; Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 233; Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 73–76; Baer, "Bodies," 17–18; earlier examples in Wigger, *Saint*, 67–68, 75, 229, 248–49, 275, 329–30; Duffin, *Miracles*, 127–28, 132, 137; Ising, *Blumhardt*, 210. John Taylor argued that he had tried a succession of experimental remedies (including "galvanism") for two decades, but was cured in less than two weeks after turning to Christ for healing (Curtis, "Character," 41).

326. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 32–33. On the movement distancing itself from Dowie, see also Alexander, *Healing*, 58; Curtis, *Faith*, 197, 200; cf. Blumhofer, "Apostolic Church," 131; for other Protestants' attacks, see Mullin, *Miracles*, 206–7. Dowie was also notoriously hard to get along with; see Wacker, "Marching to Zion 1," 8. An analogous conflict has separated some progressive urban churches from their origins in some more traditional African Zionist movements (like Mutendi's) that reject medicine (Daneel, *Zionism*, 58–59).

327. Curtis, *Faith*, 88. As Barron, *Gospel*, 40, notes, "His example of moderation has too seldom been followed."

328. Then, see Opp, *Lord for Body*, 51–52, though many were concerned about the potentially harmful effects of morphine (56–57); Van De Walle, "Cobelligerence"; John G. Lake seems not always positive toward medicine (Lake, *Sermons*, 134–35). Though Dr. Lilian Yeomans was healed through Dowie, she did not follow his antipathy toward her former profession (Opp, *Lord for Body*, 198). Later, see positive approaches toward medicine in Hickson in Mullin, *Miracles*, 241; Hickson, *Bridegroom*, 23–24, 392; still later Oral Roberts in Schwarz, *Healing*, 31–33; Kuhlman in *Miracles*, 15; Pat Robertson in *Miracles*, 143–44; others, e.g., Graham, *Spirit*, 160; the many pastors surveyed in Braden, "Study," 233; Martin, *Healing*, 34–35; Lawrence, *Healing*, 52–57; Baxter, *Healing*, 288; Witty, *Healing*, 17; White, *Adventure*, 44–50; Hock, *Miracles*, 31; Dearing, *Healing*, 159–71; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 126, 131; Neal, *Power*, 22–29; Althouse, *Healing*, 57; Sweet, *Health*, 160; Godwin, *Strategy*, 19, 32, 46; Anderson, *Miracles*, 52–54 (narrating a miraculous supply of medical help); Brown, "Introduction," 8 ("most pentecostals"; cf. 14); in Africa, Burgess, *Revolution*, 225 (most Nigerian Pentecostals); Bomann, "Salve," 198–99 (Colombian Pentecostals, though many lacked access to medical care); Bergunder, "Miracle Healing," 299–300 (most Indian Pentecostals, though noting on 301 that the poor lack access anyway); Rasolondraibe, "Ministry," 348; Woldu, *Gifts*, 132; Numbere, *Vision*, 293, 345; Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 360–61 (African Christianity generally); Ayegboyin, "Heal," 237, 246 (on the Aladura); generally, see the summary in Harrell, "Divine Healing," 227. Catholic charismatics strongly affirm conventional medicine (Csordas, *Self*, 34–35; see, e.g., MacNutt, *Healing*, 14, 164–67). Although

All along, some had not been healed, a problem that led to different explanations.³²⁹ Some, like Gordon, appealed to God's sovereignty;³³⁰ others attributed lack of healing to lack of faith;³³¹ others, like Cullis, insisted that one should believe despite symptoms,³³² so that some emphasized acting on their faith, acting as if healed until the healing was clear.³³³ Critics readily pointed out that many were simply claiming healings that had never actually materialized.³³⁴ Cullis eventually "used medicine for his severe cardiovascular problems," but some, like Carrie Judd Montgomery, continued to resist medicine even though her husband had poor health and she needed glasses.³³⁵

D. L. Moody, while affirming that God could heal today, denied that healing was in the atonement and thought such views extreme.³³⁶ Many others came to share this concern. R. Kelso Carter was a leading defender of atonement-for-healing theology after being healed through the ministry of Cullis in 1879 and authored the now-famous hymn "Standing on the Promises" (1886).³³⁷ Much later, however, he became sick for three years until he finally obeyed his doctor.

some ambivalence exists, even the Word of Faith movement approves of medical treatment (see the survey in Barron, *Gospel*, 83–86; comment in Hagin, *Midas Touch*, 191, 194), with a few exceptions (like those in Bowler, "Bodies," 84, 94–96; Bergunder, "Miracle Healing," 299; earlier, Alexander, *Fire*, 95, 106, 302).

329. Curtis, *Faith*, 24–25, 87–88, 195–97.

330. *Ibid.*, 88, 197; cf. Barron, *Gospel*, 39. This is probably still the most frequent explanation; I summarize a number of examples of this view in an endnote in the next chapter (487n360).

331. Curtis, *Faith*, 88–90. Sometimes despite contrary pastoral teaching some zealous healing advocates have insisted on this position (e.g., the lament in Roque Cagas, transcript, April 11, 2002).

332. Curtis, *Faith*, 90–91. On Cullis's eventual rejection of medicine for a time, see Synan, "Healer," 201.

333. Curtis, *Faith*, 91–93 (Judd), 94 (Simpson); Wacker, "Searching," 152–53 (early Pentecostals). Advocates distinguished this from will power (Curtis, *Faith*, 94–95), and Simpson emphasized depending even on God's gift of faith rather than one's own faith (94–95). Many practice this approach today; see, e.g., Bowler, "Bodies," 89–91, noting the influence of E. W. Kenyon's mistrust of "sense knowledge" (89; reflecting Platonic roots); Sánchez Walsh, "Santidad," 155–56, 158.

334. *Ibid.*, 113. Already in the 1880s skeptics were also complaining that faith healing testimonials were marketed the same way medicines and Christian Science claims were (112). For a popular survey of Christian Science history from a nonsympathetic perspective, see, e.g., Schwarz, *Healing*, 124–38; more sympathetically, Oursler, *Power*, 101–12 (including cures); on Mesmerism, which influenced it initially, see 121–24; McClenon, *Events*, 187–89; Bishop, *Healing*, 89–92 (hypnotism was called Mesmerism until the mid-nineteenth century, McClenon, *Healing*, 92–93). Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy criticized Charles Cullis for practicing medicine alongside faith (Hartley, *Evangelicals*, 63). I have not treated Christian Science claims much in this book because denying the reality of sickness does not provide a close analogy for NT examples of claiming healing; a book treating a wider variety of claims, including those of various other faiths, as noted in ch. 7, would need to include more of these accounts. Likewise, *Course in Miracles* has a very different content from traditional miracles (Perry, "Course in Miracles," esp. 184).

335. Reyes, "Framework," 87; Kay, *Pentecostalism*, 47. Hudson, "British Pentecostals," 294, notes that one's death led Boddy to insist that God should lead individuals for their own situations; Reyes, "Framework," 86–87, says that the arthritis of Boddy's wife changed his resistance against medicine. E. N. Bell had remained more moderate, though he approved of "claiming" healing (85, 87; cf. similarly Shearer, "Believe," 7), but many early Pentecostal leaders mistrusted medicine (see Seymour in Synan, "Healer," 196; many Pentecostals in 197; the early Pentecostal Holiness Church in idem, "Churches," 111–12).

336. Curtis, *Faith*, 11.

337. For his testimony, see Morgan, *Sings*, 215 (facing the song, 214). Some other famous songs rose from deep tragedy (e.g., "It Is Well with My Soul," 185). For his atonement theology, see, e.g., Hartley, *Evangelicals*, 62.

After this experience, he himself became a doctor and publicly changed his position in a work in 1897. He still believed in healing and prayed for the sick, but he doubted that healing could be automatically appropriated. He now insisted that healing depended on God's will, which could sometimes be mysterious.³³⁸ Apart from Dowie, most of the healing teachers shifted to a greater recognition of God's sovereignty in who was healed.³³⁹

Some faith missionaries like Rowland Bingham found their beliefs wanting when confronted with malaria and other scourges of the mission field and came to oppose the idea that all would be healed through faith.³⁴⁰ (Nevertheless, Bingham continued to affirm the many genuine healings that had taken place³⁴¹ and himself prayed for the sick, who were sometimes healed.³⁴²) A zealous Charlie Miller, just twenty-one years old, traveled to Africa to help Methodist bishop William Taylor; confessing that he was healed, he kept refusing medicine and died from his sickness on May 7, 1885.³⁴³ In response, the bishop complained about the extreme doctrine that had cost Miller his life. While Bishop Taylor himself affirmed that Christ's death provided "for bodily as well as spiritual restoration," he maintained "that the work of physical redemption would not be completed until the resurrection."³⁴⁴ A number of Alliance missionaries died after refusing malaria treatment, and by the late 1890s, Alliance missionaries used quinine for malaria treatment.³⁴⁵ Simpson and others moderated their views in light of these failures.³⁴⁶

In 1915, just over a decade after the start of modern Pentecostalism, William Burton noted that "45 South African Pentecostal missionaries had died of malaria because they refused to take quinine." The mission's leader, Bowie, died at age

338. Curtis, *Faith*, 197–99; Opp, *Lord for Body*, 32; Reyes, "Framework," 76; Baer, "Bodies," 150–51; Dayton, *Roots*, 129–32. Carter had previously opposed medical means (Petts, "Healing and Atonement," 17).

339. Curtis, *Faith*, 199. On 204 Curtis notes the example of Elizabeth Annabelle Needham, who noted that many were not healed and reacted against the movement's approach of claiming healings that did not materialize.

340. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 129 (after his sicknesses and the death of his companions). Unlike A. B. Simpson and (for the most part) R. A. Torrey, he rejected healing being in the atonement (Baxter, *Healing*, 128–30; for Baxter's own rejection of this idea, see 127–37). (Some today might construe Torrey's ambivalence, as articulated by Baxter, in terms of the already/not yet application of the kingdom.) Malaria remained a hazard outside Africa as well (e.g., in northeast India; the hardship of Miles Bronson in Downs, *History*, 60).

341. See Bingham's praise of the many healings through Cullis, in Baxter, *Healing*, 99–100 (Baxter was a friend of Bingham's). See discussion in McGee, *Miracles*, 192–94.

342. A man for whom Bingham prayed testified to being healed of tuberculosis and remaining alive fifty years later (P. W. Philpott, in Fant, *Miracles*, 16–19; Bingham's prayer is on 18).

343. Curtis, *Faith*, 194.

344. *Ibid.*

345. *Ibid.*; on some deaths, including that of one of the Alliance's first missionaries to the Belgian Congo shortly after his arrival, see also McGee, "Radical Strategy," 81. Deaths for refusing medical treatment are also documented more recently, e.g., more than fifty deaths in one church in the early 1980s United States (Sweet, *Health*, 160).

346. E.g., Reyes, "Framework," 88. Cf. Church of God Anderson (Stephens, *Healeth*, 81, 106–9, 169–70).

twenty-seven despite hours of fervent prayer.³⁴⁷ African Christians found Western Pentecostals' use of quinine inconsistent³⁴⁸ and Burton himself initially resisted it³⁴⁹ but finally acceded to it in view of the need to stay alive.³⁵⁰ Less radical circles already believed that God at least often expected people to use the natural means of healing where it was available. Lack of healing seemed difficult to explain otherwise, and just as experiences of healings for some justified a theology of healing, lack of healing appears to have motivated others in their critiques of the movement.³⁵¹ Pentecostal leader Donald Gee by the mid-twentieth century felt that the teaching of healing-in-the-atonement was too rigorous; he affirmed the spiritual commitment of those who died refusing medicine while questioning "'their sound judgement.'"³⁵² Today in many cultures even most Pentecostals allow that God often works through, or even typically expects people to use, natural means when these are available, alongside faith.³⁵³

While their Protestant detractors polemically compared their miracles with those attributed to Catholics and some non-Christian religions,³⁵⁴ the radical Protestants who sought supernatural healing saw themselves as simply believing and returning to teaching already prescribed in Scripture and the example of the

347. Hudson, "British Pentecostals," 295. Pentecostal missionaries also died often in Liberia as well, although some missionaries (such as Grace Agar in Asia) did maintain continued health (McGee, "Regions Beyond," 82–83).

348. Anderson, "Signs," 207, in the context of Burton's ministry in what was then called the Belgian Congo. Walls, *Movement*, 99, notes that one reason for the Christ Apostolic Church's withdrawal "was disillusionment with missionaries who used quinine"; see earlier Parrinder, *Religion*, 97, though noting that others claimed that rejection of European control was the key factor; cf. Burgess, *Revolution*, 69.

349. Hudson notes that Burton, seeing many local people healed, could not understand the missionaries' death; some Pentecostal missionaries took quinine to glorify God by living, but Burton insisted that it was better to glorify him by dying, if need be (Hudson, "British Pentecostals," 295–96). Hudson (296) views this as a logical extension of the belief that healing was in the atonement.

350. Anderson, "Signs," 207. Even so, missionaries could still succumb to malaria, as in the case of Ralph Devin in Indonesia in 1951, at the age of fifty-three ("Devin"). The sickness mentioned for Burton's wife and implied for himself in Burton, "Villages," 7, might be malaria. Some people did claim to be healed from malaria ("Certainty of Healing"), though without immediate blood tests this would be difficult to ascertain scientifically.

351. For complete repudiation of miracles, some cite B. B. Warfield's tragic loss of his invalid wife even while working on *Counterfeit Miracles*; see, e.g., Mullin, *Miracles*, 214 (cf. also Brown, *Miracles*, 199, noting her terrible illness throughout their marriage); for the illness of A. C. Cooke's daughter and Cooke's hostility to Charles Price's healing campaigns after she was not healed, see Opp, *Lord for Body*, 162. The feelings of those who have suffered such losses are understandable and can motivate a commendable desire to expose fraud; Peter May ("Miracles," 146), for example, has a daughter-in-law with multiple sclerosis, and this and other experiences generate "a moral outrage."

352. Hudson, "British Pentecostals," 297. Some others went further in rejecting the view (Kay, *Pentecostals*, 87–88). Already in 1915, German Pentecostal leader Jonathan Paul offered an alternative (Hudson, "British Pentecostals," 297); others, like Elim leader George Jeffreys, maintained the tension between healing and not healing (Hudson, "British Pentecostals," 297–99 with 298–99 on Jeffreys).

353. The case might be comparable to working for one's daily bread as well as praying for it. The greater-than-usual average longevity of Adventists also might offer principles regarding the value of natural means of health such as exercise, diet, and rest.

354. See, e.g., Curtis, *Faith*, 76, 98.

early church. Many other clergy continued to believe that miracles had mostly ceased in the apostolic era, while allowing some exceptions in extraordinary cases.³⁵⁵ There existed, then, a range of positions regarding divine healing.

More serious charges involved obvious abuses generated in many public meetings. Bingham observed that disabled persons were helped to their feet during meetings “only to return to their helplessness” afterward.³⁵⁶ One critic complained in 1930 that many of the same people claimed healings every time a new healing evangelist came to town.³⁵⁷ Such observations do not undercut the testimonies of those who experienced healings and remained whole, but they should caution us against taking at face value all claims offered on the spot at public meetings.

Gender and Healings

One criticism of faith healing popular in that period, defined as it was by that era's emphasis on “muscular,” “masculine” Christianity, would not set so well with most hearers today. For many critics, faith healing constituted a “feminine superstition.”³⁵⁸ This complaint was occasioned partly by the predominance of women claiming healings.³⁵⁹ Although this tendency has existed in some other eras as well,³⁶⁰ at least in that era social factors account for some of the discrepancy.

In the Victorian ethos, working men treated health as their normal state, often suppressing physical complaints, whereas women typically viewed themselves as needing healing.³⁶¹ The period's literature had idealized especially sick and suffering women.³⁶² It was thus more culturally acceptable for women to publicly admit health problems and testify of healings than for men. After the Victorian era,

355. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 75.

356. *Ibid.*, 171.

357. *Ibid.* The critic, fundamentalist preacher T. T. Shields, is a polemical rather than objective source, but this criticism seems a plausible one (though it is unlikely that he would actually recognize all those testifying).

358. *Ibid.*, 76.

359. E.g., the majority of those claiming cures in Price's meetings (sometimes as high as 92 percent) were women (*ibid.*, 160), though Price himself wanted to get more men involved (Tallman, *Shakarian*, 152). In the same era, women predominated among the healing testimonies in Francisco Olazábal's meetings (Espinosa, “Healing in Borderlands,” 141).

360. Such a preponderance of women does not occur in all samples in all cultures (cf., e.g., Castleberry, “Impact,” 151), though women do tend to predominate in most cultures, perhaps because of limited expression in other areas. Women predominated in 1700s Protestant healing accounts (Kidd, “Healing,” 168). At Lourdes the figure is about two-thirds (Marnham, *Lourdes*, 183; cf. Cranston, *Miracle*, 154), but this is in proportion to their participation in pilgrimage there (Cranston, *Miracle*, 154; for examples, see 247–58; for notable men, see, e.g., names on 137). Women outnumber men among participants in Catholic charismatic prayer groups, but their experiences are comparable (Csordas, *Self*, 31–32); also among Zulu faith healers (Crawford and Lipsedge, “Help,” 138) and Brazilian Pentecostals (Chesnut, “Exorcising,” 172).

361. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 48. By contrast, men were not praised for passivity (Curtis, *Faith*, 43).

362. Curtis, *Faith*, 38–50; on the image of “female invalids” also in popular fiction, see 43. On the history of approaches to “hysteria,” see Capps, *Village Psychiatrist*, 15–21. A prominent diagnosis of women in the nineteenth century, it virtually disappeared in that form in the 1930s (22); it mimicked epileptic fits (111) but doctors rarely proved sympathetic, viewing it as a frailty of the female nervous system (112).

Opp notes, "The critique of faith healing maintained its gendered overtones; now framed within the context of hypnotism, 'susceptibility' replaced the late-Victorian concern with 'sentimentalism.'" ³⁶³ One fundamentalist preacher in 1925 associated faith healing with feminine "hysteria," ³⁶⁴ and in 1910 a play associated faith healing with women's greater credulity. ³⁶⁵

While we would rightly disparage such criticisms as sexist, cultural expectations may have sometimes made it easier for women to identify with this movement than it was for men. Of the small number of physicians who shifted from emphasizing medical practice to emphasizing divine healing, the majority were women. ³⁶⁶ Many of these physicians who turned to ministries of divine healing had first experienced healings themselves. Thus, for example, when Dr. Jane Baker experienced miraculous healing from breast cancer, it felt like hot irons going through her breast (reported in 1892). After some Christians spent the night in prayer for her, Dr. Elizabeth Keller experienced healing from shoulder and nerve injuries caused by a carriage accident (reported in 1910). A fall caused Dr. Florence Murcutt's "internal injuries and a fractured arm," but X-rays confirmed the healing after prayer (reported in 1922). ³⁶⁷

Canada's first woman officially licensed as a medical doctor, Dr. Jenny Kidd Trout, helped establish the Women's Medical College at Queen's University. Yet by 1891, Opp observes, she had become an invalid. She recovered after prayer and, retired from medical practice, began praying for the sick. ³⁶⁸ The most noted physician-turned-healing minister was the well-credentialed Dr. Lilian B. Yeomans, who was healed from morphine addiction and became a major public advocate of divine healing. ³⁶⁹ A book that she wrote, still in circulation, claims a variety of divine healings, including the disappearance of goiters, blindness, deafness, inability to walk, and the case of a woman healed instantly on what was about to be her deathbed. ³⁷⁰

363. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 168.

364. Ibid. (A. C. Gaebelein).

365. Ibid., 204 (cf. also 205–6). The African-American character also appears credulous (see the description in Mullin, *Miracles*, 208–9), though the play's author did not reject faith itself (208–10). A 1913 play by G. K. Chesterton also made "women and social outcasts . . . the true believers" (in this case, in magic, which proves efficacious; 219). In 1923, Wilson, *Power*, 14, noted the prominence of women in local ministries of healing.

366. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 195–202, esp. here 196. Some male physicians were also openly praying for the sick, with resulting healing claims, e.g., one Dr. Yoakum (in Glover, "Modern Miracles," 2). Cullis, however, continued prayer and medical practice simultaneously, rejecting charges of contradiction (Hartley, *Evangelicals*, 62–63).

367. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 196.

368. Ibid.

369. Yeomans, *Healing*, 7–16; Opp, *Lord for Body*, 196–98.

370. Yeomans, *Healing*, 123, for these; also smallpox (57–59); tuberculosis, permanently healed (60, 69); inability to conceive (121–22); a child's eye improved after prayer (115–16); a growth on the face healed (though not instantly, 119–20). Claims of deathbed recoveries (e.g., Woodard, *Faith*, 30–35, 64–65, 68–70, 90–91) are not limited to Christian circles; meditation cured a Japanese man who believed himself on the verge of death, and he became a shaman (McClenon, *Events*, 89–90).

Supernaturalist Christian Claims in the Early Twentieth-Century West

Healing claims continued in the early twentieth century, though experiences and explanations sometimes varied according to the social class and denomination where they were reported. Belief in biblical sorts of miracles continuing in the present took two major forms in the early twentieth century.³⁷¹ Some, in line with the intellectual milieu of the era, believed that modern faith cures were mind-over-matter cures and that these cures illumined the miracles in the Bible as well. Others, frequently (though not exclusively) from less socially respected classes, believed that the miracles in the Bible were supernatural events and that such events continued in the present.³⁷² Ecclesiastical politics and concern for intellectual respectability led many church leaders to offer purely naturalistic explanations for healings even while miraculous healing remained popular among rank-and-file church people.³⁷³

Some elements of this class difference in how miracle reports are appropriated have persisted. Modern Western academicians have probably tended to discount and ignore some miracle claims not only for cultural reasons but also, unconsciously, for class reasons.³⁷⁴ As one writer skeptical of such miraculous healing claims complained more than half a century ago, they arose and “spread among an entirely different class of people, as to economic, cultural, and social background,” namely, “the underprivileged and dispossessed people, folk to whom emotional religion makes an especial appeal.”³⁷⁵ Many of the twentieth-century Western claims, especially in the first half of the twentieth century (before the spread of the charismatic movement in the mainline denominations), come from the very poor. This observation is not surprising, since the poor have less access to medical care³⁷⁶ and are less influenced by Western academic philosophic presuppositions of antisupernaturalism. There also were very many of them; education was less widely

371. For one brief and popular survey of twentieth-century healing claims, see, e.g., Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 175–85.

372. Mullin, *Miracles*, 214–16, 249 (the former position rejecting nature miracles but allowing that God worked through the natural means of mind cures).

373. *Ibid.*, 248; cf. also modernist theological de-emphasis on Jesus’s miracles (*idem*, *History*, 206–7, 234; contrasted with Pentecostalism in 211–12).

374. As in, e.g., the recollections in Storms, *Convergence*, 29. Cox, “Foreword,” xix, complains that even in the West “chasm[s] of income, race and social status” still often divide Pentecostals from the dominant churches of the earlier Reformation. See the explicit and frank discussion of class prejudices regarding healing in Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 142–44.

375. Buskirk, *Healing*, 78–79.

376. Some contend that in the Western world today, dependence on legitimate medical means of recovery has rendered us less apt to depend on the divine or supernatural intervention that many other peoples see as their only access to recovery (Winckley, “Healing,” 178–79). Whatever one’s perspective on this suggestion, those of us with access to such care should be grateful for it; the more widely available, the better. In contrast to a few groups like Dowie’s, most Christians accept empirical medicine as a gift of God’s created order. Yet Chevreau, *Turnings*, 16–17, rightly emphasizes that around the world, miracles are far more common among the poor; this observation certainly fits Lukan theology (cf. Luke 4:18–19).

available in the larger culture at that time.³⁷⁷ As academicians, many of us tend to view Jesus and the first apostles as academically “rational” (or rationalistic) people like us; yet in some respects³⁷⁸ Jesus and the Twelve, in contrast to the Sadducean high priests, may have been more like some of the leading figures in popular-level healing movements that have appealed especially to the socially disenfranchised. Certainly the social and academic elites despised the Galilean prophet-sage Jesus, who did not meet their standards of education and respectability.

In fact, such claims of widespread healings commanded the attention of much of U.S. popular culture at various times in the past century, some of which I will summarize briefly below. Because I will focus in this section on some particular figures associated with ministries of healing, I must explain both my rationale for and my recognition of the complications involved in doing so. My rationale is not theological, but pragmatic. Healing claims on a popular level are hardly limited to specific, known figures, and most of these figures themselves attribute the healings directly to God and (often) to the seeker’s faith, rather than to themselves. One could thus fairly readily attribute the healings to such factors rather than specifically to the individuals who most often report them.³⁷⁹ Claims at public meetings also differ from reports verified subsequently, and I do not work from the assumption that such meetings provide the context of the majority of genuine cures.³⁸⁰

Moreover, I am fairly certain, based partly on random interviews, that the number of miracle claims in a given circle (proportionate to its size) do not correspond to how well known that circle becomes; some ministries market themselves more effectively than others, and I do not intend my citation of particular circles (where

377. It should also be noted that earlier studies of vernacular health beliefs tended to focus on “marginal” nonconventional populations, whereas “the enormous extent of recourse to vernacular healing strategies among educated, thoroughly acculturated, “mainstream” groups has only recently begun to be recognized (O’Connor, *Healing Traditions*, 18, and the numerous studies cited there).

378. I refer here only to the matter of healings and exorcisms. Moreover, the observation is not intended to apply to all first-century Christian voices. Paul was highly educated, and we may approach him in connection with the intellectual milieu of his day; as historians or those with literary interests, many of us can identify also with Luke. But just as Albert Schweitzer challenged nineteenth-century scholarship for making Jesus a modern liberal instead of a first-century apocalypticist, scholars can run the risk of playing down his populist and charismatic side because it tends to be foreign to our own approach.

379. Thus even moderate cessationists, as opposed to antisupernaturalists, who might deny present gifts of healings yet allow that God sometimes still answers prayers in miraculous ways, could admit many of these examples in this book, as I have already noted. A significant proportion of those cited attribute the miracles to God’s sovereignty rather than to themselves. A moderate cessationist might allow that God could be acting sovereignly or responding to personal, desperate faith even in cases of locations such as Lourdes or evangelists associated with healing. Moreover, one might distinguish Pauline healing gifts in the church from Luke’s mission-related emphasis on signs in evangelism, especially evident in new locations. In Luke’s theology, signs reflect God’s gracious attestation of the message, not the messenger (Acts 3:12, 16; 14:3). But in many cases even Pauline gifts of healings (1 Cor 12:9) probably imply simply special faith in God for healings (cf. Rom 12:3, 6; see discussion in Keener, *Romans*, 145–46). Whether extraordinary power (cf. 2 Kgs 13:20–21; Mark 5:27–31; Luke 6:19; 8:46; Acts 5:15–16; 19:11–12) belongs with signs or healing gifts may be debated (probably the former, if we may draw the line strictly).

380. See the mostly balanced warnings against celebrity-style evangelists in Schwarz, *Healing*, 35–51; for the reminder that preachers could claim healings on the spot that never materialize, see 117, 146.

I have access to more claims than elsewhere) as an endorsement over against other circles.³⁸¹ My reasons for citing these circles are largely pragmatic: because such published claims tend to be collected in larger numbers around these figures, and because collecting such claims is part of the objective in this section of the book, it is pragmatically useful for me to note various such claims here.³⁸² In the Gospels and Acts, too, God often worked miracles through individuals, so the analogy is not weakened by this point.³⁸³

Dorothy Kerin

I begin with two early twentieth-century Anglican healing figures from the British Isles, Dorothy Kerin and James Moore Hickson.³⁸⁴ On February 18, 1912, Anglican youth Dorothy Kerin was healed of tuberculosis during a vision.³⁸⁵ “Though I had not walked for five years,” she testified, “I now walked quite steadily, and was not the least bit shaky; indeed I felt so well and strong that I might never have been ill at all.”³⁸⁶ Her doctor had left her dying from consumption and diabetes Saturday evening; when the next day he heard of her recovery he assumed that someone had misunderstood and that she had died instead. When he arrived to find her walking around and able to run up and down the stairs,³⁸⁷ he cried, “Great God, what is the meaning of it all?”³⁸⁸ His statement was published in the local newspaper on February 21, insisting that there was no question about her prior diagnosis. “Had I read of it,” he admitted, “I certainly should not have believed it. She is well, but how she got better, I don’t know.”³⁸⁹ In another interview, he noted that she had advanced tuberculosis and other conditions, to such an extent that she should have already been dead.³⁹⁰ Later, after she had been critically injured during a robbery, she experienced another dramatic healing.³⁹¹ Various eyewitnesses offered evidence of how close to death

381. All claimants, like all other people, exhibit a range of human frailties; I would be least inclined to trust the judgment of those that deny having any.

382. So also some involved with the 1904–5 Welsh Revival (Synan, *Voices*, 90–92). That revival had a global impact (Orr, *Awakenings*, 115–18).

383. With Go, “Ministry,” 81 (see more fully Jesus commissioning disciples for this activity involved with their kingdom proclamation, 81–86). In the exodus narrative, see Osborne, “Miracles,” 305 (emphasizing God’s special activity through Moses and Aaron). Though I do not find the comparison particularly helpful, those who claim parallels with psychic phenomena note that these are more prominent through particular individuals (Thouless, “Miracles,” 257).

384. Although a formal “charismatic renewal” did not exist in their day, Anglican charismatics later became a significant element in the church (Synan, “Renewal,” 151–58).

385. Gusmer, *Healing*, 13; Rose, *Faith Healing*, 105; Maddocks, *Ministry*, 101–2; some writers cite also meningitis. She believed that the Blessed Sacrament had affected her (Kerin, *Touch*, 8) and that an angel healed her (10–11).

386. Kerin, *Touch*, 12 (noting that just afterward she enjoyed her first hearty meal in years).

387. *Ibid.*, 13. On the doctor’s expectation of her imminent death, see also 7.

388. *Ibid.*, 14.

389. *Ibid.*, 14–15.

390. *Ibid.*, 15.

391. *Ibid.*, 28–37. Visions at this time included the Virgin (33) as well as angels and Jesus (31, 36).

she was on one or the other of these occasions and how astonishing was her instant recovery.³⁹²

Archbishop Lang later laid hands on her, commissioning her to minister in healing gifts, and she traveled also elsewhere in Europe and in the United States.³⁹³ It was believed that she brought healing to many, including a prominent physician.³⁹⁴ Among the many healings claimed³⁹⁵ are the disappearance of a gallstone³⁹⁶ and the cancellation of an eye operation after an eye's unexpected recovery.³⁹⁷ At least taken individually, a number of these claims involve illnesses that have been known to remit spontaneously at times (as illnesses often do), but some claims, like her own initial healing, appear extraordinary.

James Moore Hickson

British Anglican James Moore Hickson had a prominent and respected healing ministry that was attested and documented by Anglican bishops around the world in the early 1920s.³⁹⁸ Media reports from the period attest that his ministry, accepted within the Anglican/Episcopalian church, attracted much wider attention and raised the level of class respectability accorded faith healing.³⁹⁹ Hickson emphasized that there was no power in himself; it was in Jesus's name that he was laying hands on people.⁴⁰⁰ (Unfortunately, his gifts being in healing rather than

392. The appendix in *ibid.*, 49–85, includes these eyewitness testimonials attesting her sickness and recovery, some based on months of observation (including from nurses, 58–59, 83–85; and another doctor, 80–82).

393. Gusmer, *Healing*, 13. She mentions healings, e.g., in Kerin, *Touch*, 39–40. She does note that God hears prayers in his own “times and ways” (*ibid.*, 40).

394. Rose, *Faith Healing*, 105, though suggesting that most of the ailments cured were apparently “psychogenic.” On her Anglican healing ministry, see further Gusmer, *Healing*, 112–14.

395. See at greater length Kerin, *Fulfilling*, 123–60.

396. Or a kidney stone (the particular organ is not specified). Thomas Golby had remained bedfast for a year before the stone was discovered, at age seventy; after she prayed, the pain disappeared and within two months it was gone (Kerin, *Fulfilling*, 142). Stones do pass on their own, though not usually painlessly.

397. *Ibid.*, 146–47. Though the text does not specify that there was no more glaucoma, the doctors' decision might imply this verdict.

398. See Hickson, *Heal*, *passim* (brought to my attention by Dr. Gary McGee). The book includes letters with healing claims from many witnesses; given the contemporary publication date, to have invented the names or forged their letters would have been an extraordinary act of hubris, quickly exposed and discredited. His Anglican detractors, usually preferring psychological explanations, unhappily acknowledged these eyewitness accounts from the bishops (Henson, *Notes*, xiii–xiv). Opp, *Lord for Body*, 150, emphasizes that Hickson remained fully part of the Anglican movement and its interest in spiritual healing, not adopting Pentecostal style or theories of healing in the atonement. His lay healing ministry continued to be favorably remembered in Anglican circles much longer (e.g., Gusmer, *Healing*, 12–13, 46; Maddocks, *Ministry*, 100–101); cf. more diverse opinions in Mews, “Revival,” 299, 303–5, 312–19, 322–23, 328–31. Lambeth Conferences in 1908, 1920, 1930, and 1958 discussed healing ministry (Gusmer, *Healing*, 12), and the 1978 Conference affirmed it still more strongly (Maddocks, *Ministry*, 107; *idem*, *Call*, 66–67).

399. Mullin, *Miracles*, 237–41.

400. Mews, “Revival,” 304; cf., e.g., Hickson, *Bridegroom*, 283.

teaching, some of his subsequent public speculations overshadowed for some observers his more substantive earlier ministry involving healing.⁴⁰¹)

He claims that people began to be healed when he began praying for them at age fourteen in Australia;⁴⁰² he ministered to thousands in the United States, based in the Episcopal churches but affecting a wide range of denominations.⁴⁰³ He ministered also among Copts in Egypt;⁴⁰⁴ in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka);⁴⁰⁵ in India;⁴⁰⁶ in China;⁴⁰⁷ in Japan;⁴⁰⁸ in the Philippines;⁴⁰⁹ in the Middle East;⁴¹⁰ in Europe;⁴¹¹ in South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), among various ethnic groups there;⁴¹² also in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand.⁴¹³ The author includes dated letters received from named church leaders in each of these locations attesting a number of both instantaneous and gradual cures (though of course many petitioners unfortunately did not improve). He also includes news reports where local newspapers covered the meetings and those reported healed. Claimed healings include cures of deafness, blindness, and paralysis, among other maladies.⁴¹⁴ One eyewitness of the Calcutta meetings (March 19–24, 1921) wrote:

401. Mullin, *Miracles*, 246. I did not notice serious problems in my sampling of *Bridegroom* (1937).

402. Hickson, *Heal*, 6–7; cf. idem, *Bridegroom*, 101. The archbishop recalled similar reports given him by Hickson in 1909 (Mews, “Revival,” 312–13).

403. Hickson, *Heal*, 15–17. Healings attested in letters to the author, especially from church leaders, included a nasal growth shortly before it would have been removed surgically (19); multiple cases of deafness; blindness; goiters (29); another bedridden with arthritis (29); blindness (31–32); a child’s eyes straightened (37–38); paralysis (43–44). For the denomination range, see, e.g., 45–46.

404. Ibid., 47–48. One of his detractors claimed that only few were healed there, “so far as I can gather” (Mews, “Revival,” 323), but Hickson himself did not claim that the majority were healed.

405. Hickson, *Heal*, 48–51.

406. Ibid., 51–67; idem, *Bridegroom*, 177–78, 393. Healings there in November 1920 included those mentioned by one pastor there (*Heal*, 53): “a young girl whose hitherto twisted feet had become straight. And there was a young man who saw for the first time for three years. And we heard of a woman carried to church who had walked home. And then we saw an old backward-class Christian woman whose sight had been restored”; these were followed by gradual healings of other ailments. Cures elsewhere there are noted on 55, 62 (deafness, blindness, paralysis). One informant in early 1921 (63–64) noted that they had verified seventeen cases, and that he was so shocked to see a long-term invalid walking that he stopped to confirm her identity.

407. Hickson, *Heal*, 68–81.

408. Ibid., 81–88.

409. Ibid., 88–90.

410. Ibid., 91–97.

411. Ibid., 97–110.

412. Ibid., 111–43 (South Africa); 143–54 (Rhodesia, which is now Zimbabwe). This visit marked a high point in Anglican acceptance of spiritual healing, which related well to local concerns (Ranger, “Dilemma,” 355–58).

413. Hickson, *Heal*, 155–203 (Australia and Tasmania); 204–39 (New Zealand). These include in Australia multiple healings of total deafness; long-term inability to walk; blindness (196); in New Zealand, many healings of blindness, paralysis, goiters, and so forth (205–6, 212–13, 217–20). A critic claimed that many in the Australian meetings had been disappointed by not being healed (Mews, “Revival,” 305), although we should note that Hickson never claimed that all were healed. In New Zealand (1923), fewer experienced permanent cures than originally projected, but Hickson’s ministry there had long-term effects (see Farley, “Mission”).

414. For deafness, sometimes long-term and total, see, e.g., Hickson, *Heal*, 29, 74–75, 87–88, 118, 121, 123, 124, 128, 129, 130, 134, 135, 141, 151, 152–53, 159, 162, 183, 191, 196, 212–13, 218, 220; for

I have seen the eyes of the blind opened immediately; one was an old man, one a child of six years of age born blind. Others have told me that they had begun to see. At the last morning's service a Bengali father ran after me to show me that his son, for twelve years a paralytic, and one of the stretcher-cases who could not move when brought to Mr. Hickson, was walking away from the cathedral.⁴¹⁵

A minister present in Hankow and Wuchang testified,

A lame boy walks straight; two dumb children can speak; a baby carried to the Cathedral in apparently a dying condition was healed almost instantaneously; a hospital evangelist, whose eye has for years been unsuccessfully treated by the doctor, was practically healed before the man left the Cathedral.⁴¹⁶

One witness described a crowd around a Indian boy of perhaps nine in South Africa, who had been deaf and mute since age three, now cured. The witness found that the boy could now hear, and "just then the Town Hall clock struck, and he looked up at it with such a pleased expression."⁴¹⁷ Local newspapers in South Africa confirmed a number of the cures in 1922, following up on cases of deafness and other conditions cured.⁴¹⁸ One deaf boy of sixteen was healed and responded to sounds, but speech "was unfamiliar to him, and he laughed considerably because he could not say what he wished."⁴¹⁹ Besides testimony letters preserved by Hickson, we have the memoirs of Eyre Chatterton, bishop of Nagpur, regarding Hickson's activity in India in 1920. He noted how not only Christians but also Hindus and Muslims came for healing. Despite reservations about some of Hickson's views, Chatterton found Hickson a warm person with a genuine healing gift from God.⁴²⁰

Back in England in October 1924, various newspapers (the *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, the *Yorkshire Evening Argus*, and the *Yorkshire Observer*) were reporting astonishing healings through Hickson's ministry there.⁴²¹ They reported, for example, how Mrs. Sarah Ann Pinfold of Bradford, paralyzed by rheumatoid arthritis and not helped by two surgeries, suddenly dropped her crutches and began walking

goiters, 29, 212, 220, 226. Some cases of cured blindness appear in Keener, *Acts*, under Acts 9:18, and of paralysis under Acts 9:34. McGee, *Miracles*, 186, 300, cites a number of contemporary newspaper reports about Hickson's meetings.

415. Hickson, *Heal*, 65–66; the informant notes that he has heard of other cases that he has not yet investigated.

416. *Ibid.*, 76.

417. *Ibid.*, 121. Similar expressions are narrated for some other healings of those born deaf (e.g., Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 49–50); and of those born deaf and blind (Tari, *Breeze*, 15–16).

418. Hickson, *Heal*, 122–23, 129–30, 134–35; cf. 152–53. A priest near Durban in 1922 noted that he could barely believe what his eyes had seen, including the healing of blind, deaf, and paralytic (124); the list of known cures in Johannesburg is quite long (128). South African newspapers are also said to have documented healings through others a generation later (Stewart, *Only Believe*, 99–100).

419. Hickson, *Heal*, 134.

420. Mews, "Revival," 307.

421. *Ibid.*, 301–4. Hickson, *Bridegroom*, 223–24, also reports a healing mission in England, beginning with a dying woman raised from her deathbed and restored over several days.

and was continuing to do so.⁴²² A more skeptical investigator complained that while she could still walk and felt better, no complete cure had taken place.⁴²³ The papers, while reporting cures, seem even more emphatic about the quiet propriety of the services,⁴²⁴ presumably eager to contrast the growing Pentecostal movement, not known at the time for its decibel-level restraint.

In the context of church leaders' widespread acceptance of the "uniformity of nature" (the usual grounds for rejecting supernatural activity) in this period,⁴²⁵ Hickson's ministry not surprisingly generated ecclesiastical criticism as well as praise. He had particular difficulty before the First World War. Although a retired bishop of Bombay, some wealthy women, and some clergy worked closely with his Society of Emmanuel, started in 1905, he worked especially among the poor.⁴²⁶ Archbishop Davidson met with him in 1909, accepting some of his views but remaining highly skeptical of others, such as the possibility of healing being conveyed through a handkerchief.⁴²⁷

In the 1920s, however, the increasing acceptance of the new psychology pioneered by Freud and others opened doors in society for allowing mind and faith cures,⁴²⁸ which in turn made claims of religious healing appear less pathological or low class. Whether such explanations corresponded to Hickson's own would be beside the point; they created social space for healing ministry. Despite Hickson's

422. Mews, "Revival," 302–3, quoting the newspapers.

423. *Ibid.*, 306.

424. *Ibid.*, 303. Mews also cites personal conversation with a clergyman who in his younger days was present at the service, recalling the bishop laying on hands after Hickson to give his blessing (304).

425. See *ibid.*, 313–14.

426. *Ibid.*, 312. Cf. also the Episcopal Emmanuel Movement, starting in 1906 Boston and led by Rev. Elwood Worcester (Oursler, *Power*, 113–17), and the Order of St. Luke, founded in 1947 (117–18).

427. Mews, "Revival," 312–13. Hickson's idea of using a handkerchief when unable to reach the sick himself stemmed from Acts 19:12. The early Pentecostal practice seems to have been genuine and free of gimmicks (Parsons, *Acts*, 278–79, also on 279–80 comparing relics); for example, one British Pentecostal reported that a mentally challenged youth in the United States received prayer through this method and afterward completed high school successfully at age eighteen (Stormont, *Wigglesworth*, 105–6). Osborn, *Healing*, 47, reports its efficacy as a contact point for faith when physical presence is not possible. Salmon, *Heals*, 80–81, notes such healings (but prefers "laying on" hands, 81); for proxy and distant healings more generally, see 78–81 (including a child's high fever, 78–79); in the Gospels, Matt 8:8–13//Luke 7:6–10; John 4:50–53. In popular practice, for an example in Nigeria, e.g., Folwarski, "Point of Contact"; in southern Africa, a slipper in Koch, *Zulus*, 106; in India, a cloak in *ibid.*, 105 (both emergency situations); cf. the blanket in Anderson, *Pelendo*, 133; in connection with Azusa Street, Robeck, *Mission*, 106; with Wigglesworth and other early Pentecostals, Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 94; early Pentecostals in Shearer, "Believe," 7–8 (a dying woman healed when it touched her, and she thereafter remained active); Glover, "Healings," 16 (a dying man healed fully but progressively from the moment of contact); *idem*, "Recent Healings," 13 (two cases); Reiff, "Los Angeles Campmeeting" (two cases, the one on 14 healing the wife of a Presbyterian minister); Otero, "Convention"; Wise, "Healings" (for a blind missionary); the heterodox A. H. Dallimore (Guy, "Miracles," 457–58); more recently, e.g., Woldu, *Gifts*, 141–42; Stewart, *Only Believe*, 149; Bowler, "Bodies," 93. Devotees of Lourdes likewise find distant contact points for faith (Cranston, *Miracle*, 161), sometimes water from Lourdes (311); for other contact points for faith, besides relics, see, e.g., oil from the cave of Gābrā-Seyon (Michael, "Gābrā-Seyon").

428. Mews, "Revival," 316–18. In the United States, even popular magazines could write concerning healing claims; see, e.g., Daggett, "Miracles" (cited in McGee, *Miracles*, 174).

newfound popularity in this era, however, clerical detractors remained, particularly in England. In 1924, the dean of St. Paul's, suspicious of any supernatural claims, denounced Hickson's ministry as catering to the superstitious and "half educated," hence hampering the church's respectability.⁴²⁹ In 1925, the bishop of Durham critiqued the approach of Hickson and his allies as misguided,⁴³⁰ while unhappily recognizing that Anglican bishops throughout the world offered eyewitness support for Hickson's claims.⁴³¹ The bishop of Chichester was horrified to discover that Hickson had laid hands on "hundreds of unconverted Africans" and that some of them were healed.⁴³² Various English bishops noted that praying for a few sick persons quietly was acceptable, but large crowds were unacceptable. By this point in his ministry, however, Hickson inevitably drew large crowds, whether or not he wished to, thereby eliciting some clerical hostility.⁴³³ Needless to say, no amount of positive successes could prevent the hostility of some critics.⁴³⁴

The Anglican Divine Healing Mission that Hickson founded gradually dwindled after his death,⁴³⁵ but as a healing home it was later renewed through George Bennett's leadership, with further recoveries reported, though the emphasis was more on psychological healing than it had been during Hickson's ministry.⁴³⁶ Hickson influenced others, such as Alfred Price, who eventually began healing services at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia.⁴³⁷ This church reported many healings over the years. One case involved a woman with running sores from her ankle to her knee; she had developed gangrene, recognized by multiple doctors, and was preparing to enter Jefferson Hospital for probable amputation. She stopped at the church for prayer, however, and left without needing her cane.

429. Mews, "Revival," 304–5, noting that "a fellow clergyman" rejected the dean's argument as "pure naturalism." We should also recognize that this was the era of the modernist-fundamentalist controversy in the United States.

430. Henson, *Notes*, 90–113.

431. *Ibid.*, xiii–xiv. Henson recognizes here that his opposition to Hickson represents a minority of global Anglican sentiment.

432. Mews, "Revival," 326.

433. *Ibid.*, 326–28. For his part, Hickson protested that he had not deliberately sought to have large missions, nor had he foreseen their size (328).

434. Even much later, some denigrated "irrational" faith healing to condemn "magical" approaches (e.g., Salsman, "Healing," 149–53, against genuinely fraudulent but also other faith healers; on 154–55 he views accepting one's condition as the only valid form of spiritual healing; Boggs, "Cults"; *idem*, *Faith Healing*). Others from the mid-twentieth century were more positive (Bonnell, "Valid," allowing prayer as well as medicine).

435. Bennett, *Miracle*, 13.

436. *Ibid.*, 41, 48. Rev. Howard J. Cobb, raised from what he believed would soon have been his deathbed, devoted himself to healing ministry, founding the Crowhurst healing home in 1928; Bennett became warden of Crowhurst in 1958 (Maddocks, *Ministry*, 103). For Maddocks' own story, see Maddocks, *Call*.

437. Oursler, *Power*, 201; Oursler provides further detail about the church's healing ministry (120–24). Others in turn cite the wide-ranging influence of Price (e.g., Peterman, *Healing*, 3). Hickson also influenced many Anglican churches to embrace healing prayer (cf., e.g., Hickson, *Bridegroom*, 349–53, 363). Similarly, "Prebendary Carlisle, healed of spinal trouble," went on to found the Church Army (Maddocks, *Ministry*, 101).

The surgeon was astonished when the next morning her bandages were removed. "In two days," she announced, "I was discharged from the hospital as completely cured."⁴³⁸ In another case in 1949, an elderly widow of a Lutheran minister was hemorrhaging from an abdominal tumor and told that she would die without surgery. After prayer, she felt better, and the new X-rays showed that the tumor had vanished.⁴³⁹ Other testimonies included the healing of a boy's clubfoot, a girl's meningitis, and so forth.⁴⁴⁰

Healings in Other Traditional Churches

Not only Anglicans but also members of other socially respected churches reported healings in this period. For example, in Ohio in 1907, Albert E. Day, a recently ordained Methodist minister, discovered that he had tuberculosis. Suffering severe hemorrhaging, he was sent to Colorado Springs, warned by doctors that he would need to remain there or expire within six months. After praying that God would give him just twenty years to preach and fulfill his calling, he decided to return to ministry in Ohio, despite his doctor's solemn warning that if he did so he would soon be dead. The hemorrhaging stopped as soon as he decided to return to ministry.⁴⁴¹ Although tuberculosis remained in his system, "he never experienced one further symptom of this disease."⁴⁴² In the early 1940s, he suffered a heart attack, and X-rays showed an enlarged heart; he continued his ministry, however, and in 1947 a leading cardiologist examined him and found his heart completely normal, a situation the doctors considered unusual.⁴⁴³

In 1950, Dr. Day and some others independently felt led to come together and begin a healing ministry in his church, now in Baltimore;⁴⁴⁴ although not all were healed, many were, of illnesses ranging from psychosomatic problems "to advanced organic illness."⁴⁴⁵ One example of a cure reported was "a woman with a growth on her eye." The physician planned to operate on it the next day, but she came first for prayer. The next day, when the physician was about to operate, he found that the growth was now coming loose, and he detached it easily with tweezers.⁴⁴⁶ In another example, after prayers, a surgeon canceled an operation to remove a brain tumor hours before the operation was scheduled; the young man soon returned home, without the illness returning.⁴⁴⁷

438. Oursler, *Power*, 32. Cf. gangrene healed overnight in Seibert, *Church*, 98–99.

439. Oursler, *Power*, 122–23. She was still coming to the services seven years later, close to the time of Oursler's writing (123).

440. *Ibid.*, 124.

441. *Ibid.*, 137. For the renewal of healing ministry in the Methodist church, see also Maddocks, *Ministry*, 108–9.

442. Oursler, *Power*, 137–38.

443. *Ibid.*, 138.

444. *Ibid.*, 138–41.

445. *Ibid.*, 141.

446. *Ibid.*, 143–44.

447. *Ibid.*, 144.

Beginning in the 1940s, Elsie Salmon, a Methodist minister's wife in South Africa, exhibited healing gifts that convinced even some who had not believed that such occurrences happened in their own time (including initially her husband).⁴⁴⁸ Eventually her ministry touched many thousands in her country. A Methodist minister noted that she prayed at his church's request for a man whose kidneys were hemorrhaging; the bleeding stopped, and two days later the sanatorium released him.⁴⁴⁹ She describes the cures of various bone diseases,⁴⁵⁰ spinal diseases,⁴⁵¹ skin diseases,⁴⁵² arthritis,⁴⁵³ blindness and paralysis,⁴⁵⁴ and the like. She reports that complete deafness that had persisted for ten years was healed after prayer, as was another man who had been deaf without his hearing aid.⁴⁵⁵ I can list here no more than a sample of cures claimed.⁴⁵⁶

Methodist pastor Roger Squire of Red Bank, New Jersey, offered another account. In one of the most serious commuter train accidents in U.S. history, a train in 1951 left its rails and crashed over an embankment; in addition to eighty-five people who died, hundreds of others were injured. One was Robert Stout, who was in a coma for several days and scheduled for brain surgery. Sunday morning at 11:15, just before the operation was scheduled, the pastor led the church in prayer for Stout's recovery, and at about this time he began regaining consciousness. The surgeon canceled the operation, and within a few weeks Stout was fully restored apart from "occasional lapses of memory."⁴⁵⁷

When Lewis Llewellyn was five years old in Pittsburgh in 1915, he was dying of "brain fever, spinal meningitis, mastoiditis, and pneumonia." If he survived,

448. See Sangster, "Foreword" (for her husband, 6–7; for Sangster, 5–6). Though her services were based specifically in Methodist churches, people from many denominations attended (Salmon, *Heals*, 36); witnesses attesting healings included the secretary of the South African Methodist Conference (ibid., 10) and many others. She knew of few relapses (14), but notes the temporary character of some cures (113–16, some but not all related to returns to former lifestyles or failures to employ common sense). She recognized that many with great faith were not healed (118) while some skeptics (34) or others without faith (cf. 63–64) were. Her reports depend on feedback (usually letters) from those cured; these sources usually cite the original diagnosis and medical confirmation of the cure, though Salmon claimed no diagnostic competence herself (14). Others mention Salmon (93–104), and on the internet I discovered the memoirs of one Freda Phipps, which include (in a much longer collection of memories) the experience of one Mrs. Turner whose hands were crippled with arthritis "until she had a miraculous cure when I went with her to a Healing Service" under Salmon; <http://jamesell.tripod.com/id14.html>; accessed Oct. 5, 2010). Some of her methods appear unusual (e.g., 33, 59; "drawing out" inflammation, as on 67, appears also among traditional healers), but apparently more effective than the churches' frequent failure to engage illness.

449. J. Wesley Allen, in Salmon, *Hands*, 12.

450. Ibid., 52–53.

451. Ibid., 57–62.

452. Ibid., 63–66.

453. Ibid., 94–96 (including a bedridden person, 95).

454. Treated in ch. 12.

455. Ibid., 75–76.

456. E.g., a hemorrhaging child's recovery (ibid., 82–83); a split tongue was healed instantly (85); the healing of gastric enteritis (88); and so forth. Koch, *Zulus*, 177–78, also reports healing of enteritis in South Africa.

457. Oursler, *Power*, 147–49, noting that six years later, he remained well.

doctors expected him to be a vegetable. Both his Baptist church and the nuns at the hospital prayed, and he “was healed and recovered” fully.⁴⁵⁸

Catholics also continue to report cures from this period. For example, in 1921, after a nurse put a drop of silver nitrate solution into the eyes of infant Peter Smith, she discovered that she had accidentally administered 50 percent solution instead of the normal 1 percent. She discovered the mistake only when she found his eyes “swollen and inflamed,” and the examining physicians believed that nothing but a miracle could save his sight. Prayers were offered, and in the morning the child’s eyes were found restored; various doctors and nurses at the hospital provided their written testimonies to the event.⁴⁵⁹ In December 1925, Sister Delphina Grazioli had been suffering from cancer for several years; surgical interventions in previous years had failed, and she was given days or hours to live. The other sisters and orphans in her order had been praying for her, and suddenly she felt that Mother Cabrini appeared to tell her there was more work for her to do. She sat up and declared that she had been healed; three days later she walked to the chapel, and she was still working three decades later, when my source was writing.⁴⁶⁰

From 1908 to 1927, the vision of Sister Jeanne Marie declined. The four doctors (two of them specialists, one of whom was a Protestant) concluded that her “left optic nerve was totally atrophied and the right one was four-fifths atrophied.” She began praying fervently on January 21, 1927, for a double novena (a novena is a nine-day period of prayer), and on February 8, the last day of her novena, her pain was gone and her sight restored.⁴⁶¹ Capuchin monk Padre Pio Forgione (1887–1968) was known for his healing gifts, and in the 1920s and 1930s most people for whom Chicago’s Father Solanus Casey (1871–1957) prayed were healed.⁴⁶²

Eastern Orthodox figures also were reporting healings.⁴⁶³ In the East, on the Aegean island of Kimolos, St. Methodia (1865–1908) was said to make the sign of the cross, anointing with oil the ailing body parts of supplicants. It is said that people were healed of tumors and other diseases through her prayers and faith.⁴⁶⁴

458. Llewellyn, “Events,” 242, recounting his father’s healing. It is not clear whether the cure was instantaneous, but the nuns called it miraculous.

459. Sabourin, *Miracles*, 165–67, though he, unlike some of his sources, wonders (167) whether the silver nitrate “actually reached the eyeballs.” As some other writers on healing acknowledge (cf., e.g., Oursler, *Power*, 97–98), many Protestants would regard the report as theologically problematic because it involves intercession through Mother Cabrini, who was deceased; but some other Protestants would allow that God could respond to earnest pleas of the faithful without necessarily endorsing the particulars of the prayers. Sabourin, *Miracles*, 171–72, feels that the documentation for many cases of posthumous miracles used for canonization of saints is inadequate. In at least some of these cases, though, the nature of collecting human testimony may render these the best that one can do; evidence need not be perfect to be adequate, depending on the bar of proof one demands.

460. Oursler, *Power*, 98 (again the story involves intercession to Mother Cabrini, who died in 1917).

461. Garner, “Regressions,” 1262.

462. DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 61–62; Zagrans, *Miracles*, 207.

463. The Eastern Orthodox Church has always affirmed miracles and charismata (Synan, “Charismatics,” 199), despite the difficulties experienced by some contemporary charismatic renewalists there (199–200).

464. Cavarinos, *St. Methodia*, 43–44, 68–69 (giving five healing claims with the persons’ names). Among others, a later patriarch of Alexandria endorsed her (51).

Somewhat earlier, healings were also attributed to St. Arsenios of Paros (1800–1877)⁴⁶⁵ and St. Seraphim of Sarov (1759–1833).⁴⁶⁶ Other Eastern churches also have healing traditions; one Western visitor notes an Assyrian Christian village church that for an estimated fourteen centuries has had a special room for prayer for the healing of the sick.⁴⁶⁷ Orthodox Christians have continued to narrate accounts of divine intervention, not only connected with saints and not only in the past.⁴⁶⁸

Early Pentecostalism

Not surprisingly, early Pentecostalism, birthed in a context of the Holiness movement and other circles praying for healings and missions, augmented the quantity of healing testimonies.⁴⁶⁹ While early Pentecostals, like most previous popular movements, were not generally interested in preserving documentation for their testimonies (not least for eschatological reasons), they are recent enough to have left a massive wealth of sources. The sources do offer some common problems: we may suspect that they were often apt to embrace the most optimistic theological interpretation of their recoveries (a characteristic of their positive faith); some testimonies may have been premature; and some casual claimants and professionals may have been insincere. Nevertheless, many testimonies of dramatic recoveries clearly come from eyewitnesses, and the abundance of these accounts appears to suggest some dynamic active within this early movement.⁴⁷⁰

Many early Pentecostals saw themselves as a movement that God could use, but their commitment was to the Spirit's work rather than to their movement per se.⁴⁷¹ Apart from its addition of speaking in tongues, Pentecostalism essentially

465. For samples of those attributed to him before his death, see Zervakos, "Miracles," 84–85, 86–87 (for accurate prophecy, 85–86); on St. Arsenios more generally, see Cavarnos, *St. Arsenios*.

466. Cavarnos and Zeldin, *St. Seraphim*, 22–23 (including the rheumatism of Nicholas Motovilov in 1831). After his death some claimed that they had earlier seen him levitating but had been forbidden to discuss it earlier (24–25). The hagiography tradition undoubtedly exerted more direct influences on reports of these figures than in healing accounts of conservative, British Anglicans like Kerin and Hickson. Attempts to verify levitation (conducted in Buddhist circles) have so far tended only to disconfirm it (see Benson, *Healing*, 166), though cf. McClenon, *Events*, 216–17 (including a case he witnessed on 217, while allowing for the possibility of fraud; cf. another's claim on 144–45; idem, *Healing*, 59). For explanations of fraudulent levitation, see Charpak and Broch, *Debunked*, 25–27.

467. Young, "Miracles in History," 113.

468. The story of a Greek Orthodox woman, Stavritza Zacharion, in Nairobi, in Bredesen, *Miracle*, 97–98.

469. For early Pentecostal beliefs about healing, see Alexander, *Healing*, 64–242; for healing in early Pentecostalism, see also Reyes, "Framework," 67–90; Baer, "Bodies," 254–58; in the early Church of God in Christ, see, e.g., mention in Synan, "Churches," 103. For Carrie Judd Montgomery, one of the few major evangelical healing leaders who embraced the Pentecostal movement, see Baer, "Bodies," 96–110, 272; Alexander, *Healing*, 24–27. For other early Pentecostal healing and miracle claims, see also McGee, *People of Spirit*, 83, 138, 198–99, 206, 243, 266, 275, 337–38, 358; MacNutt, *Crime*, 185–97.

470. Starting assumptions may affect whether one construes the dynamic psychologically or theologically (or a combination thereof), but the movement clearly shaped how many experienced their illnesses and recoveries.

471. See, e.g., "Episcopal Ministers"; Wigglesworth's prophecy of a greater future movement in Stormont, *Wigglesworth*, 113 (though Parham expected Pentecostalism to be the final end-time awakening;

continued the ideals of the healing movement that had already been circulating at the turn of the century. But despite exceptions, Pentecostalism in this period was not associated with social respectability by the elites. Elite disdain was compounded further by some of Pentecostalism's emotive worship practices borrowed from "slave religion."⁴⁷²

Other healing advocates, like A. B. Simpson, distanced themselves from Pentecostalism, and Simpson's movement increasingly played down its earlier emphasis on divine healing.⁴⁷³ Pentecostal and Holiness groups took up the healing emphasis as many other evangelicals abandoned it⁴⁷⁴ (and probably some healing advocates simply joined the newer Pentecostal movement). Even many of Dowie's Zion, Illinois, followers joined the fledgling Pentecostal movement,⁴⁷⁵ despite his immediate successor's effort to prevent this exodus.⁴⁷⁶ Many Pentecostals critically affirmed some aspects of his legacy, recognizing both positive and negative elements.⁴⁷⁷ As Heather Curtis points out, at this point the urban, East Coast, "international and interdenominational" movement of

Blumhofer, *Sister*, 69); Aimee Semple McPherson strove for interdenominational cooperation (Blumhofer, *Sister*, 202, 211–21; her vision for Pentecostalism was also eschatological restorationist, but for the entire church, 206, 213–14; charismatics cite a longer legacy than restorationists, Nienkirchen, "Visions").

472. Pentecostalism's appeal was to the masses, and the early African-American influence at Azusa Street also contributed to the movement's potential for ethnic reconciliation and global multiculturalism (Robeck, *Mission*, 88, 137–38; testimony in Horton, *Corinthians*, 66n29; cf. Synan, *Movement*, 80, 109–11, 165–69, 172, 178–79, 182–83, 221; idem, "Seymour," 778–81; idem, "Legacies," 148–49; Lovett, "Pentecostalism," 83; Daniels, "Differences"; Jacobsen, *Thinking in Spirit*, 63, 260–62). These connections are natural applications of Acts 2 itself (Bediako, "African Culture," 120; González, *Months*, 18; Solivan, *Spirit*, 112–18; Míguez-Bonino, "Acts 2," 163–64; cf. Keener, "Acts 2:1–21," 526–27; idem, "Diversity"; Marguerat, *Actes*, 81; Yong, *Spirit Poured*, 94, 169–73; Park, *Healing*, 130–32; Williams, "Acts," 219–20) and Acts 2 was so applied at Azusa Street (Yong, *Spirit Poured*, 183; cf. Bartleman, *Azusa Street*, 54).

473. Curtis, *Faith*, 201; Opp, *Lord for Body*, 129; Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 144–45; cf. Barron, *Gospel*, 44. This is not to say that they abandoned belief in divine healing; see, e.g., Fant, *Miracles*, passim. Fundamentalists of the 1920s harshly rejected Pentecostalism, but even one of their own leaders, Baptist pastor John Roach Straton, claimed to have witnessed healings in his church and among family members (McGee, *Miracles*, 180–81, noting also Straton, *Healing*; see esp. Baer, "Bodies," 321–24).

474. Curtis, *Faith*, 201. Many apparently expected faith to always cure ailments, just as a number (though not all) expected tongues to always accompany Spirit baptism; much of Pentecostalism has moved away from especially the former claim, at least in the West. While this seems to be a theological improvement (many early Pentecostals, like others, were not healed), healing reports seem to have also declined with their diminished expectation.

475. Note Boddy, "Experiences," 33; this included even some of Zion's leaders (see Blumhofer, "Invasion," 4–5). For many of Dowie's followers, Pentecostalism assumed the mantle of his restorationist vision after his fall (Blumhofer, "Apostolic Church," 140).

476. For the struggle with Wilbur Glenn Voliva, see Blumhofer, "Invasion," 4–5. It was not only Charles Parham with whom Voliva, Dowie's most trusted assistant, clashed, however; he had Dowie removed from office while he was away recuperating from a stroke (1905–6; Wacker, "Marching to Zion 2," 9).

477. E.g., Booth-Clibborn, "John the Baptist," 7 (affirming his early restoration of the healing emphasis but condemning his later view that he was the end-time prophet); Boddy, "Experiences," 38 (he began well but was targeted by the enemy); criticism in Gee, "Apostles." Dowie influenced early Pentecostals (Hudson, "British Pentecostals," 289–94; Hyatt, *Years*, 161), including Wigglesworth (Hudson, "British Pentecostals," 291–94).

the late nineteenth-century United States now shifted to towns and rural areas in the South and Midwest.⁴⁷⁸

It is possible to do no more than mention some examples of healing claims from early Pentecostalism. (In collecting examples, I surveyed some old articles with "Healings" in the title, but hundreds more included accounts of healings that could easily fill a book by themselves.) Undoubtedly some of the reports involve misdiagnoses; reading the descriptions of doctors' verdicts in the popular reports reminds one to be grateful for how far medicine has progressed in the last century. Many Pentecostals themselves also noted the tragedies of people not healed, frequently on the mission field.⁴⁷⁹ Clearly, however, many serious conditions were cured, alongside the more general social empowerment that the movement brought to more marginalized people.

Early Pentecostal Testimonies

The Azusa Street revival, based in Los Angeles, facilitated the global spread of Pentecostalism, and many healings were claimed in connection with it and its aftermath.⁴⁸⁰ Although many surviving reports of significant cures recounted in the next section are associated with major figures in the movement, other incidents lacked such prominent connections. For example, it is reported that one young woman paralyzed from the waist down in early twentieth-century England kept looking to God for three months after being anointed with oil; suddenly, through her pain, she heard Jesus's voice and found herself healed. Her mother, shocked

478. Curtis, *Faith*, 201; for its earlier transatlantic character, see also idem, "Character," 29–30. The later renewed international focus of the healing movement may have resurfaced from a temporary retreat (in many circles) into local forms just as the spirit of nineteenth-century North American evangelicalism resurfaced after much of it hibernated for a time in early twentieth-century fundamentalism. Although not in view here, perhaps the most distinctive, isolated form of U.S. faith healing persisted in the form of folk tradition among some Appalachian families, where it was apparently applied individually, especially to burns, bleeding, and yellow blisters around a child's mouth ("thrash"); see Wigginton, *Foxfire Book*, 346–68 (for burns, 350, 355, 360–63; for bleeding, 347–55, 364, 368; for thrash, 355–59). Curers would recite a verse (350, 355, 356, 363) secretly (for bleeding, some used Ezek 16:6; 352, 354, 368; another used a composite, nonexistent verse for burns, 367); they might also have a standard prayer (363) and prayed in Jesus's name (as with, they said, other prayers, 365), though some felt that the healer need not be religious (363). Cures had to be effected without revealing the formula or verse (cf. 347, 356–57, 365–66). For some, cures were normally immediate (355, but cf. 360–62), and any failures were attributed to failure to use the exact formula (354). These healers attributed all the healings to the Lord (346, 349, 355, 362) and often mentioned faith (346, 355, 356, 359, 363); they would never take money (346, 355). Some testified of their own healing (355); while medical doctors generally seemed skeptical (364), one was ready to pay to learn their method (355). Waving the hand over a burn (355; cf. 2 Kgs 5:11) and reciting a verse (cf. *p. Erubin* 10:11) appear in other traditions as well; so do secret formulas (in magical traditions, e.g., *PGM* 1.192–94; Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 233). How much involves mere folk tales (cf. Wigginton, *Foxfire Book*, 359) and how much involves faith in God may differ from person to person.

479. See, e.g., the missionary mother who lost her daughter to measles in Mongolia, accepting this as God's will but clearly grieving deeply (Hindle, "Heart").

480. E.g., Robeck, *Mission*, 43, 46, 73, 76, 107, 142–44, 259, 269; Synan, *Voices*, 41, 43; Menzies, *Anointed*, 51; Alexander, *Fire*, 123.

to see her standing, fainted.⁴⁸¹ One minister reports praying in 1926 for a woman named Clara Shannon, who was in a wheelchair with severe multiple sclerosis and given perhaps six months to live. Clara was healed, astonishing the small town, but after her doctor told her that her cure would not last, she lost hope and returned to her wheelchair. After more prayer, she experienced healing again, and this time it persisted; the minister wrote the article forty years later, noting that Clara, whose current photograph accompanies the article, remained in health as he was writing.⁴⁸²

Another source reports the healing of goiters, deafness (after thirteen years of deafness), the visible disappearance of a growth in a child's nose, and so forth.⁴⁸³ Many others also report the healing of deafness.⁴⁸⁴ X-rays showed that a suffering woman in Miami, Florida, had advanced tuberculosis, with one lung badly damaged; about three months after she was instantly healed through faith in 1927, she reports, new X-rays startled the doctors. Their records attested her previous condition, but their examination showed that she was completely well.⁴⁸⁵ Many others report healings from tuberculosis, then a common malady.⁴⁸⁶ Examples include a person who was dying of tuberculosis and weighed only 79 pounds being instantly healed the first time she was prayed for and, at the time of the report sixteen years later, weighing 152 pounds;⁴⁸⁷ or a woman whose lungs were badly affected by tuberculosis before prayer but three hours later had no sign of it.⁴⁸⁸

One can barely enumerate the stories. Among healings claimed in Hungary, a woman about to die from heart trouble dreamed that an angel had given her a new heart, and she awoke well.⁴⁸⁹ Elsewhere, a person who was supposed to die if she did not have an operation was reported healed three hours after the prayer.⁴⁹⁰ School authorities ordered the parents of one child "badly afflicted in her eyes" to get her glasses, but after her healing pronounced her vision perfect with no glasses.⁴⁹¹

481. Stormont, *Wigglesworth*, 110–11, noting that he heard the account from her pastor.

482. Hurst, "Healings." The second time of prayer included the involvement of Dr. Lilian Yeomans, who was visiting.

483. Forsberg, "Campaign," 15.

484. Reiff, "Later Healings" (noting one case on 5 and another on 6); idem, "Los Angeles Campmeeting," 13; "Healings in Australia"; Mueller, "Blind, Deaf," 22; Ollson, "Healings"; "Revival in England"; Jessup, "Healings."

485. Calley, "Healed," giving her testimony, followed by confirmation from her former pastor.

486. E.g., Reiff, "Later Healings," 6; Martin, "Healings at Kilsyth" (noting that the woman was dying before being healed); Mueller, "Blind, Deaf," 22 (though the report appears quite soon after the cure); Jessup, "Healings."

487. Shearer, "Believe," 5; the reporter, her husband, says God "has made her fleshy" (in contrast to her thin family) to testify to his power. He jests that her only "consumption" now is of food. He claims that he was healed from nephritis and high blood pressure, often coughing up blood, though it sounds like he may still have "symptoms" (Shearer, "Believe," 7).

488. Hansen, "Cures," 115 (Hansen being the examining physician). For other cases, see, e.g., Glover, "Recent Healings," 14; "Certainty of Healing"; the healing of Nicholas B. H. Bhengu's wife from tuberculosis in South Africa is mentioned in *PentEv* 1944 (Aug. 12, 1951): 13, in a photo caption.

489. Szabo, "Healings."

490. Mueller, "Blind, Deaf," 22.

491. Kortkamp, "Healings."

An older woman was warned that even surgery on her cataracts might well not help them, but her sight was restored. Now she replaced the cover of her watch again, because she could see the time instead of having to feel for it.⁴⁹² Others report, for example, healings of long-term stomach or skin conditions or tumors;⁴⁹³ the healing of a sliced finger bone and the skin;⁴⁹⁴ the gradual but abnormally rapid healing of broken bones;⁴⁹⁵ chronic gallbladder problems;⁴⁹⁶ the healing of a very sick baby;⁴⁹⁷ the instant healing of a goiter;⁴⁹⁸ the instant healing of diphtheria;⁴⁹⁹ permanent healing of epilepsy;⁵⁰⁰ healing of dropsy so that the enlarged body quickly (over the next few days) began to reduce in size;⁵⁰¹ a twenty-two-month-old's severely swollen face healed;⁵⁰² cancer;⁵⁰³ and a host of other conditions.⁵⁰⁴

Pentecostalism spread rapidly in the Majority World with indigenous workers who shared the Pentecostal experience. Early Western Pentecostals reported many particularly dramatic testimonies among their missionaries.⁵⁰⁵ In Africa, for example, in 1922 a missionary described a central African chief who had

492. Ibid.

493. E.g., all from the same page of a Pentecostal magazine in 1913, Sullivan, "Healed"; Kleiner, "Tumor" (a large fibroid she had for years passed); Ayers, "Eczema" (noting that it had covered all his body). For other claims of tumors healed, see, e.g., Nudgett, "Healed"; Glover, "Miracles of Healing" (gradual); "Scotland Stirred," 6; Fortune, "Healed."

494. Jenkins, "South Africa": "We prayed also for another boy who had cut the bone of his finger to the joint, and the doctor could not get the bone to join, neither could he get any flesh to cover the joint. We prayed for him, and his finger came all right."

495. Schmidt, "Bones": a man in his sixties broke three of his bones in a fall (21); the doctor believed that this was the worst break in a limb he had seen (22) and insisted on surgery to insert plates and screws (21). The man refused (21) but in three weeks believed that his arm was as well as before the fall, and the doctor, though quite surprised, was a Christian and acknowledged that God had done this (22).

496. Glover, "Miracles of Healing," 6, noting that doctors had insisted on removing it but that she had been healed instead.

497. Jamieson, "Healings."

498. Ibid.

499. Martin, "Healings at Kilsyth," noting that "both speech and hearing were gone, and her throat was one white mass of disease," until her instant healing, which brought her full strength.

500. Richards, "Healings."

501. Reiff, "Los Angeles Campmeeting," 13. For other reports of healing of dropsy, see Koch, *Zulus*, 75, 78–79.

502. Newman, "Healings."

503. Glover, "Miracles of Healing," 5; Mueller, "Blind, Deaf," 22, noting several aftermath reports, including the quick disappearance of an external cancer; Taylor, "Healings," 11; McNutt, "Healed"; and often in the literature.

504. Numerous claims in one church in Glover, "Healings"; cases associated with Welsh minister Stephen Jeffreys in "Revival in London"; other cases in, e.g., Glover, "Recent Healings"; "Certainty of Healing"; Richards, "Healings" (often gradual but notable); Jessup, "Healings"; Mueller, "Blind, Deaf"; summaries in Buchwalter, "Asking"; "Reports: Little Rock." In one case, terribly painful and severely protruding "bowels" that would require surgery returned to their proper place within a day after prayer (Glover, "Healings," 16). Recoveries also followed children's prayers (Glover, "Recent Healings," 13). I list some accounts of cured blindness in ch. 12.

505. E.g., protection from bubonic plague in India (Mueller, "Healings") or the recoveries of all flu victims elsewhere (Reiff, "Healings," writing four years after a deadly global flu epidemic). Note the summary in McGee, *Miracles*, 146.

sold all his wives to pay shamans to heal his withered arm, to no avail; after the arm was healed through Jesus's name, the Christian message was welcomed in the village.⁵⁰⁶ From West Africa in the same year came the report of a boy "instantly healed of what appeared in the natural to be an incurable condition of badly diseased gums and teeth."⁵⁰⁷ The same source reports the conversion of a man through the healing of his apparently dying wife.⁵⁰⁸ In Kisumu, Kenya, in 1925, a missionary reports an apparently paralyzed woman instantly healed; she praised God and immediately went to dig in her garden. The missionary also notes that she asked parents if they were willing to part with their child, dying of pneumonia, if it was God's will; they were, "but when prayer was offered, the child was healed."⁵⁰⁹

Such reports also come from Asia. In 1923, for example, a number of children in a missionary orphanage in China were reported to have been healed, including at least five who had seemed humanly hopeless cases; two cases had stirred considerable interest among the non-Christian local population.⁵¹⁰ In 1933, a new believer in Manchuria prayed desperately for his dying child, who was healed.⁵¹¹ Likewise, the same year, a believer in India was experiencing instant healings as she prayed, including of a young man's ear discharge that had lasted three years; her sister was also healed on what had appeared to be her deathbed.⁵¹² In 1925, one missionary in Calcutta reported that a twelve-year-old girl "who was almost gone after thirty-one days of fever" began to recover as soon as she prayed; the child was completely well by the next day and soon was skipping around.⁵¹³ Christians also prayed for a missionary they had not known, whose blindness was healed after a day of fasting.⁵¹⁴

In 1917, one couple reports that one Hawaiian woman's body was covered with leprosy; she reportedly hid from doctors lest she be consigned to Molokai, the leper colony. Yet after prayer the woman was healed.⁵¹⁵ The same article reports other healings in Hawaii, one of an "incurable" case apparently of kidney disease; another case where an astonished doctor had to cancel an operation,⁵¹⁶ and the full healing within twenty-four hours of the skin of one woman who had endured

506. Burton, "Villages," 6 (being the missionary who prayed). A Nazarene missionary in Jamaica prayed for a ten-year-old boy who had never opened his hand, and it immediately opened and remained normal thereafter (Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 94, citing the eyewitness account of Evelyn Cohen).

507. Reiff, "Healings," reporting the letter of "Mrs. Ira G. Shakely from Sierra Leone."

508. Ibid., again following Shakely, who also provided additional testimonies.

509. Keller, "Healings."

510. Gleim, "Ministering."

511. Kvamme, "Raised."

512. Mueller, "Miraculously Healed."

513. Wise, "Healings."

514. Ibid.

515. Johns, "Results," 10. Many lepers were of course not healed, and Pentecostals, like others, sought to minister to them (e.g., in India, see Eberhardt, "Fruit"; Helmbrecht, "Leper"; cf. also the testimony of Hickson, *Bridegroom*, 211–12, about a ministry in Japan).

516. Johns, "Results," 10.

“open sores for twenty years.”⁵¹⁷ In Latin America, when a man in Argentina was dying of appendicitis, he was healed during prayer, though “tested” with pain the next night; the next day, when the doctor who had planned to operate examined him, he declared him well instead.⁵¹⁸

Early Pentecostal Figures

Healing was important to early Pentecostalism, and nearly all early Pentecostal leaders claimed “stunning divine healings in their own bodies.”⁵¹⁹ One of the notable early evangelists touched directly by the Azusa Street revival was John G. Lake. His ministry is said to have begun with the healing of some dying relatives⁵²⁰ and eventually claimed thousands of healings,⁵²¹ in southern Africa as well as in North America.⁵²² For example, his popular biographer reports that one deaf and mute boy was healed and “was quite bewildered at the noise he heard around him for the first time in his life.”⁵²³ Among the more dramatic claims was the healing of a woman who had had a hysterectomy—and subsequently became a mother;⁵²⁴ another was a boy’s misshapen skull returning to normal.⁵²⁵

Another early Pentecostal healing figure was Charles S. Price, who had a law degree from Oxford and was a “modernist” preacher before his conversion to Pentecostalism through the ministry of Aimee Semple McPherson.⁵²⁶ Price reported

517. *Ibid.*, 11.

518. Wood, “Healings in Argentina” (1922; also noting a boy’s healing from convulsions and fever within five minutes of prayer).

519. Wacker, “Searching,” 151, remarking also on the unusual hardness of most of these leaders.

520. Lindsay, *Lake*, 10–14. For his calling to healing, see Lake, *Sermons*, 5–9.

521. Zeigler, “Lake”; cf. Lake, *Sermons*; Lindsay, *Lake*, 26, 31. Some estimated as high as one hundred thousand during his ministry in the Pacific Northwest (Lindsay, *Lake*, 53), though others have cited “exaggerations” (noted in Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 55). On Lake, see also Baer, “Bodies,” 263–68.

522. He is also known for his half decade in South Africa (e.g., Lake, *Sermons*, 12–13; Maxwell, *African Gifts*, 40; Clark, “Challenge,” 81; Anderson, “Signs,” 200–201, 206; McGee, *Miracles*, 164, 292n156; especially Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 55–59, noting both his interracial emphasis and his unfortunate service to apartheid ideology there; some others doubt his service to racialism, e.g., Clark, “Apostolic Faith Mission,” 44; Alexander, *Fire*, 125); churches he helped found are now said to include some five million adherents. Through his colleague William T. Dugan, thousands were reportedly healed of plague in South Africa (Lindsay, *Lake*, 37); another associate also had a large healing ministry but fell into error and was discredited (Lindsay, *Lake*, 49–50). For the influence of his movement on Zionism, alongside its indigenous character, cf., e.g., Hinchliff, “Africa,” 479; on the ministry of Pieter le Roux, who later led the AFM, see Le Roux, “Le Roux,” 53–60; on the original nonracialism of the movement that later became racialized, see 45–46, 58–60; on his influence on South African Zionist churches, see 61; Moodley, *Shembe*, 72–73. Those who think (unlike some others) that Le Roux left Zionism for Pentecostalism partly from “racial preference” also note his influence on the early Zionists (e.g., Lang’at, “Experience,” 99–100).

523. Lindsay, *Lake*, 27–28. For a cure of partial muteness in 1921 associated with a different ministry, shocking even the person so healed, see “Revival in London,” 15.

524. Lindsay, *Lake*, 56.

525. *Ibid.*, 57. It was said that the Better Business Bureau investigated claims of cures and was favorably impressed (53–58, including the noting of names).

526. Blumhofer, *Sister*, 175–76; Opp, *Lord for Body*, 155; Baer, “Bodies,” 301–2. See his autobiography (*Signs Followed*), including healings in Victoria (e.g., 60). Pentecostals described him as “a Congregational minister who has received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit” (“Healings at Victoria,” 9).

many healings, such as of a boy's damaged knee;⁵²⁷ full healing of curvature of the spine, freeing a woman from a large back brace;⁵²⁸ another spinal restoration;⁵²⁹ and spontaneous cures breaking out in his meetings.⁵³⁰ A later leader influenced by him reported his sister's dramatic healing through Price's prayer.⁵³¹ (I will mention one of Price's campaigns in a different connection in ch. 14.)

Another healing evangelist offering abundant claims in the early twentieth century was Maria Woodworth-Etter, who straddled both the Holiness movement and later the early Pentecostal movement.⁵³² For just a few samples among the numerous healing claims in her journal, she records a pastor's observation that a woman crippled by arthritis had not been able to walk for four years and could not comb her hair or raise her arms, until healed along with the blind, deaf, paralyzed, and others in her meetings.⁵³³ Likewise, a man with three broken ribs flinched in pain when she touched his side, but as soon as he received prayer, his ribs came together, and "he could pound on those ribs with his hands." A Choctaw Indian from Oklahoma had suffered for thirty years "with a running sore on her foot"; the pain disappeared instantly, Woodworth-Etter's diary claimed, and the foot was now healing.⁵³⁴ F. F. Bosworth attested that Emmett Martin, a fifteen-year-old boy, had one arm paralyzed since the age of one and the other now in a sling from an accident. After prayer both arms were healed, and, once the sling had been removed, he clapped his hands together and returned the next night to testify.⁵³⁵ One writer visiting her meetings in Dallas reported hundreds healed; "the blind have seen, the deaf have heard, the dumb have spoken, broken limbs have been restored," and various diseases healed.⁵³⁶

Not all of her claims were successful;⁵³⁷ others, however, seem to have proved more enduring. For example, a doctor was reportedly astonished to discover some

527. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 193; a physician had told the boy that he could not even return to school for six to eight weeks; "the pain and swelling disappeared" after anointing; see the 1929 photo of the boy on 194.

528. *Ibid.*, 193, with the accompanying photo of the woman holding her back brace on 194, from 1926.

529. *Ibid.*, 157.

530. *Ibid.*, 158–59.

531. Tallman, *Shakarian*, 101.

532. See Warner, *Evangelist*, passim, documenting claims of healings from sources such as Woodworth-Etter's publications, newspaper reports of her meetings, and interviews with people who knew her, often children of those healed under her ministry. For concise surveys, see Pope-Levison, *Pulpit*, 97–109; Baer, "Bodies," 203–12; Brown, "Woodworth-Etter"; Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 122–23. Stanley Smith of the Cambridge Seven, a CIM missionary, affirmed her ministry; see the preface of Woodworth-Etter, *Diary*.

533. Woodworth-Etter, *Diary*, 159, and *idem*, *Miracles*, 117–18 (from F. F. Bosworth of Dallas, Texas, Aug. 11, 1912).

534. Woodworth-Etter, *Diary*, 161, and *idem*, *Miracles*, 119. For some further examples, see *Miracles*, 123–27, reported April 21, 1913.

535. Woodworth-Etter, *Diary*, 159 (from Bosworth, Aug. 11, 1912).

536. Frodsham, "Victories." Other Pentecostal publications also reported that people saw healings in her meetings (e.g., Reiff, "Los Angeles Campmeeting").

537. Anderson, *Vision*, 94, complains that she "continued to say her husband had been healed of tuberculosis" in 1913, "even after he died of that ailment a year later." Perhaps she viewed a temporary

of his patients inexplicably healed at her meetings. He corroborated the healings to the newspaper, came, was converted, and was healed of a bronchial condition that had lasted for years.⁵³⁸ Eyewitness claims also include an instant and permanent healing of a boy, Louis Romer, from chorea, a healing that Romer confirmed independently many years later.⁵³⁹ Benjamin Denton, who was reportedly dying of tuberculosis, his lungs bleeding, was instantly and permanently healed in 1917 (a testimony again corroborated by a researcher many years later).⁵⁴⁰ Uncounted other reports also surround her.⁵⁴¹

Other well-known Pentecostal ministers reported large numbers of public healings.⁵⁴² One of the most famous healing evangelists, known for many healing miracles, was British evangelist Smith Wigglesworth.⁵⁴³ Before his significant healing ministry, Wigglesworth himself was on his deathbed from appendicitis that was too far gone; the doctor thought it too late for surgery, but he was instantly healed without medical intervention. A plumber at the time, he went and did a plumbing job.⁵⁴⁴ Wigglesworth emphasized salvation over healing,⁵⁴⁵ but many healing reports

remission as nevertheless beneficial. Others also kept insisting on healing even when sickness returned (Reyes, "Framework," 89).

538. Warner, *Evangelist*, 160–61, citing *The Moline Daily Dispatch*, Nov. 28, 1902, and later, for more detail, other sources.

539. *Ibid.*, 180–81; he was healed and was eighty at the time of the book's writing; he wrote his testimony to the author on July 20, 1981.

540. *Ibid.*, 181; the testimony is from his family and a letter to the author in 1978.

541. *Ibid.*, noting that he recounts here "only three cases of the reported hundreds who received healing in Maria's meetings during the early years of the Pentecostal movement." Although she was criticized for people falling into "trances" or fainting because emotionally overwhelmed by the Spirit at her meetings (Baer, "Bodies," 205), similar phenomena occurred in other revival settings, like John Wesley's ministry (Cracknell and White, *Introduction*, 17) and that of early American Methodists (Wigger, *Saint*, 78, 80–81, 301–2, 307, 310, 320, 322, 327, 360); the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist revival at Cane Ridge (1801; Sweeney, *Story*, 72; Prather, *Miracles*, 27–28); and genetically probably unrelated Hebrides revivals among fairly strict Calvinist Presbyterians in the north of Scotland (1939, 1949–52; Peckham, *Sounds*, 104–5, 120, 183, 239–40); as well as Scottish revivals in 1859–60 (Bebbington, "Clash," 78–79); and the 1904–5 Welsh revival (Davies, "Roberts," 123); it appears in various revivalistic settings today (e.g., Marostica, "Learning," 215–16, including on 215 a case of six hours of an unbeliever's unconsciousness during deliverance from an occult connection). Pytches, *Come*, 147–48, notes St. Teresa of Avila's discussion of trances, and falling in the Wesleyan and other revivals, including Welsh revivals (1762–1905).

542. Cf. the brief report (unfortunately without details) concerning Bishop Ida Robinson of Mount Sinai Holy Church of America in Pope-Levison, *Pulpit*, 206.

543. Warner, "Wigglesworth"; Baer, "Bodies," 268–72; Frodsham, *Apostle*; Liardon, *Wigglesworth*; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 98–101; a friend's examples in Stormont, *Wigglesworth*, 99–111; an observer's report in Wigglesworth, *Anointing*, 66. Wigglesworth attributed healing to God's compassion, though sometimes also to faith (Reyes, "Framework," 85); he sometimes did not feel the Lord's leading to pray for some persons to be healed (Stormont, *Wigglesworth*, 111). For his early insistence on healing through faith, however, see McGee, *Miracles*, 183, 189. For Pentecostalism in Britain more generally, see Kay, *Pentecostals*.

544. E.g., Liardon, *Wigglesworth*, 4–5. Shearer, "Believe," 6, reports that his own mother was scheduled for surgery due to "chronic appendicitis" nineteen years earlier when she was commanded to be healed and rose up well, never to have another appendicitis attack. Whether or not the initial diagnosis is correct, she recovered from something serious.

545. Andrews, "Healings," citing his words at a meeting in Australia.

are associated with his ministry.⁵⁴⁶ One more recent British Anglican writer notes that fourteen raisings are attributed to Wigglesworth's ministry.⁵⁴⁷ Besides contemporary documents, Dr. Rex Gardner cites the later testimony of a doctor who had heard of some healings in Wigglesworth's ministry from his parents, who had earlier corroborated some such extraordinary claims.⁵⁴⁸

In North America, F. F. Bosworth (mentioned above) reported many healings. For example, John Sproul, suffering the effects of mustard gas, was cured when the Bosworths prayed; returning "his disability pension," Sproul returned to work on the railroad.⁵⁴⁹ Mrs. J. B. Long of Pittsburgh testified in writing (with her address) that she was instantly healed fully of total deafness, from which she had suffered for five years, and from injured knees (from which she had suffered for several years); she could now hear and run.⁵⁵⁰ Mrs. Edith Watt Lau, who was cross-eyed and had serious vision problems, was healed;⁵⁵¹ Alice Baker was healed of cancer,⁵⁵² and overnight the flesh that had been eaten away in her upper lip was restored;⁵⁵³ Ms. R. Nix of Toronto claimed healing from partial paralysis of the legs and near blindness along with her heart and diabetes problems;⁵⁵⁴ Mrs. Edward Bander of Easton, Pennsylvania, testified to a healing of her stomach cancer and its long-term effects so dramatic that all twenty of her near relatives and in-laws were converted;⁵⁵⁵ a woman mute for three years was suddenly healed;⁵⁵⁶ others testified in writing of their instant and almost instant healings of cancer.⁵⁵⁷ A thirteen-year-old boy, healed instantly of infantile paralysis that had deformed his legs since age one, began three days later to learn how to use roller skates and announced, "I'm the happiest boy in Easton."⁵⁵⁸ (Although I treat Bosworth among Pentecostals, he ultimately affiliated instead with the Christian and Missionary Alliance because of disagreement with contemporary Pentecostals on the universal necessity of tongues.⁵⁵⁹)

546. E.g., a number who had not walked in years, or at all, were now able to walk (*ibid.*; "Healings in Australia," 28; "Remarkable Healings in Australia"); some deaf persons were excited to begin to hear ("Healings in Australia," 28).

547. Pytches, "Anglican," 194. Wigglesworth claimed that the greatest test of his obedience was when he called his just-deceased wife back to life but God told him to stop (Stormont, *Wigglesworth*, 112).

548. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 98.

549. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 161.

550. Bosworth, *Healer*, 214–16, noting on 214–15 that in the year since her healing the symptoms had never returned; another person who knew her well offered confirmation, 216. A number of healing testimonies appear on 213–40.

551. *Ibid.*, 221–23; she provided her testimony and address a year after the healing.

552. *Ibid.*, 223–28, with confirmation from another person, with her name and address, on 228–29.

553. *Ibid.*, 225; also noted by the other witness (228–29, mentioning the cessation of the odor), who noted also the doctor's astonishment (229).

554. *Ibid.*, 232–34.

555. *Ibid.*, 234–35.

556. *Ibid.*, 238–39.

557. Multiple cases in *ibid.*, 229–32, 239–40.

558. *Ibid.*, 237–38. On Bosworth more critically, see Baer, "Bodies," 290–94.

559. Menzies, *Anointed*, 129–30; on Bosworth's dissent, see also Opp, *Lord for Body*, 152. Several leading early Pentecostal figures demurred from the movement's emerging public position on tongues

Also in North America, the fairly ecumenical but sometimes controversial Aimee Semple McPherson encountered healing dramatically in what is reported as the instant healing of her broken ankle.⁵⁶⁰ The next year, she and her husband fell ill with severe cases of malaria, however, and her husband, instead of being healed, died.⁵⁶¹ Aimee's faith eventually recovered from this blow, and she had great success at her crusades.⁵⁶² One crusade report that survives cites numerous healings, among them a boy who had never walked without crutches began walking, as did a woman whose leg had been paralyzed for eight months; one deaf and mute claimed to hear; and a woman unable to walk found both her walking and (unexpectedly) her partial deafness cured.⁵⁶³ Her Dallas meetings in the early 1920s reportedly drew more than one hundred thousand, and despite her own emphasis on salvation more than healing, both the sick and the press kept up a focus on her prayers for the sick.⁵⁶⁴ Being originally from northeast Ohio, I have learned orally from people (noncharismatic as well as Pentecostal) whose families were deeply impacted by her Canton, Ohio, crusade.⁵⁶⁵ Among healings claimed at those meetings, one named, three-year-old girl limp with paralysis was healed and began running around;⁵⁶⁶ J. A. Henson of South Canton was healed of deafness;⁵⁶⁷ and so forth. Newspaper headlines in other locations like Wichita proclaimed that her "prayers melted goiters" (that article also reporting that the deaf heard and lame walked in the meetings she held there).⁵⁶⁸ Whereas many of their predecessors used "healing homes," evangelists like McPherson preferred

always accompanying baptism in the Spirit; see Robeck, "Seymour," 81–89; McGee, "Hermeneutics," 108–10; Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 41; Williams, "Acts," 219 (Seymour); cf. Robeck, *Mission*, 178; Jacobsen, *Thinking in Spirit*, 10; Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 20 (on Abrams). Seymour may have played down the role of tongues rather than denied their inclusion in Spirit baptism (Jacobsen, *Thinking in Spirit*, 78).

560. Dr. Samuel Herrington warned her on Oct. 18, 1909, that her ankle was permanently damaged and that she should not walk on it for five weeks; believing that she had been healed instantly in answer to William Durham's prayers the next evening, she had her cast cut off and walked immediately (Blumhofer, *Sister*, 83; cf. briefly Menzies, *Anointed*, 65). Further on McPherson, see Blumhofer, *Sister*; Pope-Levison, *Pulpit*, 187–203; Ray, "McPherson"; Baer, "Bodies," 295–301; for her paternalistic attitude toward Mexican-Americans (though it was possibly progressive for the era), see Espinosa, "Healing in Borderlands," 136–37 (by all accounts, the later McPherson liked to be in control).

561. Blumhofer, *Sister*, 91–92.

562. See, e.g., *ibid.*, 83, 160–61, 171–74, 213; McGee, *People of Spirit*, 149–50; Oursler, *Power*, 215.

563. "Healing from Side." The boy's mother said that he had been unable to walk since "stricken with infantile paralysis" when he was two years old. One researcher who pored over newspaper coverage of her crusades from 1919–22 notes that the documentation unexpectedly yet overwhelmingly confirms that large numbers of people were healed of serious conditions (Epstein, *Aimee*, 111, 185, as cited in McGee, *Miracles*, 183, 300; cf. Prather, *Miracles*, 92–93).

564. Blumhofer, "McPherson," 266.

565. A noncharismatic missionary whose parents were converted at that meeting, and members of a Pentecostal church founded through that meeting. In addition, the family of a professor of mine came into Pentecostalism through that crusade (noted of Gary McGee in Klaus, "Foreword," xii; McGee notes the crusade in *Miracles*, 182).

566. "Healing Service."

567. "Deaf Rear" [*sic*].

568. Blumhofer, *Sister*, 213.

large-scale crusades.⁵⁶⁹ This approach eventually became the more visible one; most healing revivalists of the 1950s employed large-scale crusades.⁵⁷⁰

Among those mid-century Pentecostal evangelists, often the subject of academic studies today,⁵⁷¹ one who remains widely known today is Oral Roberts, who later became Methodist. Roberts claims that he was healed of nearly hopeless tuberculosis⁵⁷² and claimed many healings in his crusades. One reporter interviewed a number of these healing claims, encountering a number of dramatic stories. Thus, for example, in 1948 Doyle Wills of Greeneville, Tennessee, was dying of tuberculosis; bedridden for twenty-eight months, he was now “hemorrhaging almost constantly,” and doctors had given up hope. Commanded to walk in one of these meetings, he claims that he was instantly healed and strong and that X-rays confirmed his recovery.⁵⁷³ He returned to hard physical labor.⁵⁷⁴ Another man suffering from terminal heart disease was also healed and continued in hard physical activity a decade later.⁵⁷⁵ Even by Roberts’s own estimate, only a minority (about 10 percent) were cured;⁵⁷⁶ he also admits that God is the healer, and he is merely a “point of contact.”⁵⁷⁷ Nevertheless, some of these reports differ from our typical naturalistic expectations.

Mainstream evangelicalism, much of which had once been open to healing, in the early twentieth century reacted against what it perceived as excesses in contemporary healing movements.⁵⁷⁸ Since the 1960s and 1970s, however, many have viewed the earlier reaction as itself excessive. Leonard Sweet points out that a new center seems to be emerging that affirms that God sometimes heals, although he does not always do so.⁵⁷⁹ To many people’s surprise, early Pentecostalism’s interest in religious healing and early studies in the psychology of religion have converged in widespread contemporary scientific interest in religious factors in health.⁵⁸⁰ Full consensus may not be achieved, but we can deny neither that many people believe in healing nor that vast numbers claim to have experienced it.

569. Synan, “Healer,” 201. Creatively adapting publicity styles of the day, from the Salvation Army to Billy Sunday, McPherson was a leading figure in a new style of evangelism, adding faith healing to the existing repertoire (cf. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 148–50).

570. For academic analysis of the healing revivalists, see Harrell, *Possible*, esp. 53–116 (on 1947–58); on a more popular level, Liardon, *Generals*, drawing on interviews as well as written sources; eyewitness reports in Stewart, *Only Believe*, passim; on Branham, whose theology fell far short of the acclaim accorded his healing gift, see, e.g., Kydd, *Healing*, 168–80; for criticisms, e.g., Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 22–26. See also works from directly within the movement like Allen, *Price*; Coe, *Coe*.

571. The seminal and most often cited work is Harrell, *Possible* (1975). For one critique of Roberts, see Oates, “Roberts.”

572. Oursler, *Power*, 187.

573. *Ibid.*, 181.

574. *Ibid.*, 182.

575. *Ibid.*, 182–83.

576. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 58.

577. Oursler, *Power*, 186.

578. Note, e.g., Spurgeon’s critique of cessationism, but later Baptist reaction against Pentecostalism in Barr, Leonard, Parsons, and Weaver, *Acts*, 106–7. Cf. more affirming cases in Baer, “Bodies,” 312–24.

579. Sweet, *Health*, 158.

580. Eames, “History,” 82; see discussion of religion and health in my ch. 13 below.

Conclusion

Not only the Majority World today but also the history of Christianity, including in the West, is replete with supernaturalist claims. The modern Western prejudice against acknowledging or exploring miracle claims rests not on a total lack of evidence for such claims, even in Western history, but on an a priori insistence that they be screened from consideration. Yet such claims belong not only to earlier history or to non-Western cultures; countless examples can be offered today, including in the West.

Supernatural Claims in the Recent West

There is not to be found, in all history, any miracle . . . performed in such a public manner and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable. . . . It forms a strong presumption against all supernatural and miraculous relations, that they are observed chiefly to abound among ignorant and barbarous nations; or if a civilized people has ever given admission to any of them, that people will be found to have received them from ignorant and barbarous ancestors. —David Hume¹

That God does heal in the late twentieth century should be accepted on the evidence of all these Case Records. If you do not accept those two statements, you may ask yourself what evidence you would be prepared to accept. —Dr. Rex Gardner²

Claims regarding supernatural phenomena characterize not only the Majority World and the premodern West but also a significant Christian subculture within the Western world, including in recent decades.³ Writing from a sociological perspective, some four decades ago Peter Berger challenged the views of many religion scholars that the modern world no longer harbors much belief in the supernatural.⁴ Where once some theologians spoke of the death of God, now miracles have become much more fashionable (even among some of the same theologians).⁵ Thus the “lack of contemporary analogies” that some have used to rule out supernaturalism restricts the source of acceptable human experience

1. Hume, *Miracles*, 34, 37; idem, “Miracles,” 34, 36.

2. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 165.

3. For healings in United Kingdom churches, including Anglican and Baptist churches, see Wagner, “World,” 80–82. For one attempt to classify various Eastern and Christian metaphysical approaches to healing in a Western U.S. city, see Hexham, “Religion.”

4. Berger, *Rumor*, 1–34. Cf. Cladis, “Modernity”; Butler, “Theory,” 54, 60–61.

5. Wakefield, *Miracle*, 8, noting Harvard’s Harvey Cox as a chief example. Wakefield also quotes at length Rev. George W. Weber, at one time associate professor at Union Seminary and later president of New York Theological Seminary. Weber grew up in “a liberal, ‘postscientific’ church” with no need of

not simply to the West but, as some scholars have put it, “to the *secular academic subculture within this single culture*.”⁶

Claims Are Now Common

That people make such claims does not by itself compel all interpreters to understand all these claims in a particular manner, but it does make discourteous any simple appeal to an alleged uniformity of human experience that excludes such a large range of humanity’s claimed experiences. Such reports are far more common today than in Hume’s day. Claims of cures by prayer have even become important media stories in recent times, though scholars debate the reasons.

For example, CNN has noted controversial studies about intercessory prayer helping cardiac patients,⁷ that many doctors believe that prayer makes a quantifiable difference in healing (though also noting detractors),⁸ and that “family doctors overwhelmingly believe that religious faith can help patients heal.”⁹ Other media sources have reported a major study by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that revealed that prayer was the most common among complementary or alternative therapies employed by Americans.¹⁰ Television stations have reported that increasing numbers of physicians pray with or would like to pray with their patients;¹¹ *Business Wire* reports that 73 percent of doctors believe that miracles can

miracles; when he began ministering in East Harlem, however, he was confronted with so many accounts of healings that he had to take them seriously (242).

6. Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 75 (emphasis theirs); on 77, noting Walter Wink as a dissenting example within that subculture. Cf. similarly Evans, “Judgment,” 201–2.

7. Catherine Rauch, “Probing the Power of Prayer” (CNN, Jan. 18, 2000), at <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/HEALTH/alternative/01/18/prayer.power.wmd/index/html>; accessed June 22, 2009. Subsequent studies have offered more mixed results; my point here is that the discussion has entered mainstream public culture. Most of the links in this paragraph follow the work of the late Dr. David Larson of the Rockville, Maryland, Center for the Integration of Health and Spirituality (here using <http://healthyinitiatives.com/Larson%20Research.htm>; accessed June 22, 2009).

8. Jeff Levine, “Doctors Explore Use of Prayer to Fight Disease” (CNN, July 13, 1996), at <http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/9607/13/nfm/healing/index/html>; accessed June 22, 2009.

9. Andrew Holtz, “Many Believe Faith Heals” (CNN, Dec. 16, 1996), at <http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/9612/16/faith.healing/index.html>; accessed June 22, 2009. The article cites 99 percent of “doctors in an American Academy of Family Physicians survey” as affirming “an important relationship between the spirit and the flesh” (though this figure does not directly affirm belief in the supernatural dimension, a significant but lower figure in other studies).

10. Susan Scott Schmidt, “Let Us Pray: New Report Finds Prayer Tops the List of Therapies We Use to Heal Ourselves” (July 27, 2004), at <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/04209/352161.stm>; accessed June 22, 2009.

11. “Studies Prove Healing Power of Prayer: More Doctors Praying with Patients” (WESH, Orlando, July 21, 2004), at <http://www.wesh.com/health/3559756/detail/html>; accessed June 22, 2009. Note also the neurosurgeon and other doctors praying for their patients in Bob Faw, “Doctors, Patients, and Prayer,” *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly* (Oct. 23, 2009), accessed at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/october-23-2009/doctors-patients-and-prayer/4724/>; accessed Nov. 5, 2009 (brought to my attention by Diane Vescovi).

happen today,¹² and in the same study that more than half pray for their patients and have seen results that they consider miraculous.¹³

Likewise, a poll concerning pain control produced by *USA Today*, *ABC News*, and Stanford University Medical Center found that more than half of respondents used prayer. According to the poll, of those who used prayer, 90 percent found it effective and 51 percent highly effective. For whatever reasons, the only other therapy with comparable results was prescription drugs (89 percent effective, 51 percent very effective), beating out even rest and massage treatments.¹⁴ Individual cases have also made the news, such as the 2008 report of a sudden disappearance of a child's massive brain tumor after prayer, before any medical treatment could begin.¹⁵ Earlier, *Time* reported a baby with malignant meningioma, a brain tumor that had always proved fatal, being healed through prayer.¹⁶ Moving beyond healing, a *Good Morning America* cohost called the survival of a skydiver, whose parachute failed to open, "miraculous." *ABC News* similarly reported the sudden, inexplicable recovery of a woman from

12. "Science or Miracle? Holiday Season Survey Reveals Physicians' Views of Faith, Prayer, and Miracles" (*Business Wire*, Dec. 20, 2004), at http://www.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsID=20041220005244&newsLang=en; accessed June 22, 2009. Of the eleven hundred physicians polled nationally, only 12 percent claimed to reject biblical descriptions of miracles (37 percent affirmed them as literally true, and 50 percent as metaphorically true); roughly two-thirds viewed the Bible as inspired. The study was conducted by HCD Research (Flemington, N.J.) and the Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies of The Jewish Theological Seminary (New York City).

13. *Ibid.* Most doctors have seen "many cases of unusual results," but their premises will determine whether they view these as miracles, as natural anomalies, or the like (Gorsuch, "Limits," 296); thus the actual number who have seen what most *believers* in miracles would call miracles would be higher than the self-reporting number.

14. Anita Manning, "Prayer Effective as Painkiller?" (*USA Today*, May 9, 2009) at http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2005-05-09-prayer-pain_x.htm; accessed June 22, 2009. Although apparently many persons do not pray for pain reduction, it is estimated that some 88 percent of people in the United States pray (Poloma and Gallup, *Prayer*, ix, 1–2).

15. E.g., Clint Yeatts, "Power of Prayer: Kayla Knight," on KLTV (an ABC affiliate), July 20, 2008, reports (with MRI photos) about an eleven-year-old girl whose brain tumor covered nearly a fourth of her brain. Two days after prayer, and before any treatment could begin, an MRI showed that the tumor was gone, a result confirmed by a subsequent MRI (<http://www.kltv.com/global/story.asp?s=8699200>; accessed Aug. 20, 2008; June 29, 2009). Dr. Nicole Matthews notes that infections can sometimes mimic tumors, but assuming the accuracy of the report, this sounds like a genuine miracle (personal correspondence, July 7, 2009). As one anthropologist notes, however, while such events are probably fairly common, they rarely garner media coverage or the attention of social scientists (Wilson, "Seeing," 207).

16. Gibbs, "Miracles," esp. 67–68, 70, 72. An Episcopal priest led in prayer and anointing shortly before the surgery (70); after an unusual, sudden reduction in the baby's fluid, surgeons went to remove the rest of the tumor (the part not removed a month earlier for biopsy) and could find no trace of cancer even in the supposedly cancerous tissue (72). The neutral medical label is "spontaneous remission," but few would fault the family or others for calling it a miracle. Elizabeth Jernigan, cured as a baby, was nearly thirteen at the time of the *Time* article (73). The article reports various other events that could be construed miraculously, including a slightly skeptical Episcopal mechanical engineer who noted that he had survived 600 amps of 575 volts—far more than a thousand times enough current to have killed him (66).

six years of coma, noting the family's view that this was a miracle.¹⁷ Reports continue to appear.¹⁸

Not everyone would explain all these results supernaturally, but that is the usual explanation of the people praying, and for many cases, of most observers. As was noted in an earlier chapter, supernatural beliefs are more mainstream in popular U.S. culture than antisupernaturalism is.¹⁹ This acceptability does not make the beliefs correct (a smaller but significant number of people in the United States who believe in divine activity also believe in ghosts and alien conspiracies, for example²⁰), but it does warn against the facile assumption that modern Western culture, including all scientists or doctors, take antisupernaturalism for granted. Contrary to some earlier predictions, modernity does not inevitably lead to anti-supernatural assumptions. Given the most common users of NT scholarship,²¹ NT scholars who take antisupernaturalism for granted to appeal to accepted sentiments may actually exclude the real views of most of their audience from consideration on these matters.

In this chapter, I offer merely a sample of recent Western miracle claims. Although surveys show that such claims are more abundant in the Majority World, I have more examples from the West by virtue of my current geographic location. Again, in recounting the claims of recoveries in this chapter, I am not yet trying to explain them; different claims may invite different explanations, just as geological specimens that we lump together as rocks invite different explanations (e.g., the different formation histories of sedimentary and igneous rocks). Many of the recoveries recounted in this chapter could have alternative natural explanations, though such explanations seem more hard-pressed in other cases. (I reserve a number of the more dramatic and hard-to-explain cases for ch. 12, which addresses specific categories of healings, recounting claimed cures of blindness, resuscitations, and so forth.) At this point I am merely emphasizing that such claims are widespread, though I have tried to include a number of stronger ones among those listed. It

17. Pullum, "Believe," 135, citing Robin Roberts on *Good Morning America* (WWAY, Wilmington, N.C.; March 3, 2007); *ABC News* (WWAY; March 7, 2007).

18. Cf. accounts about Chauncey Crandall (reported by a Miami television station and others) and Marty Alvey (reported by Amy Troy and others) in ch. 12.

19. See "Landscape Survey," 11; Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 4, 23–24; Koenig, *Medicine*, 55; Wuthnow, *Heaven*, 122; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:11, 520–21.

20. In the 1970s, Greeley noted that nearly one-fifth of the U.S. population reported experiencing the paranormal frequently, without any pathology (Greeley, *Sociology*, 7; noted also in McClenon, *Events*, 20). He defines "paranormal" in such a way as to exclude miracle claims (Greeley, *Sociology*, 8); even on such a narrow reading, he notes only those who report the experience frequently, though one suspects that those engaged in some familiar mystical practices like prayer may have also responded affirmatively. On reported experiences of haunting, see, e.g., McClenon, *Events*, xiii, 57–74; media coverage apparently increased belief in poltergeists (to 25 percent; see 57). In the United States in general, those with no religion are more disposed to affirm "nonreligious paranormal phenomena," and such beliefs are highest in regions where church attendance is lowest (21; cf. Greeley, *Sociology*, 15). "Occult beliefs" flourish in France, once the heart of the radical Enlightenment (Chapak and Broch, *Debunked*, 116–18).

21. As many scholars have noted, whether we like it or not, most of our audience is religiously motivated; see Mitchell, "Family Matters," 346; Meeks, "Why Study?" 167; Agosto, "Publics."

is also helpful to recognize that some of the healings were public, against Hume's eighteenth-century skepticism that reported miracles ever occur in public.²²

Most important for historical purposes, I again underline the main point that people can believe that they have recovered supernaturally (hence that such claims can occur on or near the level of eyewitnesses), often almost immediately. Thus scholarship that fails to reckon with such a construction of reality works in academic isolation from social reality. For example, even those who suspect that many claims of healing evangelists proved successful for psychological reasons recognize that "no one will deny that some are healed."²³ This chapter simply illustrates the abundance and diversity of claims with a number of concrete examples.

Samples of Individual Healing Reports

Scientists, doctors, journalists, and others offer healing reports; in some circles, such as among Pentecostals, they are common enough that a significant number of randomly chosen individuals would know of cases in their immediate circle. I also know of a number of healing claims in my own immediate circle. Again, what I offer at this point is merely a sample of what could be offered. As noted earlier, many examples can be explained in more than one way; I have tried to represent the diversity of claims by including here some more ordinary claims as well as some more dramatic ones (others of which appear in ch. 12). One should keep in mind my earlier explanation of the ways that I use examples for the argument of this book, especially in chapter 7; I defer most discussion of explanations until chapters 13–15.

To introduce the subject, I turn first to one narrative attested by another academician I know, which I will recount at somewhat fuller length than many others.

One Modern Healing Narrative

From Galen Hertweck, a seminary professor in the Philippines, I heard about an earlier story with which he had firsthand acquaintance when he was a pastor in the United States some years earlier. On my request, Galen put me in contact with the member of that congregation whose story he had witnessed,²⁴ Ed Wilkinson. I quickly learned that Ed is not given to uninformed credulity; reflecting his training in neuropsychology, he complains about those who want faith to cure everything,

22. Hume's emphasis on this point reflects earlier discussion; seventeenth-century theologians often emphasized the public character of miracles (Daston, "Facts," 113). This insistence stemmed from Protestant polemic against "sacramental miracles" (114–15) but was taken over by deists like Toland (116).

23. Scherzer, *Healing*, 215; cf. Emery, "Cured," 17, who appears to view them *all* as psychological rather than organic. Some people who are skeptical of supernatural factors nevertheless recognize value in these psychological ones (West, *Miracles*, 11, 103).

24. Galen Hertweck, interview, Jan. 26, 2009. His recollection was the same as the account that Ed Wilkinson subsequently gave me, except in less detail.

using it as a neurosis to avoid dealing with reality.²⁵ Many years ago, however, his family faced a crisis in November 1984, when his eight-year-old son Brad was found to have atrial septal defect, with two holes in his heart. The condition impaired his lungs in addition to his heart. To allow time to convalesce without interrupting school, the visiting pediatric cardiologist scheduled surgery for June, warning that Brad could not play sports anymore in the meantime.

The months of waiting proved stressful. As June approached, Brad began giving away his toys, not expecting to survive. One day he asked his father, "Am I going to die?" Ed answered his son honestly: not everyone facing heart surgery dies, but during heart surgery that is always a possibility. "Can Jesus heal me?" the eight-year-old asked. Aware of how often faith had been abused, the father cringed. "I'll get back to you on that," he responded. A few days later, after some anguished prayer and engagement with Phil 4:13, he shared his resolution with his son. God does heal, but whether he would heal in Brad's case or not, they still had hope of eternal life in Jesus.

Galen, the pastor, informed Ed that someone was planning to conduct a healing service in their church in June. Ed felt that this was their only hope apart from the surgery that was scheduled the Sunday following the service. When the anticipated service concluded, however, the visiting minister, Wesley Steelberg Jr.,²⁶ initially was focusing primarily on praying for emotional healing, and Ed felt cheated. But then Steelberg called for those wanting prayer for physical healing, and Ed urged Brad to go forward. At first reluctant, Brad finally complied, explaining to this visiting minister what was wrong.²⁷ "Do you believe that Jesus can heal you?" Steelberg asked. Brad answered affirmatively, and Steelberg offered a simple prayer.

The following Sunday, the family traveled to the university hospital in Columbia, Missouri, for further tests; the tests merely confirmed that nothing had changed. The following morning, as Brad was taken for surgery, the doctor explained that Ed could follow Brad only as far as the yellow tape, and the team would be operating on Brad for four to six hours. At this point any hope of a miraculous healing had faded, so the family could only pray for surgical success.²⁸ Ed returned anxiously to the waiting area. After about an hour, the pediatric cardiac surgeon, the pulmonologist, and the risk management director for the hospital entered the waiting

25. Ed Wilkinson, phone interview, Feb. 22, 2009; with confirmation of some details in personal correspondence, March 11; April 3, 2009. Naturally Brad remembers fewer details, but he also shared with me the elements that he recalls (Brad Wilkinson, personal correspondence, May 17, 2009).

26. Steelberg's own background may be significant for his interest in healing: he "had been healed of a critical heart condition and was given just hours to live" before being healed (Galen Hertweck, personal correspondence, May 17, 2009); his daughter confirms that he was healed (Candace Fisk, personal correspondence, May 20, 2009; see further discussion below). Likewise, Steelberg's father, Wesley Steelberg Sr., had been healed around age eight from "a debilitating condition due to brain fever and spinal meningitis" (Olena, *Horton*, 69–70).

27. One of Brad's clearest memories is his fear of going "down front and being prayed for" (Brad Wilkinson, personal correspondence, May 17, 2009).

28. Brad recounts that this was "the first time I can recall when I just had to trust God and let go," because there was nothing he could do (*ibid.*).

area and summoned Ed to accompany them. The surgery should have taken at least three more hours, so Ed was anxious. Because the surgery was obviously no longer occurring, Ed, his mind racing, could only fear the worst as he followed them obediently down a long corridor.

Ushering Ed into a room, they displayed films posted on the wall, taken the day before. "You see where the blood was leaking from one chamber to the next," the surgeon explained. Then the surgeon showed the film they had just taken as they were starting surgery, with a wall of some sort where the leak had been. Too anxious and traumatized to process immediately what the surgeon was saying, Ed finally interrupted. "What happened to my son?" "Brad is in the recovery room," the surgeon answered calmly. "I beg your pardon?" Ed demanded.

The surgeon explained that there was nothing wrong with Brad's heart—even though the holes were clearly there the day before. His lungs were also now normal. "I have not seen this very often," the surgeon explained. While this sort of spontaneous closure could happen in infants, it was not supposed to happen in an eight-year-old. "You can count this as a miracle." The pulmonologist added, "Somebody somewhere must have been praying." The hospital risk manager added firmly, "You can see from the films: this was *not* a misdiagnosis."²⁹

Because they had done a cardiac catheterization, Brad would have to be kept overnight, but he was free to return home the next day, on Tuesday. Ed asked when Brad could start playing sports again. "When is his next game scheduled?" the surgeon inquired. "Thursday," Ed responded numbly. The doctor assured him that Brad could play on Thursday. That Thursday, as they arrived late for the baseball game, Brad's friend Paul spotted him. Knowing that Brad was supposed to be convalescing, but having prayed for him, he shouted, "Did God heal you?" "Yeah!" Brad shouted back, thrusting his fist into the air. Brad hurried to second base, where he soon caught a ball and tagged out the runner who had been on first base in a double play. A parent for the rival team complained about the catch, "*That* was a miracle." "You have no idea," Ed recalls muttering.

An agent from the insurance company later complained about the forms he received. "What is a 'spontaneous closure'?" he demanded. "A miracle," Ed tried to explain. Brad is now in his early thirties with a business and children of his own, and he has never had any heart problems since his healing. Although before his healing experience he had also had pulmonary hypertension, normally supposed to be irreversible, that problem was cured at the same time as his heart. Ed himself went through surgery for an unrelated issue last year and is well aware that miraculous healings do not always happen. He will never doubt, however, that at a time when he had virtually surrendered hope, God did a miracle for his eight-year-old son.

29. Anderson, *Miracles*, 96, notes another case of a hole in a child's heart being healed, and that such recoveries when purely natural are rare and take years; another case appears in Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 30.

Scientists, Journalists, and Doctors

John Polkinghorne, the scientist-theologian noted in chapter 5, reports a woman whose left leg was paralyzed from an injury. Her doctors had given up trying to do more for her, indicating that she would remain an invalid for life. In 1980, she reluctantly and without any positive expectation agreed to meet with a priest conducting a healing meeting. On their second meeting, she had a mystical vision in which she was commanded to arise and walk. "From that moment she was able to walk, jump and bend down, completely without pain. Her husband, an orthopaedic charge nurse, on examining his wife, found that a large ulcer, which he had been dressing, had also healed spontaneously." Polkinghorne concludes that one may think what one will, but the account "cannot simply be dismissed on a priori grounds as not having possibly happened."³⁰

Others have collected further claims, and some have investigated them. As in Jamie Buckingham's supportive follow-up of claims involving one ministry (see below), some popular authors have investigated some of the claims available to them. For example, one investigative reporter for the *Erie Daily Times* recounts that he did follow up on and confirm numerous reports of healings, as well as debunking some others. Some of the confirmed cases were instant and dramatic answers to prayer, and some involved cures never attested as occurring apart from claims of miraculous intervention.³¹ Some other investigators seem to have gone further.³²

Rex Gardner, a physician,³³ records numerous healings verified by eyewitnesses, some with medical documentation. For example, a member of a Lutheran order of sisters was supposed to need traction for many weeks but rose immediately after prayer, though some secondary elements of her recovery took two weeks.³⁴ A young medical trainee in North Wales was dying of meningitis in the hospital, but those praying for her felt that she would recover, against medical opinion. X-ray films of her chest initially revealed "extensive left-sided pneumonia with collapse of the middle lobe." Two days later, however, new X-rays showed "a normal chest." Because of scarring on her eye, the ophthalmologist assured her that she would

30. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 55 (citing *The Quarterly Review of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Study* 125 [1985]: 19).

31. See at length, Grazier, *Power Beyond* (e.g., rejuvenated bones, documented at the University of Louvain, 125–26; and another case, noting before-and-after X-rays, 127). Notable is the story of the obviously non-psychosomatic healing of a baby from fibrous dysplasia, including the rapid generation of bone (95–97).

32. See below Spraggett, *Kuhlman*; Casdorff, *Miracles*, though both are clearly supportive presentations; Prather, *Miracles*, 88–103 (which I discovered belatedly). Without elaborating full details, charismatic mainline pastor Harald Bredesen (*Miracle*, 35) recounts that one London reporter was convinced that a particular healing minister was a fraud until his accompanying photographer was instantly healed (after which the minister got front-page coverage in the local paper).

33. The book's back cover identifies him as "a Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and of the Association of Surgeons in East Africa. He has served as Examiner to the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, as Vice-President of the North of England Obstetric and Gynaecological Society, and as President of the Newcastle and Northern Counties Medical Society."

34. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 77 (noting many eyewitnesses); also in idem, "Miracles," 1931.

have “permanent blindness in that eye,” despite her confidence that she would be healed. Clearly some patients who insist they will recover are in denial, but such was not the case here. Her eye recovered completely, for which the ophthalmologist could offer no explanation. “The four consultants who saw her on admission to hospital remain confident of their initial diagnosis. She is shown at post-graduate medical meetings as ‘The one that got away.’”³⁵

He cites the healing of a cardiac invalid³⁶ and other examples. In one of his other examples, a doctor examined a Baptist woman’s ulcer that was daily exuding pus and concluded that even if it should heal, skin grafting would be necessary. The morning after prayer, nearly the entire ulcer disappeared; a week later, during another prayer, the skin was completely healed. Gardner notes that he was one of the examining physicians and had also inquired of the witnesses.³⁷

In another case, a nine-year-old girl, deaf without her hearing aid but praying for healing, was instantly healed,³⁸ to the audiologist’s amazement. The dumbfounded consultant responded, “I don’t believe you. It is not possible.” But the next day, the tests revealed that her hearing was normal.³⁹ The doctor’s report admitted, “*Her hearing returned completely to normal . . . I was completely unable to explain this phenomenon . . . I can think of no rational explanation as to why her hearing returned to normal, there being a severe bilateral sensorineural loss.*”⁴⁰ Even in the large world population such events are fairly rare.⁴¹ After reporting various other case studies, Gardner openly challenges antisupernaturalist presuppositions:

That God does heal in the late twentieth century should be accepted on the evidence of all these Case Records. If you do not accept those two statements, you may ask yourself what evidence you would be prepared to accept. If the answer proves to be “None,” then you had better face the fact that you have abandoned logical enquiry.⁴²

In chapters 13–15, I will examine proposed explanations sometimes offered for such phenomena, but these reports are at the least extranormal, and many of the particular cases that Gardner cites should undercut the readiness of Hume’s followers to simply assume a “uniform” human experience against miracles.

35. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 20–21; idem, “Miracles,” 1929.

36. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 104–6 (partly through prayer, partly at Lourdes).

37. Idem, “Miracles,” 1932.

38. The instant character of the healing was clear because she had been tested for a new hearing aid the previous day (March 8, 1983) and had been deaf (idem, *Healing Miracles*, 202–3).

39. Ibid., 204. Gardner claims that he checked the medical report and found it meticulously accurate.

40. Ibid., 205 (emphasis Gardner’s).

41. May, “Miracles,” 150–51, while acknowledging that they are rare, notes six cases of such “spontaneous remission,” but five are from one doctor who focused on collecting such incidents, and none of these claims indicate the circumstances, such as whether they were instant; the degree of impairment, cure, and evidence; or (and the answer to this question may not have been known or knowable to the doctor) whether they involved prayer. The question is not just whether incidents have occurred, but why; sudden and spontaneous reversal of human nerve damage defies current expectations of how the body functions.

42. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 165.

Gardner is by no means the only physician offering such testimonies. For example, an Anglican priest in England notes a woman who testified that she had been instantly healed of what was to be terminal cancer, and her doctor was present to confirm the same based on her medical records.⁴³ Another doctor notes a patient immediately cured from metastasized breast cancer after prayer,⁴⁴ another person cured of metastasized melanoma (spread to the liver) after prayer,⁴⁵ and other examples.⁴⁶

Another medical doctor, John White, attests that a woman with a confirmed diagnosis of tuberculosis of the cervical spine, unable to stand, was healed after prayer; her doctor, who had been trying to secure her a place in the sanatorium, “was bewildered to find there was no evidence of disease in her body.” Her illness was certain, her cure permanent, and the witness virtually incontrovertible. White could attest this incident and its permanence because he was not only the person who prayed for her, and an MD himself, but he later married this woman and spent the rest of his life with her.⁴⁷ I offer some further medical claims in chapters 14–15. Including nurses could expand claims further; thus, one oncology nurse who began praying for her patients in 1984 “noted immediate results.” In one case, she prayed for a young woman with deadly cancer in her heart lining; the next day the new pathology report shockingly revealed no trace of cancer.⁴⁸

Pentecostals and Other Churches

Pentecostals have long offered healing claims, both in the West and elsewhere in the world,⁴⁹ where their numbers are often dramatically higher. For example, a Jamaican Church of God in Brooklyn reported many healings, including a young

43. Lawrence, *Practice*, 32.

44. Reed, *Surgery*, 52–53. A breast had already been removed, but evidence indicated that the cancer had spread to the right lung and elsewhere; the morning after prayer X-rays showed no cancer, a verdict confirmed by subsequent testing. Without ruling out other factors, Reed thinks “faith and prayer” critical. The patient was Jewish but allowed Reed, a Christian, to offer a Christian prayer. Cf. *Family Medical Guide*, 16: “Once a cancer has metastasized (spread) it is usually incurable.” Salmon, *Heals*, 38, reports the healing of breast cancer, preventing a breast’s removal. Koch, *Zulus*, 182, reports “metastasis” healed, but in connection with radium treatment.

45. Reed, *Surgery*, 35.

46. *Ibid.*, 43–48, a woman healed, at least as of the time of writing, from terminal metastasized cancer, with no trace of it in her body.

47. White, “Lady,” 72–73. She recounts the same story in White, “Regrets,” 177. For other reported healings of tuberculosis, see Synan, *Voices*, 26; Miller, *Miracle*, 90–91 (a case of tuberculosis of the bowels deemed incurable by doctors, suddenly and permanently healed through faith); Salmon, *Heals*, 97–98, 100, 101; Lederer, “Healing” (dramatic, but the report is soon after the cure); Catherine Marshall in Witty, *Healing*, 21–23; a testimony of Smith Wigglesworth, claiming medical verification, in *Confidence* 125 (April–June 1921): 23; Fant, *Miracles*, 72–76 (Marie Bean, five years before the report); Yeomans, *Healing*, 60, 69; Huyssen, *Saw*, 136; clearly verified, long-term healings from tuberculosis in Warner, “Still Healed”; *idem*, “Living by Faith,” 3; a claim in Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 138 (claiming medical verification).

48. Johnson and Butzen, “Prayer,” 255 (citing an article by C. Dubois).

49. Outside the West, see discussion in chs. 7–9. In the West, see, e.g., reports cited in Poloma, *Assemblies*, 55–57.

man who was told he would need either dialysis or a kidney transplant; after being healed, the pastor reported, he needed neither one.⁵⁰ For nearly a century, the *Pentecostal Evangel* regularly reported healing claims, in later years typically certified by eyewitnesses and sometimes physicians, and in recent years published only after three years to be certain the healing remains permanent. In addition to less dramatic cures, these healings include chronic conditions such as blindness, paralysis, and even death.⁵¹ Sociologist Margaret Poloma, having surveyed more than one hundred healing claims from the *Pentecostal Evangel* in 1984 alone, notes that the reports “ranged from a damaged sciatic nerve to cancer cures, from ‘total insanity’ to healed ulcers, from back problems to double vision.”⁵²

Paul Alexander, at the time of his book’s publication a professor of theology at Azusa Pacific University, recounts how a random discussion in his extended family of Pentecostals produced memories of how most members had been healed at one time or another. He used this scene to illustrate that such experiences are common in many Pentecostal circles. Their stories included incidents such as a bone spur on a knee disappearing, a potentially fatal spider bite with its swelling being healed immediately, appendicitis being healed immediately, and immediately visible external cures.⁵³ Again, to my knowledge, no attempt has been made to catalog thousands of healing claims in a single published source.⁵⁴ The majority of claims, in fact, are never published at all (almost none of the large number I have received orally have been published), and fewer still have been medically researched (many occur in places where even full access to medicine is limited). I hope that doctoral students in relevant fields will infer here a hint for further research.⁵⁵

50. Michel, *Telling*, 77 (citing Polen, “Church,” 27). Writers sometimes comment on Jamaican Pentecostals’ transnational links (e.g., Austin-Broos, “Pentecostalism,” *passim*).

51. Claims from one three-year span include, among many others, healing from meningitis and raising from a wheelchair after years of confinement (Jan. 13, 1985): 19; instantaneous healing from advancing muscular dystrophy (Aug. 11, 1985): 12–13; complete healing of a largely blinded eye (June 8, 1986); raising a child from a wheelchair who had been confined in it for two years (Oct. 19, 1986): 25; full restoration of a child 90 percent brain-dead (May 24, 1987): 13; in an Assemblies of God missions magazine *Mountain Movers*, e.g., the complete healing of the author’s drowned baby, now a healthy adult, Carpenter, “Death” (I also knew this witness); for another person restored after nine hours underwater, Harris, *Acts Today*, 98–99.

52. Poloma, *Assemblies*, 57.

53. Alexander, *Signs*, 1–5. Pentecostal scholar Robert Menzies notes (“Sending,” 90–91) that his experience of miracles and close relationship with others who have experienced them do not leave disbelief in them an option for him.

54. Nevertheless, cataloging many of them would be a fruitful field for research, especially for dissertations in church history. The official Assemblies of God archives website (www.iFPHC.org) affords access to more than two hundred thousand pages of Pentecostal periodicals; a search for the word *healing* generated 7,309 sources (information courtesy of Darrin Rodgers), though not all of these involve examples.

55. I should warn such researchers, however, that whether the issue is healings or anything else, ordinary people often prove extraordinarily difficult to track down for interviews and follow-up. I cannot complain; I recall a psychological researcher on “forgiveness” who contacted me and asked for an interview. I did have valuable stories, but between being busy and being unsure of his research angle, I did not get back to him. Randi, *Faith Healers*, sometimes makes too much of persons not answering his queries (e.g., 28, 258, 264); many presumably (rightly) suspected his antagonism (as in Randi, *Faith Healers*, 259, 311),

While such claims flourish among Pentecostals, one must again note that such claims are not by any means restricted to them. A retired Southern Baptist pastor and seminary chancellor noted that he found that most pastors he talked with, few of whom would have called themselves charismatic or Pentecostal, had an account of a healing of some sort.⁵⁶ Likewise, in 1974, a report from the panel for doctrine for the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland indicated that they had concluded that divine healing does occur.⁵⁷

Moreover, roughly six decades ago, the National Council of Churches in the United States surveyed pastors regarding divine healing and discovered that 160 of them—more than one-third of those who responded—had prayed for healing. Of these a majority reported cases of divine healings, with some others failing to do so because they thought that only “spectacular” healings counted for the survey. The pastors came from various denominations, especially Methodists, then Episcopalians, Lutherans, Baptists, Disciples of Christ, and so forth.⁵⁸ One would not expect reports to be fewer today than in this report from mainline churches in 1950.⁵⁹

The answers given by many pastors to that survey provide numerous examples of claims of cures, the most common class of illnesses mentioned being cancer.⁶⁰ The roughly eighteen medically diagnosed cancers noted include cancers of lungs (three cases), spine (two cases), bone, and other organs, many of them declared incurably terminal by the doctors.⁶¹ Thus one Baptist pastor in Toledo reported a woman whose doctor gave her no hope of recovery from her cancer; after prayer she recovered and had remained in health during the intervening four years before the survey.⁶² Another patient had been living with diagnosed lung cancer for two years; after prayer with laying on of hands, X-rays revealed “that the condition

which reduces the incentive for cooperation. But as in failures to respond to my queries, I suspect that many others were simply too busy or had not bothered to acquire or preserve the corroboratory evidence I sought, as people who are not writing books or articles on the subject normally do not.

56. Witty, *Healing*, 206. With necessary qualifications, conservative Southern Baptist leader Adrian Rogers also recognized that God sometimes heals dramatically today (Rogers, *Miracles*, 18, as cited in McGee, *Miracles*, 202).

57. Gardner, “Miracles,” 1929, citing “Church of Scotland Report,” 167–85. In Scotland, note also the healing ministry of the now-ecumenical Iona Community (Maddocks, *Ministry*, 110).

58. Braden, “Study,” 225–31 (on 230–31 citing 65 percent of Episcopalian respondents; 39 percent of Presbyterian respondents; 33 percent of Lutheran respondents; and so forth); Oursler, *Power*, 129–32; Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 66–67. A high proportion of those who received the survey responded (Oursler, *Power*, 131); follow-up demonstrated that many of those who did not respond also had reports of healings in answer to prayers but had thought that only “extraordinary” healings qualified for the report (Oursler, *Power*, 131–32). The vast majority of cures remained permanent as of the time of the report (Braden, “Study,” 231).

59. For the charismatic renewal in the mainline denominations, see Synan, “Renewal”; idem, “Charismatics”; little of this movement was evident in the United States before 1960, however.

60. Oursler, *Power*, 135.

61. Braden, “Study,” 227; on the majority (83 of 124, more than two-thirds) of the healing cases reported being deemed medically hopeless, see 232.

62. Oursler, *Power*, 133–34.

had cleared.”⁶³ In another case, bone cancer was medically diagnosed as having spread to the woman’s “skull, ribs, hip and leg bones” and considered incurable; a midwestern Mission Covenant pastor reported that the cancer was “completely arrested and permanently cured.”⁶⁴

Likewise, a midwestern Methodist minister noted that several doctors gave a lung cancer patient only a week to live. The pastor prayed with her, and she forgave a person against whom she held bitterness; the next day, the pastor declared, “the lungs were clear of cancer and after two years the woman was still well.”⁶⁵ Presumably most of the patients mentioned did receive the medical treatment available in their era, but we should still keep in mind that cancer treatments half a century ago were on average much less effective than comparable treatments today. The most common cures mentioned after cancer were fifteen cures of heart trouble; five of paralysis; and an assortment of other conditions that include pneumonia, severe burns, crushed bones, brain hemorrhage, and so forth.⁶⁶ Moreover, these reports are not anonymous, nor are they enthusiastic, spontaneous claims offered in healing meetings; these are signed, written statements from a range of mainline pastors.⁶⁷

Examples from Interviews in My Circle

Various friends have shared with me examples from their lives or ministries, and I include some of these here. In 2006, I interviewed Dr. Douglass Norwood; during the time of most of the testimonies he recounted, he was a Moravian pastor. He mentioned several dramatic healings but explained two in the greatest detail. The first case, which took place in Suriname, I have recounted earlier. The other case, more relevant for this chapter, involved his wife, Sarah. Her neck was broken and her spinal cord severed in a car crash on December 14, 1982; she remained paralyzed at the Rusk Institute for six months. Despite the medical impossibility of her walking with a severed spinal cord, she began walking within twenty-four hours after being “anointed with oil,” leading to a number of conversions among the hospital staff.⁶⁸ Doug notes that the healing is only 90 percent complete, though

63. Ibid., 135. It had not recurred as of the time of the report, although in this case that was just half a year after the healing. The present quotation and several of those following are Oursler’s quotes of Professor Charles A. Braden of Northwestern University, who drew up the survey’s report (130). Braden notes a woman dying of lung cancer with an expected one week to live; after a Methodist minister prayed for her and she forgave an enemy, her lungs were clear of cancer (“Study,” 227–28, reporting two years later).

64. Oursler, *Power*, 135.

65. Ibid.

66. Braden, “Study,” 227–29. He notes (230) that only about 12.5 percent could be described as purely mental cures.

67. Oursler, *Power*, 135–36.

68. Interview, June 6, 2006. At Lourdes, the functionality of an organ that is medically impossible, such as seeing through eyes the optic nerves of which remain atrophied, appears as a special miracle (Cranston, *Miracle*, 136). McCallie, *Trophy*, 12–13, reports that her neck was broken in two places in a car accident, an injury the doctor expected to be fatal, but (21–22; cf. 24) after prayer (an unspecified amount of time later) X-rays (unfortunately not duplicated in the book) showed her neck healed and she returned home.

it is a medical miracle; she walks with considerable effort and requires medicines, but that she walks at all still astonishes those who examine her.⁶⁹

My long-term, close friend Melesse Woldetsadik, a minister from Ethiopia, shared with me accounts of healings in the United States, including the healing of a physician and his wife for whom he prayed on the same night.⁷⁰ Melesse referred me to the physician in question. Whereas most cured people do not retain or even know how to obtain medical records, this man, being a physician, did so, and provided me extensive copies detailing his test results. (I leave him unnamed here at his request, to protect his privacy and that of his medical colleagues whose names appear on the records, but this information is in my possession.⁷¹) The physician shared that he initially experienced a chest pain from an infection, which seemed to start recovering until he began coughing up blood. He approached a colleague who was a pulmonologist, who found not only an infection but also a suspicious lesion on the CT scan; a second CT scan confirmed this mass. It was this lesion rather than the infection that concerned his pulmonologist friend; although only a biopsy could determine whether the mass was cancerous, they expected it to be malignant based on their usual experience with lung lesions.⁷²

After prayer with Melesse and some others, the physician went for the biopsy; his colleague who did the biopsy could not locate any tumor and therefore biopsied tissue where the tumor was supposed to be. The biopsy indicated not only no cancer, but no tumor at all. Another CT scan confirmed this result; a full-body PET scan intended to see if any cancer had spread also came back negative. The physician observed in conversation with me that he believed that he had been miraculously healed. He noted that in his own practice, any patient with the same initial results he found had faced one of two prospects: either the person had to have a lung (or part of a lung) removed, plus radiation therapy, if the diagnosis came early; or the patient died. In subsequent conversation, he allowed that plenty

On 22–23, despite being told that she would need to wear a brace for three years, she wore it only in the car and not at all after a few weeks.

69. In an interview on Jan. 14, 2009, in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, Doug updated me in some detail on another answer to prayer regarding her complications. The medical records given to me on May 22, 2009, however (after much effort on their parts to acquire them), did not adequately resolve the matter in question; what may have been the most relevant record remained inaccessible to us.

70. Melesse Woldetsadik, follow-up phone interview, Feb. 23, 2009.

71. Phone interviews with the physician, Dec. 17, 2008; March 27, 2009; I received twenty-five pages of copies of test results, spanning July to Nov. 2006, on Feb. 13, 2009. In our first discussion, he noted, “To me, that was quite a miraculous healing.” We discussed possible alternative explanations in the second conversation, but they seemed rather forced in view of the hard data and the observations of those accustomed to making these diagnoses. These alternatives did not seem very plausible even if one ruled out supernatural causation and remained agnostic regarding the cause of recovery (citing merely “anomalies,” as noted above in the text).

72. May, “Miracles,” 152, is skeptical of any clear miracle in a case of a doctor whose bone lesion gradually decreased, where the lesion was presumed based on scans; even if her prayers had been answered, Mays would not classify it as a miracle. The present case is stronger in that it is instantaneous, but it unfortunately lacked pre-healing biopsy confirmation. For more doctors and those close to them reporting experiences that they construed as miraculous cures, see examples in Duffin, *Miracles*, 122–23.

of unexplained anomalies happen in medicine; a doctor (or writer) could thus be hard-pressed to pronounce any given anomaly *certainly* miraculous. But neither he nor the pulmonologist regarded this case as medically normal, since such masses, even when benign, do not usually simply disappear. By contrast, this unexpected recovery does fit a larger pattern of healings when Melesse prays, and in the circles in which he moves.⁷³

An American Baptist pastor in Michigan who has long been an adjunct professor in Palmer Seminary's DMin program, Dr. John Piippo, shared with me several reports from his church, including one of an instant and complete healing of a visitor to his church (before the healing, a non-Christian).⁷⁴ He further referred me to another person from his church who claimed to have been healed, Carl Cocherell. In March 2006, after a spiritual retreat in Branson, Missouri, Carl was checking the oil in his car when he stepped down and felt a sharp crack. Although he was a Vietnam veteran, he says that he had never felt such pain, and he fainted. X-rays at the emergency room in the Branson hospital revealed such a serious break of the ankle that after setting the break the orthopedist ordered him to stay overnight. During that night, though, Carl recounts that he experienced a voice from the Lord assuring him that his foot was not broken. After putting Carl's foot in a cast and warning that he would need months of therapy, the doctor referred him to his family physician.

Carl's wife drove them back to Michigan, and the next day his family doctor sent him to the hospital for some more X-rays. After receiving the X-rays, his doctor called him into the office and explained that there were no breaks, or even tissue indicating where the break had been. "You never had a broken ankle," the doctor explained. Carl pointed out the X-rays from Missouri. "*That is a broken ankle,*" the doctor admitted. But now there was no sign that he had even had one, so the doctor removed the cast right away. Apart from the ankle being blue for a couple of days, Carl had no problem with it. At church that Sunday, where he used no crutches or other support, he testified how God healed him. Carl provided me with the radiology reports from before and after the healing supporting his claim.⁷⁵

Danny McCain, founder of the International Institute for Christian Studies and a friend with whom I worked for three summers in Nigeria, shared with me a healing he witnessed when he was eleven or twelve years old. His younger brother, then about fifteen months old, was so badly scalded by hot water that pieces of his skin came off with his shirt. The hospital staff said they could do little to help him, and

73. I have provided here only one sample, but there are others. Compare also the stories associated with Pastor Dawit in ch. 9, including one shared with me by Melesse's brother with medical documentation.

74. He noted the contrast between X-rays taken before and after the healing. He reaffirmed these reports in personal correspondence (March 17, 2009), though I have not seen the X-rays personally.

75. Carl Cocherell, phone interview, May 2, 2009, also noting other healings he has received. Because two different locations were involved, it took some time to obtain the medical documentation, which reached me on June 17, 2009. John Piippo (personal correspondence, June 15 and 18, 2009), also supports Carl's account and emphasizes that Carl had been a runner, making the health of his feet particularly important to him.

the boy cried through the night. In the morning, visitors from their church prayed with Danny's mother, and after a period of intense prayer the mother, noticing the child "playing on the floor," discovered that he lacked even burn marks. Danny was sitting about three feet away, and can "personally remember seeing the pink new skin" where serious burns had been a few minutes earlier.⁷⁶

Bill Heth, a professor at Taylor University and formerly a cessationist, noted that various healings have occurred on their campus. In particular, he provided me the story of one of his students, Joy Wahnefried, who was miraculously healed of a lifelong condition of debilitating migraines and light sensitivity.⁷⁷ Before her healing, her migraines were sometimes so severe that she could not read and could barely listen to others or even think; she would spend time isolated in darkness. These severe attacks came at least once a week but were often more frequent or longer.⁷⁸ The condition was diagnosed as vertical heterophoria, although other triggers could also set off migraine attacks, which often lasted five to seven days.⁷⁹ (In vertical hyperphoria, one eye views images at a higher level than the other, so the brain cannot process the uneven images without great stress.⁸⁰) Although an excellent student, she regularly had to miss classes due to these migraine attacks; two weeks before the healing, her physician had warned that they could provide nothing further for her pain, and sixteen times in four years doctors had changed her glasses prescription due to light sensitivity causing migraines.⁸¹

Bill and students prayed for her in three successive prayer meetings; he provided me with the accounts of both Joy, who was healed, and Heather Murphy, a fellow student who prayed for her. Heather was feeling what God was doing for Joy even as Joy was, without expecting it, experiencing it. Now Joy no longer needed glasses, and her eye condition was gone. A couple weeks after the healing, she noted that she had gone to her eye doctor: "She can't explain it, but I suddenly have 20/20 vision and the other condition (the main reason for my glasses), which is incurable, is gone. She has no clue what to do with this information. She says she has never seen anything like this in 4,000 people." They sent back the glasses they had ordered for her.⁸² Joy and I corresponded subsequently at some length, and she

76. Danny McCain, personal correspondence, June 1, 2009; interview, July 17, 2011.

77. Bill Heth, personal correspondence, Sept. 12, 2009; follow-up correspondence, Sept. 18, 2009. In our earlier work, Bill and I held strong and opposing positions on one issue about which we had both written (e.g., Heth and Wenham, *Divorce*; Keener, *Marries Another*), through which dialogue we became friends (though Bill's position has since changed on this issue, as well as regarding cessationism, independently of me; see Heth, "Remarriage").

78. Joy Wahnefried, personal correspondence, Nov. 6, 2009.

79. Joy provided a doctor's note to this effect from Aug. 24, 2005, used to attest her need to miss classes.

80. Joy Wahnefried, personal correspondence, Nov. 8, 20, 2009. She also sent me a pamphlet in which her photograph had been used to illustrate the condition, because in her case one eye was physically higher than the other (mailed Nov. 20, 2009).

81. This involved thirty-eight doctors' visits in all over four years for the eye problem; Bill Heth, personal correspondence, Sept. 12, 2009.

82. Joy Wahnefried's correspondence to William Heth and Heather Murphy (May 30, 2009), shared with me with permission and discussed with Joy in personal correspondence (Nov. 8, 2009). I discussed

provided for me documents regarding her previous condition and a copy of her vision specialist's letter certifying that her visual acuity is now 20/20 and that she no longer needs corrective lenses.⁸³ She notes that she "didn't fully expect him to heal me in the first place" but is grateful to God.⁸⁴

Likewise, Marie Brown, a respected friend whose ministry I have followed for many years, shared with me that she has often witnessed instantaneous miraculous healings in her ministry. On my request, she kindly supplied me some photographs of people's stunned and ecstatic reactions when they were healed of deafness, blindness, and paralysis in some of her earlier meetings outside the United States.⁸⁵

Anna's and Cindy's Stories

My friend Anna Gulick, now in her nineties, shared some stories with me. Anna is now an Anglican deacon but recounted a story from when she was a Lutheran missionary in Asia.⁸⁶ At that time, she was visiting her home in the United States and prayed with an Episcopal priest that God would heal the cancer of his young adult daughter. At the close of their prayers, the daughter said that she had seen a vision of a mass removed from her abdomen. Nevertheless, she went for her scheduled surgery at a Boston hospital the next day; although tests had already shown conclusively that she had cancer, they discovered that the cancer had vanished.⁸⁷

I have mentioned some of Anna's other stories elsewhere in the book, including a recent situation with her eye, but here recount one about a friend of hers to whom she referred me. This story involves a fellow Anglican, the Reverend Cindy Larsen, who is now principal of the Bunyoro-Kitara Diocesan Theological College

this case further with Joy in subsequent correspondence (esp. Nov. 4, 5, 6, 8, 20, 26, 2009). The doctor, who did not want to call the event miraculous, could only treat the occurrence as an anomaly (Joy Wahnefried, personal correspondence, Nov. 26, 2009).

83. Her doctor's letter is dated Oct. 16, 2009, based on the test administered May 27, 2009. The letter is dated later because it was secured in order to explain to the state why she no longer requires corrective lenses for driving. Joy also supplied a prescription for her glasses from the same vision specialist from June 8, 2006. Dr. Manita Fadele also concludes that the healing of this condition during prayer makes better sense as resulting from God's action rather than mere coincidence (personal correspondence, Nov. 14, 2009).

84. Joy Wahnefried, personal correspondence, Nov. 6, 2009.

85. Marie Brown, personal correspondence, May 31, 2006. Cf. photographs in Osborn, *Healing*, between 258 and 259.

86. Sent by the Evangelical Lutheran Church (previously called the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America [NLCA], how she identified it to me initially), she was part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Japan Mission (Japan Lutheran Church; personal correspondence, Aug. 24, 2009). The ELC was one of the streams that merged into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1988).

87. Anna Gulick, personal correspondence, Aug. 23, 2009; Jan. 14, 2010; June 7, 2011. Far more cancer recoveries appear in my sources than I include in this book (see, e.g., Woodard, *Faith*, 97–99 [instantaneous and complete]; Salmon, *Heals*, 41–47; Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 92–93, 95–96; Zagrans, *Miracles*, 22–23, 35–36, 92–93, 149–51); I include a smaller proportion of these because critics who emphasize natural remissions often question miraculous cures of cancer and tuberculosis. Nevertheless, I should include at least some of these healing reports in the sample because they illustrate some of the sorts of cases involved when people claim to have experienced or witnessed healing.

in Hoima, Uganda.⁸⁸ The story that Cindy told me confirmed what Anna had told me about her, except in much more detail (here condensed).⁸⁹ Both her children, Debby and Bob, lacked immune protection as children; Debby began having allergy shots at age five yet experienced chicken pox over and over again, which should have been impossible. Finally, when an infection from a splinter pervaded Bob's entire body, despite multiple antibiotic treatments, a specialist determined that Bob had such a severe immune deficiency that it would eventually lead to fatal infection, most patients "dying before age 25." Despite assurance that this deficiency would not show up in two children in the same family, testing showed that Debby suffered from the same condition.

A skilled immunologist repeated these tests and confirmed the diagnosis. Debby was now twelve and Bob eight, and he warned that they would probably not live to twenty-five; Cindy had to sanitize everything to extend her children's lives as long as possible. Sometimes infections required their hospitalization; sometimes, to reduce the risk of infection, Cindy kept them home. Cindy laments, "Debby contracted chicken pox at least six times a year and had repeated cases of shingles. Her eardrums ruptured multiple times from repeated ear infections, resulting in permanent hearing loss and the use of a hearing aid at age nineteen." Cindy just prayed and solicited prayer from everyone she knew.

Eventually Debby entered medical school, married, and came to her twenty-fifth birthday. Although a doctor had suggested that becoming a surrogate for Debby and her husband, Brian, might be the only way for Cindy to have grandchildren, she soon discovered that Debby was pregnant. A high-risk obstetrician ordered full blood tests, including immune profiles, then had the tests repeated. Finally, the doctor called Debby and Brian in. "After stating that the results were impossible, the doctor informed Debby and Brian that her test results were normal, both times. The doctor had repeated the tests to be sure of the results. Consultation with the doctors who had treated Debby all her life brought the same words, 'That is impossible!' Debby says she smiled and said, 'With God nothing is impossible.'"

Debby urged her brother, Bob, to be tested, but he understandably did not like lab tests at this point in his life. Finally Cindy joined her daughter in urging Bob to be tested. Like Debby, he now has a normal immune profile. One can outgrow some problems, and some might respond, "Anomalies happen." "Yes," a believer might respond, "especially when we pray." Two anomalies in one immediate family itself may appear anomalous; the greater the number of statistical improbabilities in a single circle, the more the improbability is compounded. Certainly not all

88. Anna Gulick, personal correspondence, e.g., Aug. 24, 2009; Dec. 2, 10, 2009. Anna also noted Cindy's brother, who "was in an iron lung with polio" at age five and never expected to reach age twenty, but who was confident that Jesus would heal him, and he did recover to become a grandfather (Aug. 24, 2009). I have focused, however, on Cindy's more direct experience.

89. Personal correspondence, Dec. 17, 2009 (I have condensed, also omitting the immunologist's name). I received an account of another severe immune deficiency recovery, this one unexpectedly sudden, from Tina Tornow, regarding her son (personal correspondence, July 16, 2009).

prayers turn out this way, but Cindy, who now has three grandchildren, daily praises God for these gifts.

Accounts from Students and Colleagues

The accounts in this section are not all equally dramatic, but I share accounts from my immediate circle to illustrate that such accounts are not rare, contrary to what Hume and many of his followers would predict. (I include less dramatic examples as well as more dramatic ones because they also represent some of the sorts of cures people mean when they speak of healing.) My seminary, like most mainline seminaries, is not charismatic (nor anticharismatic); the majority of my colleagues are ministers in mainline denominations.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, a significant number of my colleagues have direct acquaintance with experiences of healings.

Elsewhere in the book I mention accounts from my current or recent colleagues at Palmer, Emmanuel Itapson, Loida Martell-Otero, Bonnie Ortiz, John Piippo, Rodney Ragwan, and Gail Randolph. (Paul Alexander, mentioned above, unexpectedly became my colleague during the book's editing.) Another colleague, a Presbyterian elder who for ministry reasons did not wish to be named (but allowed me to use the story), was diagnosed in fall 1998 with a brain tumor the size of a large cherry. After special prayer, it shrank without treatment to the size of a cherry pit in about four months and within about four more months disappeared entirely.⁹¹ My colleagues who volunteered stories after my project became known represent a range of disciplines (Hebrew Bible, constructive theology, and so forth) and administration. Altogether perhaps one-third of us have direct experience of what we consider divine healings (not including any others that colleagues did not happen to share with me).

Here I note a story shared with me by my colleague in Greek, Deborah Watson, concerning her younger sister Gloria.⁹² Her father confirmed and elaborated the story for me. When Gloria was a baby, she unexpectedly fell from her high-perched bassinet onto the hard floor, "face up . . . and motionless." Her father, James, a Baptist pastor, knew that they had to reach the nearby doctor's office with no time to spare and gently placed his hand under Gloria's head only to feel, to his horror,

90. Connected with the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., the seminary is effectively interdenominational, with high proportions of National Baptist, Methodist, A.M.E., and so forth. The majority of my colleagues are mainline ministers (e.g., American Baptist; Presbyterian; Methodist; Mennonite Brethren); I was ordained and work in an African-American Baptist church, though I also worked in other churches (including A.M.E. Zion and charismatic) for several years.

91. Anonymous colleague (personal conversation, May 22, 2010; follow-up personal correspondence, May 22, 26, 2010; June 7, 9, 2010). Although this recovery was not instantaneous, and the biopsy was inconclusive as to whether the tumor was malignant, even benign brain tumors "typically do not disappear" (Nicole Matthews [personal correspondence, May 25, 2010]).

92. After we discussed the account, she asked her parents to write the story for me; along with the acknowledgment of her sister, she forwarded her father's detailed account (James Watson, correspondence, Nov. 27, 2009; sent by Debbie in personal correspondence to me Nov. 30, 2009) to me, from which my narrative above is greatly abridged.

that the back of the skull was so fractured that it was crunching in his hand. The parents prayed anxiously, acknowledging that whatever God willed would be best. He explained to the doctor where he felt the bone fragments, but five minutes later the doctor asked him again to show where he had felt them. "To my astonishment," James noted, "as I slowly and carefully slid my hand once more beneath Gloria's little head, I could feel nothing but solid skull bone." Gloria was better immediately, with no known aftereffects;⁹³ she is now forty-five.

Once some of my current students knew that I was working on this book, several of them volunteered accounts of extraordinary healings in their own or their families' lives. (Of course, one could also write a book on the many who are not extraordinarily healed, but that less pleasant topic is not much in dispute.) Because most cases were simply offered to me as oral reports in conversation, including one account of the student being raised from the dead as a child, many do not appear here; I offer just a few samples of those who provided their experiences in writing.⁹⁴ For the sake of space, I have not narrated all of these claims, though the students graciously provided some in detail; others, like the testimonies of Benjamin Ahanonu, Suppogu Israel, Bernard Luvutse, Eduardo Lara Reyes, or Thang Sum, I have used elsewhere in this book. The accounts do not violate any "laws of nature," but the range of experiences does illustrate some of the sorts of experiences involved when people speak of having witnessed divine healings. Some might be explained naturally or as statistical anomalies, but some others appear more unusual.

The first three accounts involve cures that have stood the test of time, because they occurred when these students were children. In 1987, seven-year-old Baptist Melaina Marshall had what appeared to be a bad chest cold, and the staff in an emergency room took an X-ray to make sure that she did not have pneumonia.⁹⁵ What they discovered was not pneumonia but calcification of her bones; further tests and examinations ultimately yielded a diagnosis of osteopetrosis, which also explained her pain in sitting on hard surfaces. With this information, her pediatrician, Dr. Pamela Hoffman of Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital, referred her to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. There the doctors explained that this was a rare bone

93. "She was better right away—no after-effects" (Debbie Watson, personal correspondence, Dec. 9, 2009); I have not known Debbie to exaggerate. In a similar incident where a baby and her crib fell on the floor, Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 18–19, reports as miraculous the healing of a baby's fractured skull and subdural hematoma over the course of a day of prayer.

94. For those with anthropological interest, the demographic sample is somewhat limited; most of the several who volunteered these stories tended to be Baptists or Methodists (groups fairly common in our student population), and all but two are African-American (African-Americans constitute roughly half our student population).

95. Personal correspondence, Dec. 16, 2009. When she first shared her story with me orally, she planned to collect medical documentation, but as we quickly discovered, most institutions do not keep records that long (more than two decades). A survey of osteopetrosis on the internet will illustrate the seriousness of even the milder forms of the disease, and viewing Melaina's height, strength, and skills, she clearly does not have this disease now. It is not the same as osteoporosis, although reports also exist of that being healed (Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 60).

disease that could cause brittle bones, deafness, blindness, and other complications. At the time, no standard treatment was available, but the family was warned that if she did not undergo the experimental treatment her disease would become progressively worse. (Osteopetrosis may be asymptomatic in many cases, but she already had symptoms.)

The treatments would be costly, and Melaina's mother would also have to miss so much work that she would likely lose her job. She asked Melaina if she wanted to go through the treatments; a child with strong faith, Melaina declared that she would rather just pray that God would heal her. Soon after this, her mother shared her problem with her hairstylist at the hair salon near 48th and Baltimore Avenue. Many devout believers were present, and on learning of Melaina's desire to pray, they took her into the basement, laid hands on her, and joined in prayer. "From that moment on," Melaina concludes, "I believed that I was healed. I never looked back on the disease. I played sports, raced children on the block, ran track, and was a cheerleader. I never once broke a single bone in my body." She never undertook the treatment. Her vision has scored 17/15 (better than 20/20), her eyesight so accurate that she read "made in China" on the bottom of the eye chart. Her hearing has also tested as perfect. Most strikingly, a more recent X-ray, prompted by another chest cold, showed no calcifications.⁹⁶ Family members, most extensively her aunt, also confirmed her story for me.⁹⁷

Danielle Martin Moffett recounts how when she was five her mother took her to the emergency room, where doctors informed her that had she waited twenty-four more hours, Danielle's condition would have been fatal. For the next seven years, she depended on a variety of prescribed medicines to make her bowels work, until at age twelve her grandmother took her to visit a Pentecostal church in Wilmington, Delaware, where evangelist Perlle Young was preaching and praying for the sick. The evangelist prayed and told her to thank God, and "the next morning, this healing was confirmed; for the first time in 7+ years I could without medicine and help from family independently move my bowels." The problem has never returned.⁹⁸ After my open-ended questions about the incident, Danielle's older sister and grandmother, both witnesses, vividly confirmed these details in their correspondence with me.⁹⁹

Twenty-three-year-old West Virginia Baptist Jonathan Turner recounted for me why he is in seminary; I offer here a condensed version of his account. When he was in third grade, he experienced severe immune deficiency and over the following months fell progressively more ill, losing weight and finally dehydrating

96. Melaina Marshall, personal correspondence, Dec. 16, 2009.

97. See especially Paulette Terrell, her maternal aunt, personal correspondence, Dec. 16, 2009, confirming many relevant details, including what the doctors had told them; Melaina's perfect bone health and athletic activities; and so forth; more briefly, Aaron Marshall, personal correspondence, Dec. 16, 2009.

98. Danielle Martin Moffett, personal correspondence, Dec. 4, 2009.

99. *Ibid.*; her sister Brianita Bishop, personal correspondence, May 15, 17, 2010; their grandmother Edith Martin, personal correspondence, June 3, 2010.

from diarrhea. By the time that he was taken to more advanced facilities at Duke University Hospital, his mother feared that he was dying; experiencing withdrawal from previous unhelpful medication, he began vomiting on the four-hour trip, and a doctor there immediately hospitalized him. At first they found severe sinus blockage and acid reflux but eventually discovered that he was not producing gamma globulin. His white blood cell count was so low that the doctor was surprised that he remained alive; any severe infections could have killed him. The best treatment they could offer at the time was the hope of a blood transfusion every month, along with a fairly sterile environment that would include homeschooling.

To delay the need for the first transfusion, the doctor gave him a booster shot for his immune system but warned that it would not restore his white blood cells. That night Jonathan saw a glow and another figure in his hospital room, and his pain reduced as the figure approached. He heard a voice and believed that he was healed; he also felt called to ministry. Jonathan immediately began improving without the expected treatment, although it took a couple of months to regain his weight. Six weeks after this encounter, the family returned for more tests. Shocked by the results, the technician retested him twice; his white blood cell count was now higher than the average adult's. The astonished lead doctor in the case noted that there was no medical explanation for this change. Jonathan's mother pointed out that people throughout several states had been praying for her son, and the doctor, though considering himself an atheist, conceded that a miracle was the most plausible explanation. Jonathan's third-grade teacher still recalls his sickness and admittance to Duke, and his mother provided me a detailed account of his story.¹⁰⁰

My student Martha Wheeler recounts the dramatic and permanent recovery of her prayerful mother during the night that she was expected to die in the hospital.¹⁰¹ In a more gradual incident, my student Louise Koffa recounts that on November 5, 2001, an ambulance brought her husband, Henry Koffa Sr., to the hospital, where he underwent a seven-hour operation. After more than a month in an induced coma and on life support, with no sign of recovery, his blood pressure began to drop. The ICU doctor grimly warned Louise that her husband could not survive the night. Although his recovery was not instantaneous, he was home before Christmas.¹⁰² Among more recent illnesses, one of my Methodist students, Fredrick Marz, was devastated to discover that a biopsy for his wife, Peggy, revealed a cancerous tumor. After prayer that God would remove the tumor even before the surgery, Peggy went for surgery. The oncologist afterward explained that they did not find any

100. Jonathan Turner, interview, March 4; April 1, 2010; personal correspondence, March 4 and 22, 2010; Angie Turner, personal correspondence, March 13, 2010; Sara Bane (his teacher), personal correspondence, March 8, 2010. Jonathan technically became my student only after the interview, but we did live in the same building on campus, and we spent significant time in conversation (on other topics as well as this one) after students who knew his story connected us.

101. Personal correspondence, Dec. 18, 2007.

102. Louise Koffa, interview, Oct. 6, 2010; personal correspondence, Oct. 12, 2010. Louise and her husband are from Liberia, but by then resided in the United States. They belonged to A.M.E. Zion and Pentecostal churches.

"tumor, only some bruised tissue from the biopsy."¹⁰³ Leah Macinskas-Le reported (based on her mother's account) that she was fully healed after prayer of "severe internal bleeding" as an infant.¹⁰⁴

Reports also include less severe ailments. For example, another of my Methodist students, Maggie Reid, came to class on April 21, 2009, despite having a respiratory infection with a fever of 102° F that had persisted about two weeks. (Had I known, I would not have let her come to class.) She had not been taking any medicine except aspirin for the fever for a few days. Soon she had to slip out of class, but an A.M.E. student, Stacey Jones-Anderson, slipped out after her, stopped her, and prayed. "Within a minute or two," Maggie reports, "my ears and sinuses opened"; the congestion loosened within fifteen minutes and disappeared by the end of class. All symptoms disappeared, and for the first time in weeks she slept peacefully, lying down.¹⁰⁵ Maggie also reports a recent healing of a long-term condition, which healing also surprised her.¹⁰⁶

Others gave testimony of spiritual strength for stroke recovery during a dramatic divine encounter (Henry McCain);¹⁰⁷ recovery through prayer from an unusually severe, medicine-resistant staph infection (Sondria Miller);¹⁰⁸ and the vanishing of a severe and supposedly permanent wart, without any trace, a few days after prayer (John Dawkins).¹⁰⁹ Students naturally also volunteered the names of those

103. Fredrick Marz (personal conversation; follow-up personal correspondence, July 22, 2010).

104. Leah Macinskas-Le, personal correspondence, Oct. 18, 2010.

105. Maggie Reid, personal correspondence, Nov. 19, 2009; also confirmed briefly with Stacey Jones-Anderson, phone interview, Dec. 9, 2009; Maggie explained the lack of medicines in personal correspondence (Jan. 3, 2010), noting that she had stopped taking an over-the-counter medication several days earlier (having been on it for the maximum number of days) and was planning to go to the emergency room soon after the class. I was also present when she returned to class better, and she explained to me after class what had happened.

106. Previous tests for several years had indicated several problems, including endometriosis, precancerous uterine thickening, a dime-sized ovarian tumor; a test in January 2009 showed that she was now normal, without these problems (personal correspondence, Dec. 2, 2009).

107. Baptists Henry McCain and his daughter Yolanda, also my student, noted his recent stroke recovery, and his wife provided a detailed account of it that she had written for a class paper (McCain, "Faith"). His ischemic stroke paralyzed his left side, rendering therapy useless until "some sign of independent movement" returned, of which "doctors did not offer much hope." After much prayer and meditating on Matt 9:20–22, on March 31, 2006, he awoke between 2 and 3 a.m., seeing "a brightness" in his dark room; he tried reaching out for it and pleading for healing for about twenty to thirty minutes. Suddenly, he felt waves of sensation in his left hand and found that he could now make a fist. Now he was able to receive rehabilitation; "God has done his work," the doctor concluded, "now let us get back to ours" (McCain, "Faith").

108. Sondria Miller, personal correspondence, Dec. 12, 2009, regarding 2005; she also recounts the disappearance of a postsurgical growth in 2006.

109. John Dawkins, personal correspondence, Nov. 20, 2009. When he was a boy, the specialist who tried to remove a severe and painful wart on the palm of his hand found that a blood vessel ran through its core, so that when the wart grew back he would simply have to live with it. It grew back, larger and more painful, but when he visited his grandmother in rural South Carolina, she took him for prayer to Will Savage, a barely educated but godly old man who had been born in slavery. A few days later, the wart vanished, without any trace of having been there; when he showed the specialist in Philadelphia, he

healed in their circles of acquaintance. For just one example, a woman in a student's church had a stroke on August 17, 2007, which left her in a coma.¹¹⁰ In that case, the family told me that the woman was taken off life support on August 31, 2007. Because she was clearly expected to expire, she was not given even nutrition or water; nevertheless, surrounded by a constant prayer vigil, she regained consciousness on September 5. Months later she finally but unexpectedly began speaking and swallowing again, with improvement in other areas. While such cases would not meet strict criteria some demand for complete, instantaneous healings, families regard them as answers to prayer; some recoveries at least exceed optimum medical expectations. Such accounts are too abundant to elaborate more of them, but they illustrate some of the sorts of experiences involved when people speak of having seen miracles.

Yesenia's Story

Another story involves a student of mine only indirectly, but I was introduced to it by that student because of his expertise. The story is not instantaneous (thus some critics would not accept it, and it would not for example be proclaimed at Lourdes), but it is an unusual and noteworthy story of faith. My student Donald Moore is a speech language pathologist, a clinical director of voice and swallowing disorders, and has fifteen years of clinical experience. He regards many recoveries as natural but pointed me to a rare case where a particular kind of brain injury should have caused irreversible damage. After a number of email exchanges, I finally was able to catch up with Yesenia Robinson¹¹¹ and was astonished to learn that the voice I clearly heard speaking in the background was that of her son, who was never supposed to be able to speak.

On July 24, 2007, Yesenia, a Catholic born in the Dominican Republic but living in the United States since she was nine, received a traumatizing phone call: her fourteen-year-old son Deric had been in a tragic accident and was airlifted to the trauma center. Overwhelmed, Yesenia offered to accept him in any condition if God would just spare his life. The injuries could have killed him, and doctors,

concluded that it was "a miracle." Warts of course do disappear; this sounds, however, like an atypically severe case.

110. Melanie Price-Williams, interview, Nov. 7, 2009; personal correspondence, Nov. 16, 2009; Marva Gibbs, phone interview, Dec. 2, 2009, regarding her mother, Christine Curtis. Ms. Gibbs also sent me (personal correspondence, Dec. 7, 2009) a day-by-day chronology of the events she described, which I have merely summarized here. I recount this only as an example, and have not recounted most stroke recovery testimonies. One dramatic one is that of Debbie and Alan Moore; the MRI showed massive damage to one-third of Alan's brain, yielding a prognosis of total paralysis for his left side and inability to speak. After nine days of Debbie's persistent faith in God, however, Alan walked out of the hospital, speaking and without paralysis; the doctor, interviewed on the segment, acknowledges these points and his surprise (<http://www.awmi.net>, May 24, 2010 archives; accessed Aug. 1, 2010, and brought to my attention by Craig Miller). One need not affirm all aspects of their stated theology to appreciate their faith in God.

111. Phone interview, Dec. 15, 2009.

working valiantly to save him, were not certain if he would survive; the left half of his brain had been forced into the right side. As Yesenia was numb from emotion in the hospital, however, she heard a voice: "Be patient; I will return your son to you."

On the eighth day of his coma, about ten minutes after she begged God for a sign, Deric opened his eyes. Nevertheless, he could stare only blankly, unresponsively; after his transfer to rehab, he was still eating only through a feeding tube. After eleven months, it was hard for her to pray. His right side remained paralyzed; he could not recognize the family; he was drooling; and she was told that he would not get his speech back. She realized that no therapist could restore him; only the Lord could. Against everyone else's advice, she took him home from the hospital, entrusting him completely to the God who parted the waters and raised Jesus from the dead. Then she remembered the earlier voice: "Be patient." She focused on praying for his right leg, until he regained motion in that leg.

Then she focused on his feeding tube and drooling. She had asked Donald if he had ever seen anyone like this recover enough to eat; when he replied honestly that the most optimistic scenario was that he might eat applesauce someday, she responded defiantly that God would do more than this. She started feeding her son applesauce, mashed potatoes, pasta, chopped-up chicken, macaroni, and so forth, though doctors would not let her remove the feeding tube. Her greatest frustration was trying to convince anyone that the impossible was happening—he was recovering. She tried to persuade Donald that Deric was eating and would someday be speaking, but he would not believe it. Thus around November 2008 she took Deric to a center that did not have his earlier records and asked for a new swallow study. After they acknowledged that he was swallowing, the feeding tube was removed. Moreover, by this point he was no longer drooling.

In early 2009, she began praying for his right arm, with deep confidence, she recounted, as if Jesus was praying for him through her. Within some three or four weeks he could move his arm. He could not yet control his finger movements, but on November 22, he drew a picture; she named that "the day my son returned to me" and declared that she wanted to kiss Jesus's feet. By the time we talked, Deric was writing. After his arm was recovering, she began praying for his voice to return; in August, he began saying, "Mom," for a few weeks, and then, "I don't care." By October he was forming sentences and was able to hold a conversation, retaining his pre-accident memory.

In October she ran into Donald and insisted that he see her son. To Donald's shock, Deric was able to speak with him. "I just want you to know that I *did* hear God right on this," Yesenia explained. Donald responded, "I've got to contact my professor who is writing a book on this subject!" Yesenia shared with others at the hospital; they were amazed but pleased. She shared with me how much deeper her relationship with God is now, through both the suffering and through how she has grown to trust Jesus's voice to her. Donald confirms his lack of "expectations from a clinical perspective" and adds, "What took place in his case would be very

difficult to explain in medical expectations.”¹¹² We all wish that recoveries like this happened more often, but those that do invite our attention.

Some Other Individual Healing Claims

A social scientist collected more than sixty narratives of spiritual cures in north-eastern North Carolina and recounts two of these. The night before surgery for uterine cancer, one informant had a strange visitor who prayed for her healing; in the morning, doctors found her uterus unusually healthy, without a trace of cancer. Another informant noted that in 1952 her eye had been pierced by a makeshift spear when she was a girl. The eye specialist warned that he could only sew up the eye, but the mother refused and had the aunt pray for her. The informant notes that she could see fully again as soon as the prayer ended and “[has] had 20/20 vision ever since.”¹¹³

Artist and writer Pat Butler shared with me her healing from partial disability. After experiencing severe whiplash in an automobile accident in May 1985, she was eventually deemed 10 to 15 percent disabled. Her condition deteriorated; twelve years after the accident, the orthopedic surgeon warned that she had lost 40 percent of the function in her neck and planned to operate on her herniated disks when her loss reached 60 to 70 percent. In addition to the neck pain, she was suffering from other pain in the disks in her back. At a conference on healing, she asked a medical doctor to pray for her healing. He asked if she had forgiven the driver who hit her. As she began to forgive those who had wronged her, she was healed, the next morning waking without pain for the first time in twelve years.¹¹⁴ The healing has remained both complete and permanent over the past twelve years, despite her now “rigorous world travels.”¹¹⁵

Australian Adventist pastor Anthony Kent shared with me the story of his father, Melvin (Mel) Edward Kent, and Anthony’s uncle Raymond Kent provided

112. Donald Moore, personal correspondence, Dec. 16, 2009. Other stories of recovery from brain injuries could be recounted; the doctor allowed no possibility for the survival of John Brooks, a Pentecostal Holiness missionary whose accident had caused skull fractures and inflammation of the brain; to the doctor’s astonishment, Brooks recounts, he did recover and returned to his work (*Moments*, 69–72).

113. McClenon, *Events*, 131.

114. Pat Butler, personal correspondence, June 8, 15, 16, 17, 2009; this case was brought to my attention by our mutual friend Christophe Savage. It was confirmed to me by the doctor who prayed, Grant Mullen (personal correspondence, June 19, 20, 2009), who also recounted the story under the name of “Mrs. F” in Mullen, *Feel*, 131–32. At least partial healing through forgiveness also appears in the case in Reed, *Surgery*, 82–83; and full healing through forgiveness (by a seventy-year-old woman severely injured in a traffic accident) in Wilson, “Miracle Events,” 271; healing from nearly paralyzing arthritis after forgiveness in Pytches, *Come*, 184. One might find theological support in passages like Mark 11:23–25; Matt 6:12–15; 2 Cor 2:10–11; Eph 4:30–32; 1 Pet 3:7–12.

115. Pat Butler (further correspondence, June 14, 2009; cf. also May 17, 2010), noting that no surgery or treatment was necessary. She notes that she suffered another automobile accident after that time but recovered quickly, with no lasting ill effects.

a description of the story written by Mel's father (Anthony's grandfather), an Adventist pastor/evangelist, before he passed away.¹¹⁶ Suffering from acute rheumatic fever at age five, Mel was confined to bed in a dark room away from other children for three years, and sometimes he endured "ice baths to control his fevers and delirium." The fever led to chorea, often producing involuntary nervous twitching. Neither of the family doctors during this period could offer much hope for recovery, and one warned that if he recovered he would never be strong.

Convinced that God had healed far worse cases and that God had spoken through a verse in the family promise box, Mel continued to trust that Jesus would heal him. One day his grandmother felt a special impression to pray for him, and Anthony notes that "from then on he began to recover and excelled in cycle racing and gymnastics." At age seventeen, during World War II, a military doctor tested him and insisted that he was lying about having had rheumatic fever and chorea for several years as a boy. When Dr. Hopkins discovered that he was Pastor Kent's son, however, he was astonished; this was the very doctor who had first treated him, and he acknowledged that a miracle had taken place. Mel Kent, who became a carpenter, passed away on October 18, 2006, at the age of eighty-four.

A Southern Baptist missionary couple had to return to the United States because the diabetic condition of the wife, Sandy Lewis, had grown too severe. When she fell sick with cancer besides, doctors expected only progressive deterioration. Although the Lewis family had not believed that God heals people miraculously today, some friends prayed for them with confidence that she would be healed. "When she went back to the hospital," Presbyterian writer Bruce Barron notes, "tests revealed no cancer and no excess sugar." For the most part, Sandy continued on in good health.¹¹⁷

On May 11, 1992, a car struck thirteen-year-old Heyward Morris as she was Rollerblading. The resultant brain injury was so severe that the doctors at the hospital concluded that she would spend the rest of her life in a vegetative state. The most optimistic of the doctors said that at best she might be able to feed herself someday. Although the family did not consider themselves strongly religious, others banded together to pray, including Heyward's classmates in a nondenominational school with an Episcopal chapel service. Eager for a sign of encouragement, they prayed that her eyes would open on the eleventh day, and that was the day she began to come out of her coma. To the attending doctor's amazement, she did not even feel a headache. She spent the next two months in a rehabilitation hospital, and by the time of the journalist's interview two years

116. Anthony Kent, personal correspondence, Jan. 4, 2010, including the cycle racing quotation; Feb. 18, 2010; Raymond Kent, phone confirmation, Feb. 11, 2010; undated manuscript from Thomas Kent (mailed to me Feb. 19, 2010); the written reflections of Jasper Kent, Anthony's brother, for Mel Kent's funeral (Oct. 24, 2006, including the ice bath quotation).

117. As of 1987, when Barron's book was published; the healing took place in 1978 (Barron, *Gospel*, 7–8). Barron's book is primarily a critique of the Word of Faith movement, but he recognizes times when God did answer people's faith, as here.

later she had recovered fully. This full recovery was gradual, but far better than the best possible prognosis shortly before.¹¹⁸

Kelly Krabill had temporomandibular joint syndrome (TMJ) from the age of thirteen until she experienced healing at twenty-seven. After her jaw had locked mostly shut for four months at the age of sixteen, she underwent surgery, but after about a year her problem returned. When a friend of hers from Sweden was praying for the sick at High Mill Church of the Resurrection, he felt that God wanted to heal someone's mouth; she went forward for prayer, and he prayed for her simply and then moved on to the next person. She was afraid, she said, to open her mouth, uncertain what would happen, but was astonished as soon as she did so. For the first time in recent memory, her jaw opened normally and has remained normal. Although the doctor said that TMJ can work its way out, it seemed no coincidence that after years her condition changed abruptly after prayer. Her doctor was surprised and noted that he does see miracles sometimes.¹¹⁹

Despite his useful skills as a board-certified orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Charles Woodhouse felt powerless in the face of his daughter's epileptiform seizures. After another surgeon he respected prayed for her, however, her seizures stopped, so he began praying for many patients and finding medically unexpected recoveries.¹²⁰

A therapist and his son (Kevin and Alex Malarkey) recount the son's experience in the context of significant prayer and the son's reports of heaven and angels. Six-year-old Alex may have died at the accident scene;¹²¹ whether or not this is the case, he was injured so badly (from "an internal decapitation"),¹²² that doctors offered little expectation of survival;¹²³ a nurse who had spent twelve years in the unit had never seen a child survive this condition.¹²⁴ If he survived, he would be a vegetable, and never able to speak or swallow.¹²⁵ In this case, the child had the best medical attention and the recovery is not yet complete; nevertheless, Alex's ability to speak exceeded the most optimistic prognosis. Moreover, doctors confirmed that severed vertebrae healed without medical intervention.¹²⁶

Many of the examples above are random, based on what was most readily available; I could have provided a much fuller sample had I, for example, asked several

118. Wakefield, *Miracle*, 78–79.

119. Kelly Krabill, personal correspondence, Aug. 24, 2009. I attended High Mill sometimes in the late 1970s and witnessed and experienced some remarkable things there (one category of which I mentioned in Keener, *Gift*, 116). For other reports of TMJ healing, see Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 25, 53–54.

120. Bredesen, *Miracle*, 36–38 (based on his direct testimony). He offers the example of prayer for a boy with a fractured ankle too swollen yet for surgery; after Dr. Woodhouse reduced the dislocation manually, he found that surgery would be unnecessary, though it would normally have been necessary in such a case.

121. E.g., Malarkey, *Boy*, 152, 164. Intriguingly, Alex had a knowledge of events that was not explicable naturally (123–24).

122. *Ibid.*, 33 (with an X-ray after p. 100); this injury would normally lead to death (59).

123. A doctor examining the chart was convinced that the boy must have died (*ibid.*, 85); a named doctor concludes that "it is simply incredible that Alex survived" (59).

124. *Ibid.*, 46.

125. *Ibid.*, 32. He began speaking initially on 113–15.

126. *Ibid.*, 91, 176.

Pentecostal seminaries to survey their alumni for healing stories or sent a questionnaire to missionaries in regions particularly known for healings today. Indeed, had I time to collect more claims and had the reader patience to read them, I could obviously go on virtually indefinitely. Clearly there is room for further research in this area, including many dissertations.

Western Healing Ministries in the Past Half Century

Billy Graham recounts that X-rays verified the severity of his sister-in-law's tuberculosis; she was dying of the disease. Finding no hope in the treatment, she discontinued it and asked some believers to anoint her with oil and pray. Afterward, the doctors at the sanitarium were shocked by further X-rays, which verified that no active tuberculosis remained. God worked the healing, Graham contends, not through any special healing evangelist but by the simple faith of believers.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, while Graham found some healing meetings objectionable, he claimed that in others he saw God at work, using "servants with special gifts."¹²⁸ Probably he alludes to "gifts of healings." This gift does not mean that everyone who receives prayer is healed but that some seem to be gifted to pray for healings with greater than average grace. In the context of evangelism, one might think instead of more dramatic signs (accompanying the mission and not simply the missionary).

This part of this chapter will digress to address some Western healing ministries for a pragmatic reason: these ministries generate large clusters of published claims, though I suspect that unpublished claims would expand the horizon of investigation considerably. Some of these figures have drawn significant attention in parts of the West and have even been the subject of significant academic studies. (In including figures in this chapter, I acknowledge that some Western figures reported here work internationally, and the Majority World churches also influence many of these ministries today. As I admitted earlier, my lines dividing cultures and historical eras are arbitrary; I employ these traditional categories merely as a means of organizing a vast amount of material.)

Why Include Such Accounts?

Critics of supernatural healing often cite fraudulent healing evangelists (not least the fictitious Elmer Gantry, but also some real cases; see comment in ch. 13). Some of these evangelists have questionable teachings and practices, sometimes driven by financial incentives. In addition, but less fairly, many critics are put off by the subcultures of some healing ministers, sometimes (though not in my examples below) a rural Southern revivalistic tradition that strikes these critics as

127. Graham, *Spirit*, 161; noted also in Flach, *Faith*, 89. In *Just As I Am*, 75, 77, Graham notes her sickness and recovery only in passing (his focus being on his courtship).

128. Graham, *Spirit*, 162.

insincere.¹²⁹ Often, however, the differences reflect merely differing cultural styles; when studying non-Christian healers, anthropologists would note cultural styles without passing judgment on them. Not all ministries fit the harsh stereotypes. Whatever the concerns, some would ask why I include stories of healing ministries here. I do so largely because some people do report cures in such contexts; they thus represent a sample of some of the healing claims encountered today.

Personal accounts of recoveries provide more evidence than spontaneous claims at public meetings, but given the publicity surrounding the latter, I would be remiss if I did not survey some sorts of claims at these meetings. Again, I must note that my reasons for this focus here are pragmatic rather than theological. Whatever one thinks of larger-scale ministries that focus on healing, many of them supply significant numbers of healing claims that a book like this one cannot afford to ignore. In most cases I list sample claims without means to evaluate them, but in some cases evidence suggests that persons experienced cures. One may view these recoveries as exceptions if one wishes—virtually everyone recognizes that even in ministries focused on healing, most people are not healed—but the reports of some of these ministries do provide some significant case studies.

As I have noted, the proportion of those prayed for in healing ministries who are healed generally seems to be a minority, probably in many cases proportionately not higher than in the cases of some less visible informants treated elsewhere in this chapter. Probably most individuals who experience healing do so in less public settings than healing crusades or Marian shrines, receiving prayer in local churches or Bible studies.¹³⁰ While there is no reason to level the charges consistently, the capitalist competition among ministries, including healing ministries, can offer incentives for exaggeration or, in less scrupulous cases, fabrication, that are less apt to tempt most private individuals recounting their personal experiences of healing in settings that provide neither publicity nor compensation.¹³¹ Throughout this book, I have tried to offset the potential biases of samples recorded from public meetings with different kinds of samples, namely, those based on interviews with individuals.

Nevertheless, because such public ministries often offer significant numbers of published examples, some of them more extraordinary in character than one would expect based on purely natural considerations, I cite a number of them here. Moreover, while some charlatans do exist, those who paint all healing ministries

129. The revivalistic style reflects U.S. frontier culture from an earlier era; to many critics unfamiliar with this style (or who know it only from hucksters who share it) it appears insincere. Yet such a style characterized the early ministry of Billy Graham and some others whose moral and fiscal integrity is beyond question, so subculture by itself settles little.

130. With McKenzie, "Miracles," 82. Kay, *Networks*, 205, suggests that the percentage of those healed through prayer in local congregations is probably no lower than in larger crusades. Testimonies of individuals include many claiming conversion through direct encounters with Christ, despite ensuing persecution. For some other examples, see, e.g., the summary report in Clark, *Impartation*, 212.

131. May, "Miracles," 146, emphasizes this incentive. Imaginative hyperbole (such as exaggerating symptoms) is in fact a common practice (Brownell, "Experience," 215–16); for spiritualizing the unknown, cf. Hoffman and Fehl, "Spiritualizing."

this way because they presuppose that healings cannot occur seem to assume what they hope to prove.¹³² Secular exposés have done a great service in exposing clear cases of fraud (see ch. 13), but where the critics start from the assumption that all ministries are fraudulent (an approach popularly called guilt by association) they will “confirm” their suspicions the way students writing papers often do: finding evidence to support their thesis while ignoring contrary evidence.

It is fairly easy to find cases where people were wrongly supposed cured, improved only temporarily, or the cures are best explained psychologically (again see ch. 13). Once one has identified such cases, one can always come up with nonsupernatural explanations for other cases if that is one’s agenda (see ch. 14), even in cases like blindness or deafness where others may regard supernatural explanations as more compelling (see ch. 12). While healing evangelists have their followings, most people unfamiliar with them will prefer the media exposé as the “unbiased” source. Yet even journalists may have their biases, and if someone does not believe that miracles can happen (or does not believe they are apt to happen when particular kinds of people pray) one may force even less cooperative evidence into that framework. Neither healing ministries nor exposés are all of the same quality, and where fraud is not clear individual claims should be evaluated case by case. Though most of the strongest cases for supernatural healing in my own circle of acquaintances do not derive from these circles, I am convinced that most of the very limited number of informants whom I know or have interviewed in several of these ministries are sincere in reporting what they genuinely believe they have witnessed.

Many of these larger-scale ministries are charismatic or Pentecostal, the groups (at least in much of the West) that tend to pray most often for physical healings. Many local churches of various kinds, however, have their own accounts of healings; my experience as part of the African-American church in the United States¹³³ suggests to me that such experiences have a wide denominational spread, even if in predominantly white Christian circles they tend to remain more emphasized among charismatics and Pentecostals. In any case, those who demur from particular groups’ theology need not on such grounds discount the value of their more significant testimonies. Those who demur theologically from some examples can nevertheless appreciate them if they distinguish the gift of teaching from gifts of healing or if they do not limit acts of divine grace to those who share their theology.¹³⁴

132. Popular associations with Elmer Gantry and the like are far removed from most Pentecostal healing practices (Brown, “Introduction,” 5), even in cases where healing evangelists appear (15). As noted above, in addition to a minority of genuine cases of fraud, I suspect that there are sometimes cultural reasons for stereotypes and a bias against traditional North American healing evangelists. Those of us who are biblical scholars are naturally also concerned about the way the Bible is often handled in popular religion, though this mishandling is by no means limited to evangelists emphasizing healing.

133. See, e.g., Usry and Keener, *Religion*, 125–29; White, “Calling”; Johnston, “Ordination”; and numerous other articles.

134. In my theological understanding, lack of sound theology on some points brings its own problems, but lack of humble faith is not always one of them, and God is not bound to bless only those with particular

These sources therefore provide some useful illustrations for the widespread belief that people are healed through prayer, and some of these sources may factor into my later discussion about supernatural causation. After this section, I will turn to more recent and less known examples. I could have included here many other examples (for example, I engaged Mahesh Chavda's reports, some of which include documentation,¹³⁵ in a number of notes) but I felt the need to limit the length of this chapter, for which far more abundant material was available than I could wisely incorporate.

T. L. Osborn

Because T. L. and Daisy Osborn straddle the mid-twentieth-century healing movement noted in the previous chapter and more recent decades, I include some of their healing testimonies first. Afterward I will focus in more detail on the particularly controversial ministry of Kathryn Kuhlman before turning to Father Ralph DiOrio and some less conspicuous ministries. Pentecostal ministers T. L. and Daisy Osborn conducted healing crusades initially in the United States and then primarily in the Majority World, especially in the second half of the twentieth century.¹³⁶ The Osborns were influential in promoting this form of evangelism around the world.¹³⁷ Many of their volumes include photographs of those who have claimed healing along with their testimonies; one may take examples from crusades in Indonesia in January 1989,¹³⁸ Kampala, Uganda, in April 1989 and again in February 1992;¹³⁹ Bogota, Colombia, in February 1994;¹⁴⁰ Medellin, Colombia, in August 1996;¹⁴¹ Russia in September 1996;¹⁴² and Thailand in October 1996.¹⁴³

theological perspectives. We need not screen out evidence based on informants' eccentricities if we have reason to believe their eyewitness accounts to be reliable. This does not mean that we do not take into account theological grids through which they may report the events in their accounts.

135. See Chavda, *Miracle*; also cited by some other scholars (e.g., Breggen, "Miracle Reports," 382). A friend of mine, Pastor Bryan Crute, witnessed one healing of a woman unable to walk (personal correspondence, Jan. 17, 2011).

136. Their diaries, deposited in several Pentecostal libraries, contain volumes of eyewitness reports (I am grateful to the Assemblies of God Seminary library for allowing me to survey their collection in Springfield, Mo.); cf. also Osborn, *Healing*, 281–328. Osborn, like Oral Roberts, straddles both the history of earlier U.S. revivalism and current healing crusades, often in the Majority World (my distinction between the two is necessarily arbitrary). I have chosen Osborn over most other examples from the mid-century healing movement partly because he is one of the few voices of that movement whose ministry survived that era relatively unscathed (see Harrell, *Possible*, 169–72). On Daisy's role, see, e.g., Hyatt, "Women," 254.

137. See Harrell, "Healers," 333–34.

138. E.g., Osborn, *Evangelism*, 21:368–70.

139. E.g., *ibid.*, 21:400; 22:65–67.

140. E.g., *ibid.*, 22:536. Some who had been healed at the 1973 crusade there also testified (22:536–37).

141. E.g., *ibid.*, 23:438–41, including narration by LaDonna Osborn and testimonies on 440.

142. E.g., *ibid.*, 23:470–71.

143. *Ibid.*, 23:597 (I include below also examples in 23:592–93, from their ministry in Thailand in 1956, noted in this volume for the fortieth anniversary). Without many photos, cf. earlier, e.g., in El Salvador in Jan. 1953 (e.g., 1:930, where an eyewitness reports healings, noting that hostile press coverage reported a sick person dying but ignored the healings) and Guatemala in Feb. 1953 (1:938–44). Also, with

Local reports sometimes exist to confirm Osborn's own; thus on his March 1956 crusade in Bangkok, many claimed to be cured. For example, Presbyterian pastor Saman Wannakiet, who had had heart disease since he was eighteen, was healed; Baptist pastor Chaiyong Wattanachan's cancer was healed.¹⁴⁴ As in the case of Reinhard Bonnke and some other evangelists working in the Majority World, a plethora of material here invites further research by church historians. Unlike many healing ministries, the Osborns did helpfully preserve their reports for subsequent researchers; thick dissertations could be devoted to their ministry alone. To note the claims is not to endorse every aspect of the Osborns' theology, but if even a modest proportion of these dramatic reports are accurate, they may have witnessed more such cures (the vast majority in the context of evangelism in the Majority World) than any of their predecessors. Testimonies of healings in their meetings over the years involve a wide variety of illnesses,¹⁴⁵ such as leprosy,¹⁴⁶ inability to walk,¹⁴⁷ deafness,¹⁴⁸ deafness with muteness,¹⁴⁹ blindness,¹⁵⁰ spinal injuries,¹⁵¹ and other disabilities.¹⁵² One could discount some healing claims as the

photos, Tommy O'Dell (T. L.'s and Daisy's grandson) in Bogota, Colombia, June 1994, in 22:779–84; in Botswana, Jan. 1997, in 23:713–22.

144. Hosack, "Arrival," 113.

145. I have merely taken samples from the several volumes above. Cf. Osborn, *Healing*, 158: "We could record hundreds of such cases."

146. Osborn, *Evangelism*, 593 (six lepers); Osborn, *Healing*, 298 (two), 299, 303 (four), 313, 314.

147. Ibid., 1:930, 938; 21:368, 369, three cases on 21:370; 21:400; about six cases in 22:65; two cases in 22:66 (in one case, her knees were "calloused from dragging herself about"; "Now she can even run for joy"); 22:67 (after five years being paralyzed); 22:68 (two cases); 22:779 (one unable to walk for four years, now carrying her crutches); 22:784; three cases in 23:440; three more on 23:441; 23:592 (a girl); 23:597 (two cases); 23:716–17 (multiple cases). In 1:944 (including before and after photographs and the woman's address), a woman paralyzed from the waist down, who had "dragged herself on the ground 52 years," was healed, with many in the crowd amazed, recognizing her. See also Osborn, *Healing*, 157–58, 281 (many), 286–87, 289, 290, 293 (three cases), 294, 295–96, 296 (many), 298 (many), 300, 304, 305, 307, 308 (multiple cases), 309–10, 310 (many), 312 (multiple cases), 312–13, 314, 317, 319, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325 (two cases), 327; photographs between 258 and 259 (eleven cases).

148. E.g., Osborn, *Evangelism*, 1:938; 21:368; 21:369 (two cases); 22:536 ("at least a hundred" cases, including some "deaf from birth, some for 30 or 40 years"); 22:782; 23:440 (after twelve years without hearing); 23:441 (deaf from birth); 23:720–21 (multiple cases, including one deaf from birth); Osborn, *Healing*, 280, 293, 294, 296, 298, 304, 308, 309, 310, 312, 327 (multiple cases).

149. Osborn, *Evangelism*, 23:440 (from birth); 23:593 (seven persons on one night); Osborn, *Healing*, 281 ("hundreds," with "as many as 125" in one campaign), 285–86, 290, 294, 296, 300 (seven), 319.

150. Osborn, *Evangelism*, 1:930, 938, 941–42; 21:370, 400; 22:65; 22:67 (two cases, the second having been blind for thirteen years); 22:782 (almost, but not completely, blind beforehand); 22:783 (a girl weeping as she testifies that her eyesight has been restored); 23:592; 23:713–15 (twenty-five cases, with photos of five); 23:722 (photos of three more cases); Osborn, *Healing*, 281 (as many as ninety in one crusade), 287–88, 291, 293, 295, 296 (the sister of a worker), 298 (two), 300 (multiple cases), 301, 302 (two), 304, 306 (two), 308, 310, 313, 316, 317, 326; crossed eyes on 296, 297, 300. In one eye, Osborn, *Evangelism*, 22:784; 23:440 (from birth); 23:441; 23:471.

151. Ibid., 23:441 (one with a fractured spinal cord rising from the wheelchair).

152. E.g., one who no longer needs an artificial oxygen supply to breathe, 22:784; a hand previously unable to move for nineteen years, 23:440; a hand in 23:441; a woman who had had severe arthritis was now able to walk and flex her hands without pain, 23:471; a baby raised from the dead in 1:940–41. Charismatic Mennonite Gerald Derstine also claimed healing from twenty years of stuttering through

result of temporary suggestion, but this explanation does not suffice for many of the sudden recoveries, often from severe conditions, reported in these volumes.¹⁵³

Kathryn Kuhlman

Not all contemporary reports of healings prove authentic or permanent, but even some of the more controversial examples offer stronger attestation than has often been supposed. One intensely popular (yet often controversial) figure associated with healing in the past generation was Kathryn Kuhlman. I expend more space on her healing activity because she is a fairly recent and well-known figure about whom much has been written and for whom some documentation, including some medical documentation, is available. Various scholars, such as Candy Gunther Brown, have also written about her ministry from an academic standpoint.¹⁵⁴ In contrast to some ministers of her era who emphasized healing, Kuhlman's ministry extended across denominational lines, including Catholic and mainline Protestant clergy.¹⁵⁵

That she, like some other figures cited here, has been controversial in many circles might make evidence for some of the dramatic recoveries all the more significant. Indeed, I began my research with a bias against her ministry, not expecting to find material worthy of interest. I had felt put off culturally by her flamboyant style, useful as it may have been for her publicity and holding attention;¹⁵⁶ I would have

Osborn's ministry (Synan, *Voices*, 44; on Mennonite charismatics, see, e.g., Synan, "Charismatics," 192–98).

153. I spoke briefly in the past with two members of this family (LaDonna and, before her death, Daisy) and have a close friend, Marie Brown, who has worked with them more closely. It is not conceivable to me that they would have simply staged the healings, attendant photographs, and crusade footage, some of which I also watched while investigating the question. That tens of thousands of people would all pretend healing, casting away crutches and so forth, simply to fool the Osborns, and succeed for half a century, seems even less imaginable. This need not mean that every claim would prove authentic (in mass meetings, some individuals do seek attention or wrongly suppose themselves healed) or demonstrably miraculous (some may have recovered from psychosomatic ailments, etc.), but if a reader goes through the volumes and accompanying photographs, to me it seems difficult to imagine any but the most ardent and inflexible skeptic discounting all claims in this manner. Such skeptics exist, but I believe they ask too much faith in their skeptical cause at this point and that a reader committed to neither supernaturalism or antisupernaturalism would find many of these claims significant. I begin with some suspicion of (or at least caution toward) typical healing evangelists, perhaps reflecting my preconversion subculture and my academic background, but in a number of cases sources mitigate my suspicion. I am uncomfortable with some specific elements of this ministry's theology, but evangelism and compassion seem more central to its ministry than such questions.

154. On her, see also Kydd, *Healing*, 181–97; Pope-Levison, *Pulpit*, 212–21. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 179, contends that she insisted on documentation from physicians (minimally including the patient's primary care physician) before healings could be reported in her books; illnesses healed also needed to be already diagnosed and organic; and cures had to prove permanent. Thus, he notes, many apparent spectacular miracles were never reported in the books. See also Brown, "Healing Words," 278 (noting her "panel of supportive physicians to assess the healing claims that came to her attention").

155. See, e.g., the appreciative treatment in Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, 107–10; cf. the invitation of Pope Paul VI noted in Brown, "Healing Words," 271–72.

156. Kydd, *Healing*, 197, helps pinpoint the internal contradiction in her approach, while noting that all of us have some such contradictions.

preferred not to write about her meetings. Unexpectedly, the accounts I found in these works forced me to rethink my prejudices.¹⁵⁷ Apparently I am not alone. British Anglican author Michael Harper was watching skeptically in one of her meetings. When she called out that someone was being healed of emphysema and a young man began running around the auditorium at her orders, Harper was disgusted, suspecting some sort of trickery. Annoyed, he asked the man beside him what he thought about this scene, before noticing how deeply moved the man appeared. The man, it turned out, was the boy's father, who informed him that until that evening the boy could not walk fifty yards without being out of breath; doctors had told him that he could never run. "I learned a lesson that evening," Harper concluded; God could work even through people who seemed unusual to him.¹⁵⁸

One may dispute the interpretation of the documented healings, especially given the apparently larger number who were not healed, and probably at least a few deceptive or self-deceived attention seekers may have passed the tests meant to screen them out (see further discussion in ch. 13). Nevertheless, the very fact that a number of medical and other professionals risked their reputations to supply documentation in many concrete cases¹⁵⁹ demonstrates the minimal point I am making here, namely, that sincere and intelligent eyewitnesses can attest cures that they believe miraculous, even in the modern West.

The popular *Time* magazine, in fact, called Kuhlman "a veritable one-woman shrine of Lourdes"¹⁶⁰ and included four significant, medically attested testimonies of healing, including "a severely deteriorated eardrum," now with "no evidence of damage"; and chronic lymphatic leukemia, with swollen "liver, spleen, and lymph nodes," now completely normal.¹⁶¹ Earlier, *Redbook* magazine hired Emily Gardiner Neal, who claimed to be skeptical, to investigate Kuhlman. After her research, Neal's article proved favorable toward Kuhlman, the editors noting that they had medical and other evidence indicating that indeed a number of people had been cured in connection with the meetings. Neal afterward converted to become an advocate of Kuhlman and divine healing.¹⁶²

One of the first documented cures was of George Orr, whose corneal scarring through an industrial accident left him nearly blind in one eye. Historian Wayne

157. Some academicians who later grew to appreciate charismatic spiritual power in other venues were initially suspicious because of Kuhlman's style (Kraft, *Power*, 6, regarding himself; cf. also John Wimber in Jackson, *Quest*, 50). Interestingly, Kuhlman refused to be identified with the "healing evangelists" or "faith healers" (Warner, *Kuhlman*, 139–40; for her emphasis on God's role as opposed to her own, see, e.g., 128; cf. Dr. Issam Nemei in Zagrans, *Miracles*, 59–60).

158. Harper, *Healings*, 13–14. Harper became a charismatic leader in the Anglican Church, and later became part of the Antiochene Orthodox Church.

159. These include physicians (noted below); likewise, Samuel A. Weiss, judge and former U.S. Congressman, wrote the foreword (7–12) to her book, *Miracles*. For the well-documented healing of a well-known businessman, see Casdorff, *Miracles*, 136–43.

160. "Miracle Woman," 62.

161. *Ibid.*

162. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 122–23 (citing *Redbook*, 1951); Brown, "Healing Words," 273 (noting Neal, *Reporter*, 185).

Warner notes that in 1927, “the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry . . . awarded Orr workmen’s compensation for the loss of an eye.” But on May 4, 1947, his eye was healed as Kuhlman spoke on the subject of healing.¹⁶³ The optometrist certified that the scar tissue had disappeared.¹⁶⁴ Another case was the progressive but total healing of a baby’s clubfoot, a condition that normally would have required braces until at least age fourteen.¹⁶⁵ Other cases include the healing of a cardiac invalid,¹⁶⁶ the instant healing of someone with muscular and nerve degeneration,¹⁶⁷ and so forth.¹⁶⁸

Kuhlman frankly admitted that not all were healed,¹⁶⁹ attributing the results to God’s choice.¹⁷⁰ She herself was never healed from her enlarged heart, and she accepted “medical treatment, which she had often endorsed publicly as one of the means that God used to heal.”¹⁷¹ She also recognized that healings often occurred before or after the meetings, again pointing out that it was God rather than she who performed the healings.¹⁷² The initial healings, in fact, began without her prayer or knowledge as she was speaking.¹⁷³ Her audiences tended to be ecumenical rather than strictly Pentecostal,¹⁷⁴ and a wide range of people appreciated her ministry. As Candy Gunther Brown points out, “Pope Paul VI invited her for a visit, and the municipal governments of Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis bestowed on her civic awards.”¹⁷⁵

Close-range testimonies abound. When Dr. Raquel Burgos, now a pediatrician, was a child, her short leg grew two inches to match the other one within days after

163. Warner, *Kuhlman*, 132–33.

164. *Ibid.*, 134. See at greater length Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 71–75, 137; Kuhlman, *Miracles*, 40–47.

165. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 76–83. The Vatican similarly accepts as genuinely miraculous the claim of the healing of a Muslim boy’s clubfeet in the 1980s at a shrine of a twentieth-century Indian Catholic figure (Dempsey, “Lessons,” 169).

166. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 91–96; cf. the serious heart condition mentioned healed on 139.

167. *Ibid.*, 117–18.

168. E.g., a case of lupus erythematosus diagnosed as terminal (with no symptoms since the prayer for the two years before the book including it was written; *ibid.*, 121–23). Other claims include cases of permanent healing from inoperable, terminal cancer in its end stages (139); complete healing of a severely hydrocephalic baby, with guarded prognosis (140–41, noting that “spontaneous remissions” of this ailment are very rare); and complete healing of Guillain-Barré syndrome (canceling the lung surgery; 152–53; I recount another report of this affliction’s cure below).

169. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 45–46, 215–17. Her theology was influenced by Charles Price (esp. Price, *Faith*; Kydd, *Healing*, 194–95). Their view that faith is God’s gift fits also the approach of Hickson, *Bridegroom*, 70 (though apparently missing the probably objective character of the genitive in Mark 11:22).

170. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 46. She rejected the view that lack of healing meant lack of faith (100–101, 224) but apparently did practice denial of what she did not want to face (129–32, 141, 149, 233–35). She would not know God’s intention in a given case but simply depended on God to accomplish his will (Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 142–43). Not only Kuhlman but Christian healing ministers in general credit God for the healings, at least publicly (Pullum, “Selling,” 149–50), in contrast to some accusations (e.g., the slander that Blumhardt became the object of prayer, Ising, *Blumhardt*, 264).

171. Brown, “Healing Words,” 290–91.

172. *Ibid.*, 288.

173. *Ibid.*, 271.

174. *Ibid.*, 271–72.

175. *Ibid.*

attending one of Kuhlman's meetings; because she had been seeing an orthopedist, she says, she has medical records verifying her claim.¹⁷⁶ One sympathetic author who knew Kuhlman well,¹⁷⁷ Jamie Buckingham, reports numerous miracle claims: a nun instantly healed of a large tumor;¹⁷⁸ two persons born deaf healed at age sixty-six;¹⁷⁹ the healing of a heart condition;¹⁸⁰ the healing of a deteriorating multiple sclerosis patient (previously paralyzed from waist down);¹⁸¹ and another person crippled from birth who was now walking.¹⁸² A Pittsburgh newspaper reported that while many were not healed, a five-year-old allegedly disabled from birth walked, and another person allegedly unable to walk for twelve years was now walking.¹⁸³ Presbyterian minister Don Dunkerley narrates that Delores Winder, a Presbyterian woman sick for twenty years, was at the time of her attendance dying and making funeral arrangements. In these circumstances, she attended a Kuhlman service in 1975 and felt herself fully healed during a stretch of fifteen minutes in that meeting. The medically verified healing proved complete, restoring her feeling, motor control, and ability to walk.¹⁸⁴

From Galen Hertweck (mentioned earlier) I learned of a healing account involving Kuhlman about which he had some knowledge.¹⁸⁵ He put me in touch with Lee Coffey, who shared with me this story of the healing of his first son, Jonathan.

176. Llewellyn, "Events," 255, based on his interview with her.

177. On Buckingham's own struggle with cancer toward the end of his life, see Buckingham, *Summer*. When I conversed with him briefly on Aug. 26, 1991, regarding an article on a different subject, I was unaware of his own recent crisis.

178. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 40–41. Another tumor disappeared (105); a legally blind eye was healed (106); diagnosed lung cancer was healed (116); a hip was instantly replaced (116–17); all the sores or lesions of severe eczema were suddenly healed (165–67). He mentions "thousands" bused in from Canada being healed (168).

179. *Ibid.*, 128, 132, with those who could testify of their previous complete deafness.

180. *Ibid.*, 180–82, including the disappearance of both a pacemaker and the scar of its insertion (noting a doctor's attestation concerning the X-rays).

181. *Ibid.*, 183–84, noting that multiple sclerosis rarely goes into spontaneous remission after wheelchair stage. For medical documentation of the instant healing of an advanced case of multiple sclerosis in a Kuhlman meeting, see Casdorph, *Miracles*, 61–72. Baxter, *Healing*, 184–94 (following Kuhlman, *Late*), recounts the permanent healing of a severely deteriorated multiple sclerosis patient (the permanence of which he verified, 184). Another description of an earlier reported healing of advanced multiple sclerosis in Wales appears in Storms, *Convergence*, 47–48; *idem*, *Guide*, 50–52; and another report of a healing of it in England in Jackson, *Quest*, 255; Wagner, "World," 80; in Turkey, among reports sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, Nov. 9, 2009, although details are not very clear; claims in the United States in DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 76; Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 5, 16–17 (a severe case, instantly healed when a voice commanded her to rise and walk); esp. Prather, *Miracles*, 91; a possible case in Peterman, *Healing*, 1–2; more recently, Clark, *Impartation*, 118–19; cf. also a claim in Bentley, *Miraculous*, 231. Llewellyn, "Events," 242, notes that his wheelchair-bound mother, while healed of other ailments, was never cured of multiple sclerosis, yet (he suggests) miraculously enabled to live to age eighty-six.

182. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 128, 133, noting that hospital records attested this.

183. *Ibid.*, 117.

184. Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 189–90. The account is narrated in greater detail in Casdorph, *Miracles*, 147–57. For examples of Presbyterian churches affirming spiritual gifts, see, e.g., Synan, "Renewal," 166–76.

185. Galen Hertweck, personal correspondence, May 17, 2009.

Immediately after Jonathan's birth in Hoag Hospital in Costa Mesa, California, in 1968, doctors examining Jonathan's features, including his eyes and ear level, warned Lee that they suspected Down syndrome. Early tests seemed to corroborate this diagnosis. Lee was a youth pastor at this time, and the senior pastor (Galen's father) and a visiting evangelist prayed for the child and felt that he would be all right. Kathryn Kuhlman was holding services once a month in Long Beach at this time, so they went to one of the services and happened to see her as she was going in. They asked if she would pray for their son; she did and "claimed him for the service of the Lord." Lee recounts that six to eight weeks later Jonathan's entire facial structure had changed, and at this stage the doctors confessed that they had never seen a case like this before, but that he now appeared completely normal. Now forty years old, Jonathan is an electrical engineer for a national company in Texas, with two normally functioning children.¹⁸⁶

Doctors and Kuhlman

Kuhlman respected the healing work of doctors,¹⁸⁷ and many doctors who visited her meetings reciprocated the sentiment; both professed the same objective of persons' wellness. Buckingham cites the testimonies of various physicians:

Dr. Cecil Titus of St. Luke's Hospital in Cleveland said that a ten-year-old girl's club foot "straightened before my very eyes while Miss Kuhlman prayed." Dr. Kitman Au of Burbank, California, a radiologist, told a newspaper reporter, "I have seen healings in Kathryn Kuhlman's services that I, as a doctor, can only say go beyond human power." And Dr. Richard Owellen, the cancer research specialist from Johns Hopkins University, told of holding his infant child in his arms at a miracle service and watching the child's dislocated hip twist, under the power of the Holy Spirit, until it was healed and in place.¹⁸⁸

Another doctor, E. B. Henry, testified of his own healings of his hearing and, more astonishingly, a false joint caused by a bone fracture;¹⁸⁹ the consensus of most others examining the X-rays concurred that this was a genuine instance of extranormal

186. Lee Don Coffee, phone interview, July 7, 2009. Despite some possibly extremely rare exceptions (one is documented in Pradhan, Dalal, Khan, and Agrawal, "Fertility"), Down syndrome is believed to normally preclude reproduction. Because Down syndrome occurs at the chromosomal level (not always in all the chromosomes; Dr. Tahira Adelekan, phone interview, April 24, 2009, not addressing this specific case), some cases of healing claims might involve effects of Down syndrome on various functional limitations rather than the chromosomal issue itself.

187. E.g., Kuhlman, *Miracles*, 15, in support of doctors: "I believe that God has the power to heal instantly without the material tools of scientific medicine; but I *also* believe that God gave us our brains to use!"

188. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 185. Dr. Owellen's testimony appears also in Brown, "Healing Words," 278 (citing Kuhlman, *Impossible*, 71). Spraggett (*Kuhlman*, 120) interviewed Titus, who attested that he personally witnessed the instant healing of this clear case of clubfoot, at close range.

189. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 185–87 (quoting the doctor's letter). He reports another doctor's healing on 229–31.

healing.¹⁹⁰ Yet another physician, Dr. Martin Biery, a specialist in spinal cord surgery at a veterans hospital in Long Beach, California, testified to witnessing “arthritics whose spines were frozen get instantaneous freedom and move and bend in all directions without pain.”¹⁹¹ Dr. Viola Frymann, also from California, testified to cures she witnessed, including a blind child receiving sight, and “another child, whose arm and leg were paralyzed from cerebral palsy, . . . healed before her eyes.”¹⁹² This healing included paralysis vanishing and a twisted leg straightening.¹⁹³ Buckingham testifies that he and Dr. Robert Hoyt in 1969 witnessed a sudden healing miracle of an eye that was never (before his book’s publication) reported publicly.¹⁹⁴

Allen Spraggett, an investigative reporter who does not mince words in denouncing what he considers many spurious healing evangelists,¹⁹⁵ believed Kuhlman to be genuine. He reports other clearly supranormal healings attested by Hoyt, Dr. James Blackann, and other physicians.¹⁹⁶ In one case a boy was born with a deformed foot that could be corrected medically only by major surgery followed by months of convalescence. When Kuhlman called out that God was healing a child’s legs, the boy “walked up to the stage, ran back and forth, and skipped.” Dr. Blackann attested that the boy was well.¹⁹⁷ “I’ve seen massive cysts disperse immediately,” he further declared. “I’ve seen spastic conditions disappear. I’ve seen arthritic spines and limbs instantly freed in her services.”¹⁹⁸ Dr. Blackann was instantly healed of serious phlebitis when Kuhlman announced that God was healing someone of such an affliction, although he had not prayed for it and did not realize it until he noticed that the pain and swelling were gone.¹⁹⁹

By contrast, Dr. William Nolen offers cases of people who were not healed at Kathryn Kuhlman meetings or who he believed wrongly thought they were.²⁰⁰

190. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 84–90; cf. also 114.

191. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 187. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 6–7, also notes Dr. Biery testifying in Ms. Kuhlman’s meetings.

192. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 187–88; also in Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 12–13. She told a reporter (noted as a critic of Kuhlman’s in Buckingham, *Daughter*, 215) that she hoped the medical profession would become aware “of such spiritual healing.” For another claim of healing of cerebral palsy, see Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 138.

193. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 13, noting that Frymann observed that in a child this would not be merely a hysterical reaction.

194. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 188–89. For other accounts, see, e.g., Brown, “Healing Words,” 284, 288–89; and more extensively Kuhlman, *Again*; idem, *Impossible* (I drew examples primarily from idem, *Miracles*). Although I am emphasizing Kuhlman, others also claim to have personally witnessed physical changes as different ministers such as Oral Roberts prayed (Carothers, *Prison*, 47).

195. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 16–26. Spraggett is no orthodox Christian apologist; he is personally inclined to explain Kuhlman’s successes in parapsychological terms (125–29, 155–56, 171–72, though he does not rule out divine activity compatible with this interpretation).

196. *Ibid.*, 58–61. Hoyt was also ready to identify, with Kuhlman’s approval, the lack of cure in someone who thought he had been cured (63).

197. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 59–60 (quote from 60); the healing is reported to have occurred in May 1968.

198. *Ibid.*, 64.

199. *Ibid.*, 111–12.

200. Nolen, *Healing*, 41–102. Nolen starts with sufficient skepticism that he may place the bar too high for genuine evidence; one can give an alternative explanation for almost anything—unless it happens too often, which he lacked sufficient examples to test. Beyond the clear failures, he discounts those who

He gives the example of a multiple sclerosis sufferer whom he believed had not improved, except in her own perceptions;²⁰¹ another's migraines had been reduced, but this could be attributed to psychological causes;²⁰² a nun's bursitis had improved, but bursitis comes and goes anyway;²⁰³ a woman's varicose veins had gone away, but these often leave after pregnancy.²⁰⁴ Of sixteen examples Kuhlman supplied, he "found that two thirds of the patients suffered from diseases such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, paralysis (no cause listed), loss of sight, and allergies, in all of which the psyche often plays a major and dominant role."²⁰⁵

He therefore dismisses cures of such conditions as potentially psychosomatic, although many other observers would be less inclined to dismiss some of them (such as loss of sight) so readily. Since only one of the six cancer cures on the list would talk with him, he dismissed the other cures, and he observed that the person who did agree to talk with him was healed of prostate cancer, which may have simply been cured by prior medical treatment or by a spontaneous remission.²⁰⁶ (Given his verdict, the person who talked to him may have wished that, like the others, he had refused to discuss the case with Nolen.²⁰⁷) Besides these negative examples, many of which could be disputed, he cites a failure difficult to contest: one woman died of her cancer after testifying of healing at Kuhlman's services.²⁰⁸ Yet even Nolen agreed that Kuhlman believed that she was honest,

merely "improved" or went into remissions known to occur sometimes without prayer (most ailments can). He also does not address the more dramatic cures such as recounted in Casdorph, who was much more closely acquainted with Kathryn Kuhlman's ministry. That Randi, *Faith Healers*, 228–29, simply follows Nolen uncritically does not inspire confidence in Randi, who makes no pretense of neutrality.

201. Nolen, *Healing*, 79, although it may be noted that the sufferer herself disagreed.

202. *Ibid.*, 79–81.

203. *Ibid.*, 81–84. Bill Jackson (interview, Nov. 13, 2007, recounting an incident in the mid-1990s) shared with me an instant healing of an elderly man with bursitis in his left shoulder, when he prayed for him; immediately after prayer the man could lift his left arm (previously impossible), now with a full range of motion. The man belonged to Jackson's church in Champaign, Illinois.

204. Nolen, *Healing*, 88–89.

205. *Ibid.*, 100. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 36, also discounts multiple sclerosis, since it "fluctuates between periods of improvement and decline." It does not, however, normally yield to a permanent and instant cure, which some cases associated with divine healing do claim (Cranston, *Miracle*, 283–84 regarding Lourdes). May, "Miracles," 154, views medical intervention as the only possible natural cure for organic blindness, though he opines that one person claiming healing may simply have felt "better about her vision." McClenon, "Miracles," 187, includes among Kimbangu's psychologically based cures "many of the blind, paralyzed, and deaf." In ch. 12 we shall examine cases of blindness and other disabilities not so easily dismissed, given their cluster in contexts of reported divine activity.

206. Nolen, *Healing*, 100.

207. One wonders if the cancer cases who refused to talk with him did so from fear of the very sort of treatment with which he dismisses the one who did talk with him. Certainly, it may have been natural remission, but if we exclude from intelligent causation anything that could not occur naturally, there is very little that *cannot* remit naturally, and the same criterion would exclude the value of medical cures. One would need a quantitative study to ascertain cumulative benefits in such cases and would also need to allow for different outcomes among different ministers involved in healings.

208. Nolen, *Healing*, 99. Randi, *Faith Healers*, 288, assigns similar failures to Oral Roberts; others occurred early in the twentieth century (Jeffries, "Healing," 72) and more recently (a tragic case in May,

and that she did not “plant” people to claim healings,²⁰⁹ as some clearly fraudulent evangelists have done.

Yet charges of bias can cut both ways. Buckingham complains that Nolen “visited only one miracle service and interviewed only a handful of people who claimed healings.” By contrast, Buckingham claimed that he interviewed “at least two hundred medically documented cases of miraculous healings.”²¹⁰ Less graciously, Lawrence Althouse complains that the research in Nolen’s widely hailed book “would hardly have been adequate for a college freshman’s term paper,” since it involved a single visit to one of Kuhlman’s services and “a clumsy follow-up on some of the people allegedly cured at that service.”²¹¹

Dr. Richard Casdorph mounted the most serious assault on Nolen’s skepticism.²¹² Despite Casdorph’s notably strong medical and academic credentials,²¹³ his subsequent advocacy elsewhere of chelation therapy, an alternative medical approach challenged by current medical research, underlines his willingness to take unconventional, and sometimes highly disputable, approaches.²¹⁴ Nevertheless,

“Miracles,” 146). Buskirk, *Healing*, 47, notes that many who claim to be cured by faith ultimately prove not to be. “Yet,” he adds, “there have been true cures.”

209. E.g., Nolen, *Healing*, 86, 101. He notes that she was very cooperative but medically uninformed (100). He notes that those who were obviously not cured were not allowed to testify in the meetings (93); while this shows that many were not healed, it also fits the concern of those involved not to permit false testimonies. Less favorable is Bishop, *Healing*, 67 (cf. 72–73), who claims that one of her assistants in one meeting instructed ushers to keep those who were crippled from coming forward. If this is correct, the assistant may have wished to exclude the obviously disabled whose lack of healing would be conspicuous or even hurtful to them if they tried to walk and unhelpful for an atmosphere of “faith,” though this procedure does not suggest the assistant’s expectation that many would be healed while moving (cf. Luke 17:14).

210. Buckingham, *Daughter*, 211–12. He claims (212) that Dr. H. Richard Casdorph confronted Nolen “on the *Mike Douglas Show* in Philadelphia in 1975”; Casdorph had with him a teenager who “had been healed of bone cancer . . . and Dr. Casdorph had x-rays and medical records to verify it.” Brown, “Healing Words,” 281, notes that “Kuhlman’s most adamant critics emerged from the religious, rather than the medical establishment.”

211. Althouse, *Healing*, 59, complaining that “it is not scientific research.” Althouse published this work with Abingdon Press, part of The United Methodist Publishing House. Nevertheless, Althouse’s citation of scientific research on the healing of wounded mice, plants, etc. (59–65; see more fully Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 144–50; cf. MacNutt, *Healing*, 31–32, esp. his concession about “an element of the bizarre”; Epperly, *Touch*, 19), does not seem strongly helpful. Astonishingly, Mayhue, *Healing*, 95, cites Nolen with approval, perhaps because it suits Mayhue’s harder cessationist approach, 75–79. Miller, “Miracle Worker,” 25, simply accepts Nolen’s critique and then appeals to Lourdes instead (which also has its share of critics, such as West, *Miracles*, who appears to me nearly as tendentious as Nolen).

212. Often noted, e.g., Brown, “Kuhlman,” 236.

213. Casdorph, MD, PhD, a former captain in the U.S. Air Force Medical Corps and a faculty member at the University of California medical schools in both Los Angeles and Irvine, also published widely in medical journals, including four articles in *Journal of the American Medical Association* and one in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Bredeesen, *Miracle*, 20, also notes his more than four years on staff at the Mayo Clinic and his authorship of a medical textbook (cf. Casdorph, *Miracles*, 169).

214. Brown, “Healing Words,” 280–81. Chelation therapy, generally accepted for treating lead and usually other metal poisoning, has shown tentative promise for some other ailments but so far has proved ineffective in treating coronary heart disease (American Heart Association; a more definitive study was due to be completed in 2010) and its use for Alzheimer’s disease (where Casdorph found it useful) is disputed. In the past, critics have discredited faith healing by linking it with other controversial approaches;

his book on healings, although on a popular level (like Nolen's), includes medical documentation, including before-and-after X-rays, unlike Nolen's.²¹⁵ He provides case studies of nine documented healings of serious disorders, sometimes instant healings such as one that allowed a wheelchair-bound person to suddenly walk and run, and remained permanent.²¹⁶

Many of these examples cannot be explained as remissions or on other naturalistic grounds available to us. One case was Lisa Larios, a teenager who was expected to live only six more months:²¹⁷ she had not even been told that her condition was terminal but was suddenly healed in a Kuhlman meeting, able to walk and run. Testing revealed that her bones had been repaired—a phenomenon not attributable to psychosomatic causes, even if she *had* known the nature of her condition.²¹⁸ Casdorph also documents the healing of a malignant brain tumor;²¹⁹ medical documentation “includes biopsy proof of the malignant nature of the brain tumor” prior to the healing.²²⁰

Were most people cured in her meetings? It appears not. Were some persons somehow cured, even of clearly nonpsychosomatic disorders? It appears so.²²¹ No one claims that everyone was healed, but it is also difficult to dispute that significant

Opp, *Lord for Body*, 12; Mullin, *Miracles*, 103. Controlled studies carry more weight than the more limited approach of case studies, but a number of Casdorph's examples of miracle healings, presumably as opposed to the claimed benefits of chelation therapy, are not readily attributable to chance (e.g., bones do not suddenly repair themselves).

215. Some scholars have also cited the evidence in this work in support of credible evidence for miraculous healing (e.g., Breggen, “Miracle Reports,” 382).

216. Casdorph, *Miracles*. Another popular book (Hinn, *Miracle*) offers some medical documentation (reviewed by Donald Colbert, MD, as noted on 12–13) concerning Benny Hinn's ministry, with photographed before-and-after medical reports (37, 42, 44, 50, 56, 70, 75, 79, 90, 101–2, 104, 111, 116, 118, 123, 131–32, 139, 142, 146, 157, 159, 161, 173, 175). Hinn claims (21) that he has “seen people walk out of wheelchairs, throw away hearing aids,” and so on, and “the files in our office are filled with before-and-after medical reports.” He notes that he does not have healing lines and “rarely” prays “for individuals”; rather, he points people to Jesus, who heals them (21–22). Others also cite Hinn's book (Breggen, “Miracle Reports,” 382); I have not engaged it more fully because I did not want large-scale evangelists associated with healing (not really the focus of this book) to dominate much of this chapter. There has been significant controversy about his ministry (see Poewe, “Nature,” 24n9), though at the time of his book's publication, he had apparently renounced prosperity teaching (Alexander, *Signs*, 71, citing Strang, “Hinn”). Others have simply noted that they regularly receive letters from people claiming to have been healed in their meetings, without citing medical documentation (e.g., Dearing, *Healing*, 118).

217. Casdorph, *Miracles*, 27; the entire account is 25–33.

218. *Ibid.*, 30–32. Cf. the gradual healing of bones in cases at Lourdes in the mid-1960s (Cranston, *Miracle*, 303, 304); the testimony of immediate or overnight transformation of lung and bones in Bredeesen, *Miracle*, 55–56; the account of a crushed hip and pelvis healed before the following morning's X-ray reported in Tallman, *Shakarian*, 100–101. Medical treatment for extensive bone growth can require a painful and extensive process (cf. the Ilizarov frame in Piper, *Minutes*, 68–69).

219. Casdorph, *Miracles*, 49–57.

220. *Ibid.*, 56. As of the book's publication in 1976, she continued to remain healthy long after the Aug. 1971 healing. Baxter, *Healing*, 212–27, recounts a dramatic healing of myasthenia gravis in Casdorph (with medical documentation for multiple family members healed at once).

221. For one fairly neutral assessment, noting both positive and negative features, see Schwarz, *Healing*, 47–49.

recoveries occurred, apparently in conjunction with prayer. One may associate these with Kathryn Kuhlman's faith or that of the supplicants, or, as in some of Kuhlman's teaching, to no one's faith at all;²²² but the evidence suggests that some people were healed, even in extraordinary ways.

Father Ralph DiOrio

One of the figures known in North American Catholic healing ministry is Father Ralph DiOrio.²²³ One of his books (*A Miracle to Proclaim*) reports healings of highly malignant bone cancer,²²⁴ an inoperable brain tumor unresponsive to chemotherapy,²²⁵ a three-year-old's acute leukemia,²²⁶ metastatic cancer,²²⁷ neuropathy and likely terminal cancer,²²⁸ and other claims.²²⁹ One man severely injured when hit by a car was told that he would need a cane for the rest of his life. Healed during a prayer service, he ran around the church and no longer needed a brace or cane; X-rays showed that his leg was healed, and he discontinued pain and sleeping pills.²³⁰ Another man, Everett Rivers, suffering from multiple sclerosis, had not worked for seven years and had been wheelchair-bound for roughly a year before his healing. Though nonreligious, he visited a prayer service on October 2, 1980, and rose from his wheelchair and walked.²³¹ In contrast to some incidents reportedly generated merely by a burst of emotion, a few years later the man testified, "I have neither returned to a wheelchair nor required medication. In fact, I've gone back to work."²³²

222. Her later ministry emphasized especially God's sovereignty (Warner, *Kuhlman*, 137).

223. Noted elsewhere, e.g., Rogge, "Relationship," 378. Another Catholic priest with a healing ministry is Father Richard Bain (see Winston, *Faith*, 127–38).

224. DiOrio, *Miracle*, 27–35. Testimonies in this book are normally narrated by the person healed, and a nun who is a registered nurse compiled them (S). Some (not all) of the testimonies remained recent at the time that the book was written, so I inquired from one of Father DiOrio's associates whether a large number of healings remained permanent. From her personal knowledge of many persons involved, she emphasized that they did (Aldona Sarkauskas, phone interview, June 4, 2009). Apart from what I found in the books, I was not able to obtain any documentation from the ministry.

225. DiOrio, *Miracle*, 37–43.

226. *Ibid.*, 91–95 (without illness in the four years between the prayer and the book); for another case of leukemia, a three-month-old, reported two years after the healing (153–59). Earlier, Salmon, *Heals*, 100, reports a cure of leukemia; other reports in McKenna, *Miracles*, 38; "Doctor Healed"; Danyun, *Lilies*, 345; Rasolondraibe, "Ministry," 350; Neal, *Power*, 56; Woodward, *Miracles*, 368–69; Robertson, *Miracles*, 150–51; Jacques Vernaund, personal correspondence, Aug. 29, 2005.

227. DiOrio, *Miracle* 97–105 (the cancer had spread to the liver and spine). This account is narrated by her husband, a dentist, who had himself been cured of bursitis (102).

228. *Ibid.*, 141–51.

229. E.g., juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (57–63, at the age of eight in 1980); a cervical disk (65–79); infertility (81–89); tumor of the heel (107–11); cancer of the chest (113–19); "lazy eye" (121–26); multiple injuries caused by an accident (127–32); a cardiologist healed of arthritis (133–39; this was progressive, after the prayer, 138); a child's severe allergies with bloody rashes (187–93); lupus erythematosus (207–11); progressive healing of Guillain-Barré syndrome (219–31); and myasthenia gravis (245–51).

230. The healed man's testimony in DiOrio, *Miracle*, 167–71.

231. *Ibid.*, 173–79 (here 177).

232. *Ibid.*, 177–78.

Further testimonies appear in Father DiOrio's other works. Among them,²³³ a baby with myelofibrosis, for which there was no known cure, was supposed to die, but the baby started to recover after prayer and within three months its health was normal.²³⁴ A doctor testified about the healing of phlebitis through prayer;²³⁵ another doctor, Dr. Alberto M. Barrera, claims to have been healed himself of coronary heart disease²³⁶ (though some other doctors question some of his claims).²³⁷ One boy given a 20 percent chance of living to age seven was prayed for, along with receiving the normal medical treatments, and continued to remain well at twelve years old, though doctors allowed a 15 to 20 percent chance of the brain tumor's recurrence.²³⁸

DiOrio's books that I sampled respect medicine, include medical opinions, and often appear cautious in their claims. Nevertheless, as in the case of Kathryn Kuhlman, Father DiOrio has his detractors.²³⁹ One investigative report discounted all claims to cures in the twenty-eight cases the reporter investigated,²⁴⁰ though DiOrio's ministry claims that seven thousand have reported physical healings, with one-quarter including a doctor's confirmation of some sort.²⁴¹ The reporter's figure of dismissed cures included ten that DiOrio's ministry itself had deemed cures (the ones that really count in this matter, since DiOrio does not claim that everyone he prays for will be healed).²⁴² Of these ten, the reporter could evaluate only seven, depending on physicians' reports, and he categorized these in the following way: doctors concluded that two were not genuinely cured; in three cases, he regarded the original problem as not medically certain; and the other two recoveries may have simply occurred naturally or due to conventional treatment.²⁴³

233. Also infertility (DiOrio, *Signs*, 51–57); encephalitis (but gradual and partial, 119); and other recoveries.

234. DiOrio, *Signs*, 21–26; as of the book's writing, the child was four and needed only annual checkups.

235. *Ibid.*, 28–36 (the doctor's testimony is 34–35).

236. *Ibid.*, 37–46.

237. Emery, "Cured," 11, notes that, contrary to Barrera's claim, another doctor claims that Barrera experienced continued pain and took heavy medication for it; another doubted Barrera's claim that his condition had been clearly fatal. I would not be qualified to arbitrate these claims even if I had all the evidence in hand.

238. DiOrio, *Signs*, 60–65 (the percentages appear on 65).

239. Like many other healing evangelists, DiOrio comes in for critique in Randi, *Faith Healers*, 217–25. I am not in a position to verify DiOrio's claimed healings and was not able to obtain from his ministry a response to Emery's claims, apparently in view of their other pressing work, but I do not find Randi's objections compelling in this case, in contrast to several others where he provided genuine evidence of fraud. Although my impression is from a distance and cannot count for much, Father DiOrio appears to be sincere and genuinely concerned for people's recovery, though a number of the recoveries could also occur naturally.

240. See Emery, "Cured," 9. I thank Joseph Carey, my editor on two commentaries, for kindly bringing this source to my attention; being neutral, he also noted some sources appreciative of Father DiOrio, but these did not include sufficient detail regarding particular healings for me to cite here. May, "Miracles," 148–49, similarly excludes all seven of the examples supplied by Morris Cerullo as having possible natural explanations (although May does not elaborate, he does have the expertise to raise such questions).

241. Emery, "Cured," 9.

242. *Ibid.*, citing a couple that Emery says DiOrio "proclaimed healed," but Emery's report on p. 8 attributes this explicit proclamation only to a bystander. No one would dispute that the couple was not healed (see 12).

243. *Ibid.*, 10.

These particular results do not offer impressive evidence for divine intervention²⁴⁴ (stronger cases appear elsewhere in this book), but if one is merely considering the possibility of divine activity rather than trying to prove it beyond doubt, the five recoveries admitted out of these seven could involve it easily enough.²⁴⁵ Moreover, they do not rule out some other testimonies noted above, some of which are supported by doctors' opinions. That is, even a report apparently designed to discredit healings associated with this ministry does not decisively settle the question. Neither Emery nor I are doctors, so we can only depend on doctors' verdicts at this point; and unlike Emery, I was unfortunately unable to secure documentation from Father DiOrio's ministry on which I could follow up.²⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the report does highlight the difficulties of collecting testimonies from public meetings;²⁴⁷ even some who believed themselves improved at the time showed no genuine medical changes afterward,²⁴⁸ a problem not limited to any one ministry. Further, it illustrates that a doctor sympathetic to a patient's beliefs about a recovery might be apt to provide an endorsement even if the same illness is known to remit often without prayer, whereas one hostile to those beliefs might refuse an endorsement or might offer less plausible alternative explanations to an investigator, especially a skeptical one, even if a neutral observer might regard the recovery as naturally inexplicable.²⁴⁹ Most fundamentally, then, the report highlights a problem to which I shall return in chapters 13–15 (a problem not limited to any particular person or ministry, though the reporter raised it only for this case geographically near him): How do we read the evidence?

Some Less-Conspicuous Ministries

Although some of the stories that follow involve those known for ministering healing to others, the majority of stories involve voices who come closer to fitting Hume's criterion for reliable witnesses with much to lose. In most cases

244. The "words of knowledge" that Emery cites (*ibid.*, 12–13, 17) are at best imperfect and vague. With many scholars (including many charismatic scholars; see, e.g., Williams, *Renewal Theology*, 2:355–57), I doubt that this is what Paul meant by the phrase "word of knowledge" in 1 Cor 12:8 (Keener, *Corinthians*, 101). Nevertheless, many do cite cases of paranormal knowledge (see, e.g., Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 115–19; cf. Keener, *Gift*, 116).

245. In one case, for example, the prior medical treatment for a neck tumor included only ten days of radiation therapy (Emery, "Cured," 11, noting her prior cures of bone cancer by radiation treatments, although not specifying their duration).

246. Perhaps in part because of their experiences with more skeptical inquirers like Emery, whom I perhaps imprudently mentioned during my inquiry, prompting (it seemed) a quick closure to the discussion.

247. See comments in chs. 7, 13.

248. See Emery, "Cured," 13, 17.

249. A skeptical investigator may well prefer only the medical verdicts that share his or her negative assessment, even when no naturalistic explanation is readily available. Anyone who has been involved in journalism recognizes that how one frames questions can also shape answers, and this practice might prove especially significant when doctors do not wish to appear as publicly supporting verdicts that would hurt their standing with naturalistic peers. That is not to claim that Emery necessarily framed questions in that way, and it is certainly not to claim that one should not press for details. I have often had to ask uncomfortable questions of interviewees to establish to my satisfaction how certain they could be of various details.

their reputations involved other activities, and they would not stand to profit from testifying of healings they experienced or witnessed (especially in the more dramatic cases). While they may vary greatly with regard to their evidential weight for miracles, they continue to illustrate the breadth of experiences included in claims about divine healing.

I started this chapter with the story of Brad Wilkinson. The man who prayed for him, Wesley Steelberg, was alive to pray for him due only to his own unusual recovery. When he was fifty-two, a massive heart attack on October 14, 1974, nearly claimed his life; open-heart surgery helped him, but his heart muscle remained weak. The doctor described his heart as not so much “beating” as “fluttering,” and for the next six years he was on daily medication for continued angina (heart pain). His ability to function severely curtailed, he retired from ministry and had to spend much of his time in bed. While he was experiencing what appeared to be another heart attack and desperately trying just to stay conscious, believers prayed for him, and he felt what he afterward described as something like a “bolt of lightning.” His dizziness and the pain he had endured constantly all day long for six years suddenly vanished.

His daughter described for me what followed: “From that moment, dad was a new man. On the way home, [it was] he [who] carried the luggage, not mom. He was able to breathe deeply, without any pain, and to exercise, and to live a full life. He made an appointment with his cardiologist as soon as he got home, and the doctor was stunned, saying he could find no medical reason for the ‘spontaneous healing.’” Steelberg “spent the next several years traveling” around the world in vigorous ministry, until passing away six years later in his sixties from congestive heart failure, in 1986.²⁵⁰ It was during these extended years of health that in 1984 he prayed for Brad Wilkinson who, along with many others he prayed for, was healed.

Though the child was much younger than Brad, another account about a hole in the heart came my way. Psychology professor Dan Montgomery stayed with a family whose baby had this condition and was scheduled for a risky surgery the next week. Feeling a repeated compulsion to go pray for the child, he finally acquiesced, with the parents’ blessing. “Not knowing what else to do, I put my hand on Julie’s head and prayed my first ever prayer for physical healing.” It was a simple prayer, but the next week, after the surgeon took a final X-ray to be sure where to operate, he canceled the surgery. The surgeon showed the parents the X-ray confirming that the hole had disappeared.²⁵¹

Healing claims are not of course limited to holes in the heart, and they appear in a wide range of sources, which we merely sample below. Thus, for example, as superintendent and surgeon at a London Mission Hospital in North China,

250. Candace Fisk, personal correspondence, June 25, 2009 (with June 28, 2009). Cf. the account of Dr. H. B. Wallin, dying from a heart condition, his heart fully healed in the seventeen days between checkups (Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 97–98, based on his interview and Dr. Wallin’s citation of medical sources).

251. Montgomery, *Faith*, 109–12. Dan Montgomery brought this case to my attention. Note also the similar brief account in Anderson, *Miracles*, 96.

Dr. R. Kenneth McAll spent four years in a Japanese prison camp. Lacking other means to treat one dying prisoner, he prayed for him; the man had recovered completely by the next morning. Later he prayed with a patient in English, and within twenty minutes, the operation was unnecessary. “Many instances of this kind came my way,” he notes, “both during my years as a medical missionary in China and afterwards in general practice” in the United Kingdom.²⁵²

In 1952, the Reverend Dr. John Ellis Large was appointed to the (Episcopal) Church of Heavenly Rest in New York City and found that his predecessor had held weekly healing services. Uncomfortable with the notion and convinced that he lacked any healing gift, he sought to discontinue the services, but his parishioners insisted, pointing out that God was the healer in any case. After much study of the matter, he concluded that God could heal people whether the pastor had a gift or not, and he acquiesced to continuing the services. “To his surprise, cures began to be reported almost from the first service,” a reporter notes.²⁵³

Corrie Ten Boom is mostly known for her family rescuing Jews during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands and her subsequent suffering in a Nazi death camp. But she also prayed for sick persons, reporting as examples of associated cures the instant healing of a Chinese pastor’s injured wife in Indonesia and the healing of a missionary’s leprosy.²⁵⁴

Lloyd John Ogilvie notes that his church, Hollywood Presbyterian Church, did a study regarding biblical teaching on healing. At the end of the study, one of the elders noted that another elder, a psychologist, had been sitting among them in a neck brace and much pain due to an injury. They therefore prayed for his healing, and the next Sunday he was present without the brace and without the pain. This was the beginning of the church’s ministry of healing prayer.²⁵⁵ J. Sidlow Baxter, a noted evangelical leader in the twentieth-century West,²⁵⁶ testifies to being healed from diagnosed, severe diabetes.²⁵⁷

When doctors had abandoned hope of survival for a girl with “an incurable tongue disease,” Presbyterian Francis Schaeffer read Jas 5:13–18, then anointed her with oil and prayed. “The doctors could not explain the change which took place,” Francis’s wife, Edith, noted, as the girl, beginning to recover from that day, grew “completely well.” She notes that Francis claimed no special gift; he was simply obeying the passage of Scripture. He continued to anoint the sick, though not always with the same results: “There have been other times when someone

252. McAll, “Deliverance,” 296. One mental patient “hidden under the bedclothes” was also completely delivered after prayer without any further medicine. On McAll, see also Poewe, “Nature,” 3.

253. Oursler, *Power*, 53–54.

254. Ten Boom, *Tramp*, 125–26. The brief testimony does not clarify how or how quickly the leprosy cure occurred. Cf. her reference to healing and another minister in *ibid.*, 60.

255. Ogilvie, *Healing*, 35.

256. Born in Australia, he was reared in England and in later life immigrated to the United States. For his biography, see Johnston, *Baxter*.

257. Baxter, *Healing*, 254–58 (writing thirteen years later, 258).

has been healed of a disease pronounced incurable, but there also have been times when no change came at all.”²⁵⁸

At age seven, on July 16, 1977, Ben Godwin was hit by a car, splintering and dislodging from his body three inches of his tibia (a leg bone). Doctors expected him to walk with a severe limp the rest of his life, if his leg was saved. His Pentecostal mother refused to stop praying, and some three months later X-rays revealed that the entire length of the bone had been restored, shocking the physician. The expected bone graft operation was canceled, and his bone quickly filled in fully. Far from limping the rest of his life, Ben went on to play sports. Part of his ministry today helps people deal with tragedy.²⁵⁹ I might add that unlike many people, Godwin kept the X-rays for documentation, which I have seen.

David Wilkerson is widely known not for healings but as the founder of Teen Challenge, a ministry with a high success rate for addiction recovery. When he was twelve years old, however, his father, a pastor, was dying and expected to live just two more hours. As he saw his father's bed and the floor drenched with blood, he ran downstairs to the coal bin and began crying out to God desperately, unaware that the furnace pipes from the bin carried his voice throughout the house. Hearing him, David's parents asked the family doctor to step outside momentarily while David was brought upstairs so he could lay hands on his father and pray. The doctor entered again, feeling sorry for the boy, but suddenly grew astonished as he examined the father's blood pressure. "I have just witnessed a miracle," the doctor confessed, and David's father got out of the bed. He was still a Pentecostal minister when David as an adult started Teen Challenge.²⁶⁰

A popular musician until his death in a plane crash in 1982, Keith Green was a recent convert to Christianity when he learned that God sometimes healed people for whom prayer was offered. His widow, Melody, recounts that the two of them prayed for a woman named Lori who had an inoperable blood clot in her brain and was expected to live only six months. After they had prayed for about five minutes, Lori felt convinced that she had been healed. Two weeks later, they learned that an X-ray showed no blood clot, reportedly dumbfounding her doctor and three of his colleagues.²⁶¹

Presbyterian pastor Donald Bartow prayed for an elderly friend "bedfast with a rare skin disease," whose "entire body was covered with an itching, seeping, painful rash. . . . His wife had to change his shorts four or five times a day because of the seeping." Bartow and others anointed him with oil and prayed; the next morning they discovered that he was sitting up, cured, with new skin beneath the old skin that was now peeling off.²⁶² British Anglican author Michael Harper

258. Schaeffer, *Tapestry*, 222.

259. Godwin, *Strategy*, 16–66; idem, personal correspondence, May 23, 2009.

260. Wilkerson, *Cross*, 39–41.

261. Green and Hazard, *No Compromise*, 101–3 (note that the pagination differs in some other editions; the relevant pages in a Harvest House edition are 137–38).

262. Bartow, *Adventures*, 118, noting that the rash never recurred. The man, then in his seventies, lived into his nineties. Bartow's interest in healing had started with his own healing years earlier, gradual but contrary to medical expectations (13–14).

prayed for the sick because it was biblical, yet barely expected anything to happen. Later he began to receive reports that, despite his own lack of faith, some of those for whom he prayed had been healed of chronic illnesses.²⁶³ Due to “a complete nervous and physical breakdown,” Methodist missionary E. Stanley Jones was initially forced to return to the States, but found himself suddenly healed in a moment of faith.²⁶⁴

A few decades ago, the now late Episcopal rector Dennis Bennett supplied numerous stories of healings. One case involved a skeptic named Rupe, who doubted that Jesus ever existed. Rupe was expected to die soon because peritonitis from a ruptured appendix had led to the paralysis of his diaphragm. Instead, he was healed through Bennett’s prayer (though Bennett admitted that his own faith was limited), astonishing the doctors. Not surprisingly, Rupe relinquished his skepticism!²⁶⁵ In another case, a young man from Spokane named Sibley, hit by a car, was in almost hopeless condition, which Bennett describes as follows: “Fractured skull, brain damage, paralyzed on one side, a broken leg which could not be set because of his precarious balance between life and death, gangrene in both feet,” in a coma already for a month, and now appearing like “skin and bones.” Doctors said that he would not be able to communicate because of the severity of the brain damage.²⁶⁶ Rita Reed (soon after this Rita Bennett) prayed with him, and the next day he began moving his head and eating solid food, after the feeding tube was removed from his stomach. Soon he was talking and recovered completely.²⁶⁷

While warden of the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem, Donald Bridge noted some cases of healings in his sphere of ministry: “I know personally of a serious blood-disease over which the words ‘inexplicable recovery’ were written on the medical card, of a horrifying varicose ulcer which was healed in the presence of two doctors, and of a case of cancer in the shoulder and neck which, after prayer, was found on the operating-table to have disappeared.”²⁶⁸

Another example comes from the family of the Pentecostal scholar Stanley Horton, whom I have known for more than three decades as a person of integrity. In 1949, his wife, Evelyn, had a serious case of two fibroid tumors, making her pregnancy difficult. The tumors were deemed too dangerously positioned to remove, and doctors advised the Hortons not to have more children. But after three years, Evelyn felt that God had healed her, and neither of the two doctors she consulted could find any tumors. When in 1956 the nurse announced that Evelyn would

263. Harper, *Healings*, 12.

264. Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 106. Jones became one of the leading missionary statespersons of the twentieth century.

265. Bennett, *Morning*, 97–100.

266. *Ibid.*, 142–43.

267. *Ibid.*, 143–44. Bennett compares the restoration of Karen Emmott in Marshall, *Beyond Ourselves*, 221–28. Cf. the reversal of brain damage in DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 115–16.

268. Bridge, *Signs*, 190.

have another child, Evelyn danced down the hallway.²⁶⁹ Many Pentecostals can recount some stories like this from their own family or local church.²⁷⁰

Assemblies of God Seminary president Byron Klaus shared with me some of the accounts from his earlier ministry. A ten-year-old girl had Reye's syndrome. She lay in a coma on a bed of ice, with "a shunt in her brain to relieve pressure." Byron heard the doctor observe that she would be dead in forty-eight hours. He and his intern, a Wheaton College student, prayed fervently and felt that God had heard them. The girl awoke well the next day; despite doctors' predictions that she would need three months to regain motor skills, "she walked out of that hospital in 10 days." The next week the Joliet, Illinois, newspaper reported the remarkable recovery; the girl remained well and is now a mother. Likewise, on another occasion Byron prayed for an elderly woman scheduled for lung cancer surgery, who had smoked for more than four decades before her conversion; during the surgery the doctors found nothing and questioned why she had been slated for surgery. She died ten years later, in her late seventies, from unrelated causes.²⁷¹

Suffering from pain in his lower extremities, Gene Wilkins was diagnosed by age seven with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, a condition that hung over the rest of his youth.²⁷² Especially when weather was damp or he was fatigued, the pain became unbearable, and some activities were impossible for him. When he was about fifteen, the doctor warned his mother that the disease would progress and leave him in a health-care institution by his forties. By his twenties, his hands were also in pain, but he did not tell anyone about his ailment in the United Methodist church where he was doing ministry. He found particularly annoying an older charismatic woman in the church named Edith who always talked about God speaking, and he became especially uncomfortable when God seemed to be speaking to her about him.²⁷³ Whenever his family ran out of groceries, she came by with groceries, saying that God had told her their need; one time she even came by with something they had privately decided to buy that day but could not yet afford, again attributing this to God's voice.

Finally one day Edith said, "You're not well; may I lay hands on you?" Fearful that she might burst out in tongues, he refused, yet condescendingly allowed her to hold his hand and pray if it would make her feel better. Shockingly, she prayed for God to free him from the disease that had gripped him since childhood—how did she know about that? Nevertheless, he quickly forgot about her prayer, lacking

269. Olena, *Horton*, 127; also Stanley Horton, personal correspondence, May 29, 2009. Cf. also the healing of severe fibroids in Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 29–30 (though my wife and many others I know have simply had to have surgery).

270. E.g., Alexander, *Signs*, 1–5 (noted above).

271. Byron Klaus, personal correspondence, July 6, 2009. Another cure of Reye's syndrome connected with prayer appears in Tallman, *Shakaran*, 224.

272. Gene Wilkins, phone interview, May 17, 2009. With treatments now available, victims of typical juvenile rheumatoid arthritis today are usually able to function normally in adulthood (*Family Medical Guide*, 744); but Gene's description (esp. given his doctor's verdict) sounds like an atypically severe case.

273. For the charismatic renewal in the Methodist church, see, e.g., Synan, "Charismatics," 178–84.

the slightest suspicion that her prayer might accomplish anything beneficial. For a few months after the prayer he seemed “lucky” not to be having any bursts of pain. Nevertheless, he did not connect this “luck” with the prayer until a new chaplaincy role for the volunteer fire department required a complete physical. The doctor, hearing his medical history, informed him that he must have been misdiagnosed. “I don’t know who gave you the initial information, but you’ve never had any arthritic or rheumatoid disease. There is no trace of it in your body.” Gene has never had arthritis since that time, more than forty years ago, and continues as a minister in a United Methodist church in New Jersey. He also soon began praying for the sick himself, witnessing various cures, such as a boy healed of childhood emphysema.

Bobbie Spittler, whose husband, Russ, is senior professor of New Testament and provost emeritus at Fuller Theological Seminary, recounted the healing of her mother when Bobbie was thirteen, in 1944. Her mother was a patient in a private tuberculosis sanitarium in Sterling, Illinois, with tuberculosis of bones in the rib cage. The doctor had said that her mother was not going to live through the night, so churches held an all-night prayer meeting, and during the night her mother sensed that God had healed her. On examining her, the doctor concluded that she was healed and sent her home. “My Dad had promised the Lord that he and Mother would go into the ministry if she were healed,” and they “pastored several churches on the east coast.”²⁷⁴

In connection with the *Redbook* article about Kathryn Kuhlman, I mentioned Emily Gardiner Neal. In a later book, she explains that her first book, “conceived when I was an agnostic, was intended to be an exposé of ‘faith healing.’” Instead, she was converted in the course of her research and ended up defending both Christian faith and healing.²⁷⁵ After this discovery, she became part of the healing ministry under the auspices of the Episcopal Church.²⁷⁶ In one of her first experiences, she laid hands on an assistant minister who opposed both healing ministry and her involvement (as a woman) in any form of ministry, even prayer for the sick. She recoiled in shock as she heard a sharp crack, only to discover that the sound was that “of a long-dislocated bone in the young man’s body snapping back into place.” He became a strong advocate of healing ministry after this experience.²⁷⁷

274. Russ Spittler and Bobbie Spittler, personal correspondence, June 2, 2009. Lois Olena first informed me of this account.

275. Neal, *Power*, vii, referring to idem, *Reporter*. C. A. Roberts claims that he was skeptical when he began investigating healing evangelism (*Coburn*, 13) but was won over, especially when the evangelist he was investigating came to his hometown (68).

276. Neal, *Power*, viii. Healing ministries can flourish in other mainline churches; for a suggested model for the Uniting Church in Australia, see Lucas, “Foundations,” 147–77.

277. Neal, *Power*, 10. Demos Shakarian recounts that after he prayed for a man bent over and able to shuffle along only with a cane, there were popping sounds as the man’s back straightened and he was healed (Tallman, *Shakarian*, 173); cf. bones snapping into place in Zagrans, *Miracles*, 51–54, 220–21. In a Catholic church in 1828, as a girl was cured of rickets, “the astonished congregation heard the sounds of her bones cracking” as she joined her mother praying by the altar (Duffin, *Miracles*, 154).

She summarizes even a single trip that yielded many reports of healings: “the instantaneous disappearance of a large abdominal tumor, the restoration of vision to one long blind, and the disappearance of symptoms of advanced Parkinson’s disease.”²⁷⁸ To a woman “bent double” with crippling arthritis, walking only with canes, she commanded, “In the name of Jesus, walk,” and the woman immediately straightened, handed her the canes, and walked around the room three times. This woman continued to attend the meetings thereafter, remaining well.²⁷⁹

Among other instant healings she notes, a man who had long been paralyzed walked; a woman was “instantly healed of skin cancer”; a man who had long been deaf now could hear.²⁸⁰ A paralyzed boy confined to a wheelchair had not spoken for several years, since his accident. He suddenly stood and shouted, “Praise the Lord!”²⁸¹ A four-year-old boy with leukemia went into “remission” after prayer and, as of the writing of her book several years later, remained in good health.²⁸² After she prayed for four mentally challenged children, three have been moving toward normalcy.²⁸³

Yet she also acknowledges the continuing place of suffering in this age,²⁸⁴ and that most healings were delayed or gradual.²⁸⁵ Neal believed that God particularly used her to heal spinal problems because of the suffering she experienced in her own spine.²⁸⁶ She emphasizes that God is glorified not just by healing but also by his grace during affliction,²⁸⁷ and that the church must ensure never to make those not healed feel like they have failed in any way.²⁸⁸

Others with similar sentiments found that God sometimes healed. One main-line minister prayed for a woman who was so skeptical about anything happening that he himself doubted that the prayer would help her. The next day, however, he learned that the doctor had postponed the operation because the growth had

278. Neal, *Power*, 18 (noting that the last woman’s letter attesting this healing was “the first letter she had been able to write in fifteen years”). She also mentioned (18–19) a young woman cured of warts (though this can disappear spontaneously); further, a woman’s breast tumor, to be removed later that week, disappeared overnight, obviating surgery.

279. *Ibid.* Other healings in the book include a double hernia (25–26) and partial recovery from a debilitating disease through receiving the sacrament (33–34).

280. *Ibid.*, 41–42.

281. *Ibid.*, 56 (noting that much of his motor function returned).

282. *Ibid.*

283. *Ibid.* For claims of healings of mental impairment or its causes, see, e.g., Stormont, *Wigglesworth*, 105–6; and (gradually, in a child) Alexander, “Marvelous Healings”; DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 13–14 (healing during a vision at age thirty from the prenatal brain damage that had mildly impaired the person’s intelligence); Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 36–38 (apparently due to healing of brain impairment); possibly implied in Ising, *Blumhardt*, 122. Llewellyn, “Events,” 257–58, cites a healing of intelligence (even if particulars are exaggerated, records seem to indicate a significant change).

284. Neal, *Power*, x–xi, 1–8, 12–17, 21–22.

285. *Ibid.*, 39–46.

286. *Ibid.*, 18.

287. *Ibid.*, 21–22 (noting on 19 a boy who was not healed but received a deeper experience of God).

288. *Ibid.*, 59–67.

shrunk; “a day or two later” she was discharged because it had vanished.²⁸⁹ One could cite other sources, such as various traveling evangelists who claim numerous miracles, but these are often particularly difficult to verify, and I will not offer many further examples of these, some of which would be more controversial than others.²⁹⁰

One detailed study of ten Christians involved in healing ministry²⁹¹ noted contrasts with a study of selected non-Christian healers, especially that the latter often experienced healing power “as an impersonal force,” whereas the Christian healers experienced contact with “a personal deity.”²⁹² The Christian healers all experienced “awareness of God during healing” and attributed the power to God rather than to something innate in themselves.²⁹³ Most of them had once opposed or not believed in “supernatural healing” before their own healing ministry.²⁹⁴ Some felt heat when they prayed, but all felt divine guidance.²⁹⁵

289. Althouse, *Healing*, 88–89.

290. Some focus first on the least afflicted to “build faith” (Crandall, *Raising*, 154–55, objecting to this practice). One book by Todd Bentley lists vast numbers of healing claims, though most, in keeping with the genre of many revivalist reports, lack specificity; e.g., Bentley, *Miraculous*, 111 (a long-distance one), 111–12 (instant healing of bones), 114, 142 (teeth), 145, 168–69, 174–75, 186, 195, 203, 204–5, 206, 208–9, 214, 215, 217, 220, 225, 231, 232–33, 239, 241, 255, 257, 259–60, 271 (a new breast formed after a breast had been removed), 285, 298 (polio), 301 (an infant’s hydrocephalus, with instant, visible shrinking of the head to normal size). Bentley acknowledges God’s sovereign activity (332) and that not all were healed fully, especially in the earlier years (196); he also notes the lack of resuscitations so far, despite attempts (298; he later claimed even these at the controversial Lakeland Revival). He reports healings of deafness: 133, 146, 153, 164, 166, 168, 169, 177, 178, 179, 181–82, 186, 196, 205 (several cases), 208, 212, 219, 225, 237, 240, 241, 254, 257, 259–60, 262, 263, 264, 269, 276 (139 cases), 284 (twenty-six cases), 298, 302 (120 cases), 306. He also reports healing of tuberculosis: 302 (fifty-two cases), 307 (sixty-five cases, emptying the entire tuberculosis ward of a hospital in Malawi). He reports healings even of HIV or AIDS on 203, 256 (two cases), 260, 262–63, 302 (eighteen cases). I simply list claims here and at some other points in the book, without dependence on them for the book’s secondary argument; many of these claims were based on spontaneous experiences at healing meetings rather than subsequent testing, though 301 claims three cases of tested change in status. Serious controversies came to surround Bentley’s subsequent ministry, both regarding his theology and the tragic turn taken by his personal life (esp. after he suffered celebrity status). The views of the majority of charismatics and others I know who attended his meetings have ranged from cautious to (more commonly) skeptical or even outraged (see, e.g., the noncessationist, critical evaluation and firsthand account in Dembski, “Faith”). To my knowledge, the claimed medical documentation for his meetings has never been produced. Nevertheless, some better-grounded healing claims could at least illustrate the basic point that a number of people in his meetings believe that they have experienced or witnessed healings from God, a point not affected by problems surrounding Bentley’s personal life. (Llewellyn, “Events,” 256, cites an eyewitness he deems reliable regarding a case of cured blindness earlier in Bentley’s ministry; I lack access to further information.)

291. Tilley, “Phenomenology,” 73–459 (e.g., Don Williams, 420–59).

292. *Ibid.*, 36. For a psychological study of non-Christian healers among the !Kung, see Katz, *Energy*, 233–38; but some features may be learned (238).

293. Tilley, “Phenomenology,” 540; for experiencing the Spirit, see also 544.

294. *Ibid.*, 540–41.

295. *Ibid.*, 541. For heat or electrical current, see, e.g., Salmon, *Heals*, 27–28; Brown, “Awakenings,” 363 (heat, electricity); Bartow, *Adventures*, 93 (heat), 94 (current, but noting that both experiences were rare); Osborn, *Healing*, 44 (but denying that it predicts whether healing occurs), 327; heat in Koch, *Zulus*, 102; Green, *Asian Tigers*, 97–98; Bergunder, “Miracle Healing,” 298; Steve and Sheila Heneise, correspondence, Aug. 21, 2008. About half spent time alone in prayer before healing ministry, and about half felt special

Various Examples from Roman Catholic Sources

Although a larger number of my examples above derive from Protestant circles, because they represent the majority of the sources most readily available to me apart from already widely discussed sources like Lourdes, Catholics also report a significant number of healing claims. (I am focusing on them in this separate segment in an attempt to compensate for not being able to represent such claims proportionate to their actual numbers.) In the preceding chapter, I noted some Catholic healing claims associated with Lourdes, and I will return to them in fuller detail in chapter 14. I also noted some claims associated with Father DiOrio's ministry earlier in this chapter and will mention Francis MacNutt in a later chapter. Here I focus on various other cases. Non-Catholics may not be comfortable with the methods in some of the following examples, just as others may object to Pentecostal, mainline Protestant, or other groups of examples. But we are all glad for recoveries, we have already noted problems with the old Protestant polemic, and however one explains particular cases, many of these examples appear significant cures.

Thus, for example, a woman who was considered incurably crippled claimed that she was healed instantly at a Roman Catholic healing site in Montreal.²⁹⁶ In June 1976, a young man was told that he was dying from Hodgkin's disease. He committed himself to God and testified about five years later that he was grateful for his health and strength; he was now a novitiate in a Benedictine community.²⁹⁷

When two-year-old Teresa Benedicta McCarthy swallowed sixteen times the lethal dose of Tylenol on March 20, 1987, the Massachusetts General Hospital warned that she would die unless she received a liver transplant. After a few days of prayer to the saint for whom she had been named, her liver and kidneys recovered fully without a transplant. Her main physician, Dr. Ronald Kleinman, associate professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, was Jewish. He considered her cure "miraculous," reporting the cure both to the Vatican and in a 1997 interview with *CBS Evening News*.²⁹⁸

Sister Briege McKenna was suffering from severe rheumatoid arthritis that deformed her feet, stiffened her fingers, and afflicted her with continuous pain for several years. At a retreat in December 1970, she felt deeply touched by Jesus and was instantly and completely healed of sores, stiffness, pain, and deformity. She never again had arthritis or related pain, but, like a number of others whose testimonies I have not noted in this degree of detail, regarded her spiritual healing that day as even more

compassion for those for whom they prayed (Tilley, "Phenomenology," 544). Compassion also figures heavily in some earlier reports (e.g., Glover, "Modern Miracles," 4, along with abandoning pride).

296. Oursler, *Power*, 49. People have reported healings at other sites as well. DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 27–28, reports that when the body of St. Charles Makhlouf (1828–98) was exhumed in 1950, it was free from corruption, and that more than twelve hundred reported healing in connection with his shrine over the next two years (including one with a hunchback since childhood).

297. Kirby, "Recovery," 113–14.

298. Woodward, *Miracles*, 370; Duffin, *Miracles*, 139 (noting also Jewish physicians' testimony in other Roman Catholic miracle investigations). Cf. healing from poisoning also in DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 113–14.

significant than the physical one.²⁹⁹ After that experience, people began to be healed when she prayed for them, despite her personal reticence to be involved in “healing.”³⁰⁰ Among the first healings was someone blind and paralyzed, who was bitter against God and was skeptical of Sister Briège. That night the woman’s paralyzed arms were restored, and within days her sight returned, and a spiritual transformation began.³⁰¹ Soon after, Sister Briège prayed for someone dying from cancer and for someone with shingles; both were healed.³⁰² In time many others were healed of cancer,³⁰³ including a priest who had been dying.³⁰⁴ A French Jesuit priest had gangrene in his leg, and amputation was imminent; after prayer, he was completely and visibly healed.³⁰⁵

In September 1959, when medical treatments for leukemia were far less helpful than what is available today, Veronica Dougherty Hopson in North Sydney, Australia, was given at most six months to live. She was dying from acute myeloblastic leukemia; it is reported that 95 percent of the white blood cells “in her bone marrow were lymphoblasts.”³⁰⁶ Her mother asked the Sisters of Saint Joseph to intercede for her with the order’s founder, who was being studied for sainthood. For awhile, Veronica seemed to grow worse rather than better, but in early February she was released from the hospital, and by May her blood count had become normal. As of twenty years later, the leukemia had never returned. Although remissions occur, her physicians considered this one extraordinary.³⁰⁷

Healing has been an important part of the charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church. (I noted earlier that between one-third and three-quarters of active charismatic Catholics claim to have witnessed healings.³⁰⁸) The Catholic charismatic movement has also included the involvement of several biblical scholars, including Father George Montague, for many years the editor of the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*.³⁰⁹

Toward the beginning of the Catholic charismatic renewal in 1967, one of the students felt led to pray for her housemother’s phlebitis; the swelling reduced quickly, and the housemother was released from the hospital much earlier than expected.³¹⁰

299. McKenna, *Miracles*, 2–5. The severity of her original illness is described more graphically in the *Saint Louis Review* (“Poor Clare Sister Tells of Healing Ministry to Others,” Dec. 6, 2007; accessed on Aug. 10, 2009, at <http://stlouisreview.com/article/2007-12-06/poor-clare-sister-tells-healing-ministry-others>). As with other ministries cited in this book, my record of her healing reports does not constitute endorsement of every idea in her book; but I do pause to note that, like most others with ministries of healing noted in this book, Sister Briège recognizes that not everyone prayed for will be healed (McKenna, *Miracles*, 20, 38).

300. McKenna, *Miracles*, 15.

301. *Ibid.*, 16.

302. *Ibid.*, 17.

303. Many people, especially children, had been healed of leukemia when she prayed (*ibid.*, 38).

304. *Ibid.*, 43–44.

305. *Ibid.*, 54. Note also the moving story of Sister Briège’s aunt’s temporary recovery (125–28).

306. Woodward, *Miracles*, 368.

307. *Ibid.*, 369.

308. See Csordas, *Self*, 31; Rogge, “Relationship,” 376–77.

309. Father Montague acknowledges his involvement in, e.g., Montague, *Spirit*, 1.

310. Mansfield, *Pentecost*, 51–52; cf. also Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, 101. Mansfield was herself the student and initially reluctant because of associations with television evangelists whom she found repugnant (Mansfield, *Pentecost*, 51).

Some more dramatic healings were reported subsequently. In one of the movement's first public healing services, held at Notre Dame University in 1974, Father Francis MacNutt invited those who had experienced either spiritual or physical healing to stand, and roughly half of those in the stadium stood. After doctors' examinations, a number gave testimonies the next day; cures claimed included blindness and deafness.³¹¹ Although no verification procedures were yet in place, in contrast to Lourdes, one researcher spoke with one of the persons healed. Although her eyes remained defective, after the Notre Dame conference she stopped using her guide dog and white cane, astonishing those who had known her as blind. Moreover, although she had attended a university by using Braille, she now learned how to read visually.³¹²

At the 1974 Catholic charismatic conference at Laval University in Quebec, the healing service was not a plenary but merely one of many workshops. As one of the doctors present was complaining about the idea of divine healing, "a paralyzed woman who had not walked in six years" suddenly rose from her wheelchair, walked from the workshop to others, and continued walking that evening.³¹³ To walk even after being immobilized for a month is difficult; to walk after six years of muscles atrophying is extraordinary.³¹⁴ While the Medical Bureau at Lourdes excludes all cases of paralysis unless organic changes are clearly certified, and this claim would therefore not be admitted officially by their strict standards,³¹⁵ a comparable healing at Lourdes early in the twentieth century was widely circulated.³¹⁶

In another case, a nun's spinal column was damaged, leaving her with impaired movement and the assurance of five physicians that she would need to wear a brace for the remainder of her life. Eighteen months later, she found herself permanently healed the day after prayer.³¹⁷ One book summarizes some other healings reported in the early Catholic charismatic movement, including "of nervous, muscular and bone disorders; of congenital defects in infants . . . healings from very grave maladies pronounced incurable by specialists," and so forth.³¹⁸ Healings continue to be reported in a number of Catholic parishes. For example, Father Edward J. McDonough prays for the sick in a church in Roxbury in the inner city of Boston, and many claim to receive healing there.³¹⁹ A researcher found persons healed and making little fanfare of it, such as the apparently immediately effective cure of a Houston woman's spinal problem.³²⁰

311. Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, 103.

312. *Ibid.*, 104.

313. *Ibid.*, 104–5.

314. *Ibid.*, 105. Reported in other healings as well, e.g., Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 16–17.

315. Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, 104–5.

316. *Ibid.*, 105 (on Gargam; despite never being officially proclaimed a miracle, the testimony was influential).

317. O'Connor, *Movement*, 162.

318. *Ibid.*, 162–63. On the movement, see also briefly Hocken, "Renewal."

319. Wakefield, *Miracle*, 57–58.

320. Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, 118.

Joseph Marchese shared with me his experience. He was about thirty-five in the late 1970s when he discovered that he had a severe case of gout. Every day he had to take the kind of medication that was available at that time; whenever he tried to stop it, he would have an attack of gout within a day or two. Although a charismatic Catholic, Joe had never trusted faith healing, which he associated with images of Elmer Gantry. In 1985, however, he and some friends from a group coordinated by Neal Lozano, birthed from the Catholic charismatic movement, attended an interdenominational conference led by John Wimber (on whom see comments below). Encouraged by the conference's emphasis on healing, Joe's friend Bill felt an urge to pray for Joe's healing and persisted despite Joe's insistence that nothing was wrong with him. Finally Joe admitted that he had gout; Bill did not know what gout was or even what a pancreas was, and needed even Joe's direction to know where to lay his hands. Nevertheless, Bill finally laid hands on him, much to Joe's embarrassment. Suddenly, however, Joe felt a very hot sensation on his back where Bill's hand was, and it felt like a mule had kicked him in the kidney. Although not aware of it himself, Joe recounts that others reported that Bill jolted about six inches off the ground. Feeling convinced that God had healed him, Joe never took another pill for gout after that day and never had another symptom. Whenever his blood has been tested, it has always remained in normal limits. That has been the case for nearly a quarter of a century now.³²¹

I summarize most of the following examples from a book by Benedict Heron, prior of the Benedictine Monastery of Christ the King in Cockfosters, North London, which includes comments by physicians on most of the claimed cures. For example, one doctor was bedridden from malignant tumors of the spine, and other physicians had relinquished hope for him. He was then healed after being anointed with oil by women from a British Catholic charismatic prayer group. At this advanced stage, this condition is not known to be cured spontaneously.³²² A nun debilitated from medically incurable bronchiectasis was healed during a prayer meeting in San Francisco.³²³ A priest's medically incurable spinal disorder was instantly and completely healed during a prayer meeting.³²⁴

Likewise, a medically incurable, long-term, disabling back injury was completely and permanently healed through laying on hands.³²⁵ A severe case of psoriasis that was causing partial deafness as well was apparently cured.³²⁶ The book's medical

321. Joseph Marchese, phone interview, May 11, 2009. Cf. also the instant and permanent healing of gout in Augustine *City of God* 22.8.

322. Heron, *Channels*, 123–24.

323. *Ibid.*, 124–26.

324. *Ibid.*, 129–30.

325. *Ibid.*, 132–33.

326. *Ibid.*, 135–36. The medical note implies that the psoriasis was cured; the testimony claims a cure for all the symptoms but does not explicitly specify whether the psoriasis had permanently departed. The healing of severe psoriasis, suffered for twenty-seven years (with “scaly and even bleeding” large red blotches all over the body), appears in Salmon, *Heals*, 63; also twenty-five years of psoriasis in *ibid.*, 65–66.

editors note that "severe heart failure with fluid in the lungs following several heart attacks almost invariably leads to near incapacity and ultimately death." Yet they report a case of complete healing.³²⁷

Some gradual healings reported were also often unusual. Normally a loose hip joint requires surgical correction, but after continuing prayer at a charismatic retreat, the hip gradually repositioned itself without surgery.³²⁸ A nurse was gradually healed from medically incurable ankylosing spondylitis, a progressive spinal disease.³²⁹ Still, such cures do not happen only gradually. For example, a severe case of spondylitis was reported cured at Lourdes immediately on August 15, 1943, raising a dying woman to complete health.³³⁰

Elsewhere, it is reported that when Father Dennis Kelleher prayed for Tom Curtin, who was partly paralyzed due to severed nerves, the pain left, and within five weeks Curtin had the vast majority of his motion back.³³¹ In 1976, knowing that his prostate was to be removed, Chuck Schiappacasse received prayer at a Catholic charismatic retreat; his prostate recovered and has remained normal thereafter (as of the report's publication in 1993).³³² Father Robert DeGrandis has compiled numerous accounts from the Catholic charismatic movement, including the following: a comatose five-year-old whose ribs were broken and her spleen ruptured in a dangerous accident, was miraculously healed of all these injuries.³³³ Likewise, a crippled hand was straightened;³³⁴ a child with a diagnosed, serious heart problem was completely healed after prayer;³³⁵ during prayer, bleeding stopped and a cut closed;³³⁶ a child disabled and fed intravenously for fourteen years was completely healed after Jesus appeared to her in a vision.³³⁷

A charismatic Catholic community in El Paso reports numerous healings.³³⁸ For example, a woman reports that she was nonmedically healed of uterine cancer, and then had a baby.³³⁹ One girl was paralyzed in hand and foot since birth; after twenty

A single prayer cured a two-year-old with blisters since birth (63); three days after prayer a woman with eczema for thirty-five years found herself cured (63–64).

327. *Ibid.*, 142.

328. *Ibid.*, 133–34.

329. *Ibid.*, 137–39. Wilson, "Miracle Events," 272–73, reports another cure of this disease.

330. Cranston, *Miracle*, 216–23; Woodard, *Faith*, 53. "Immediately" does not mean that she regained all her weight instantly (it was about three pounds a week), but she did regain her strength and become active right away.

331. Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 22–23.

332. *Ibid.*, 42; the book (from 1993) reports other healings in connection with the Catholic charismatic movement (e.g., 34, 47, 55).

333. DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 67–68; although the account is not clear, it appears that the healing took place before the expected operation could occur.

334. *Ibid.*, 32.

335. *Ibid.*, 41–42.

336. *Ibid.*, 79–80 (Catholic charismatic prayer for a six-year-old).

337. *Ibid.*, 89–90.

338. Laurentin, *Miracles*, 12, also reports one child not healed; but clearly the proliferation of healings in the community was unusual.

339. *Ibid.*, 10.

minutes of prayer, the paralysis was cured.³⁴⁰ A doctor sent the researcher medical records supporting a surprising cure of diabetes there.³⁴¹ One of the movement's converts had been an atheist, and appears to have been healed immediately of a serious organic illness.³⁴² Other cures are also reported.³⁴³

Third Wave and Other Recent Sources Emphasizing Healing

Some charismatic circles emphasizing healing are controversial in noncharismatic circles, but it would hardly be fair to talk about contemporary healing claims while excluding all charismatic sources (any more than it would be fair to exclude some of the other circles noted above that are controversial with some others). They account for too many claims to be ignored; one need not agree with every detail of a figure's teaching to appreciate the recoveries of individuals associated with that ministry. I will not, however, focus on some of the more extreme circles.

Some recent figures publicly associated with frequent prayers for healing include John Wimber and the Vineyard movement strongly influenced by him;³⁴⁴ those associated with Global Awakening and New Wine; and some recent charismatic and Third Wave sources. Because some of these figures have seminary training, they have often been able to articulate their understanding of healing in ways intelligible to more sympathetic circles in academia in ways that most Pentecostals a century ago were not. Some critics may disagree with elements in some of these figures' theology, but it is difficult to disagree with their concern for helping those who are hurting, and some reports from these circles seem to include cures, like some of those elsewhere, too significant to dismiss. Wimber also appears far more mainstream and theologically informed than many popular teachers with healing or deliverance ministries today. From early in its growth, Wimber's movement self-identified as "empowered evangelicals" rather than as Pentecostals.³⁴⁵

Examples from the Vineyard Movement

John Wimber developed his theology of healing from George Ladd's scholarly understanding of the kingdom,³⁴⁶ which Wimber sought to implement practically

340. Ibid., 14–15 (noting photographs of the healing prayer and result, which are included between 26 and 27).

341. Ibid., 27, 32. Though noting that the standards would not meet those at Lourdes (32), Laurentin finds the latter too strict (35, 90, 91).

342. Ibid., 59–64.

343. Healed tuberculosis (ibid., 12–13); childhood retardation (due to prenatal malnutrition) healed (14); a woman on crutches unexpectedly healed after prayer (58); blindness (86); and others (46–49).

344. Other writers, such as Benedict Heron, prior of the Benedictine Monastery of Christ the King in Cockfosters, North London, also take note of Wimber and Vineyard in this connection (Heron, *Channels*, 113). Many treat Wimber largely favorably (e.g., the Anabaptist approach in Bauman, "Response," 117).

345. See Jackson, *Quest*, 14 (citing for the title more generally Nathan and Wilson, *Evangelicals*).

346. Ladd viewed Jesus's miracles as demonstrations of the kingdom (e.g., Ladd, *Kingdom*, 47; cf. also others, e.g., Sabourin, "Healings," 157), which he viewed as already/not yet (e.g., Ladd, *Theology*, 70–80);

regarding signs. Likewise, Wimber's known openness to academia has made him more palatable in many academic circles than some of his recent predecessors in emphasizing healing were.³⁴⁷ Some popular sources that are particularly harsh toward Wimber today are so partly on the basis of guilt by association, because he was connected, usually temporarily, with persons or movements that they condemn or deem eccentric.³⁴⁸ His own books are modest in the healings they report, but all persons I have consulted who knew him personally have spoken more freely of healings that occurred frequently in his ministry.³⁴⁹ In fact, while Wimber witnessed few if any healings initially when he began praying, by 1982 they were seeing "fifty to 100 people a week healed" in their church services, most of which he attributed to the prayers of people in the congregation.³⁵⁰

Social anthropologist David C. Lewis researched healing claims in Wimber's ministry and concluded that in fact a number of notable healings had taken place.³⁵¹ Focusing on a single meeting, Lewis claims that roughly one-third of those prayed for received a high degree of healing, with another quarter or so claiming some degree of healing.³⁵² Reported long-term healings of afflictions in this meeting included a hernia; sensitive teeth; hip pain; another hip injury and leg problem; a twisted ankle; a spine injury; injuries from a car crash; improve-

on Ladd's life, see D'Elia, *Place*. Scholars from various traditions have concurred that Jesus's miracles were meant to demonstrate the kingdom (e.g., Saucy, "Miracles," 285; De Wet, "Basis," 51–54). For the kingdom as both present and future in Jesus's teaching, see, e.g., Stein, *Method and Message*, 60–79; Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 3–4; Dunn, *Jesus and Spirit*, 89; Harvey, *History*, 91; Perrin, *Kingdom*, 73–74 (noting the modification in Dodd's approach); Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:389; Witherington, *End*, 51–74; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:10, 289–506; Stanton, "Message and Miracles," 57–61; Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 275. Cf. Barnes, "Miracles," 241: "Those who deny the continuing reality and occurrence of the *charismata* . . . are effectively denying the realised and present character of the kingdom of God."

347. Lewis, *Healing*, 293, notes that most participants in Lewis's study involving Wimber were also middle-class professionals, against the usual social stereotype of "ecstatic" activity among the "dispossessed"; for some academic engagement in Third Wave circles, see Collins, *Exorcism*, 105. (Cf. similarly the "unremarkable" demographic spread in Catholic charismatic healing services in Csordas, *Self*, 30.) On his life, see Wimber, *Wimber*; for his theology of healing, see Kydd, *Healing*, 46–59; for his influence, e.g., in Australia, see Lucas, "Foundations," 4–5; among some Catholic charismatic circles, Csordas, *Language*, 90, 94, 112. With respect to healing, Third Wave theology is more unified than classical Pentecostal theology (Wright, "Profiles," 286; on the Third Wave, see 273–81; on classical Pentecostalism, 281–86).

348. For these temporary associations with movements that became more controversial, see Armstrong, "Wimber," 467. See Hexham and Poewe, "Churches," on misrepresentations of charismatics.

349. E.g., Gary Best (phone interview and follow-up personal correspondence, Sept. 25, 2008) assured me that Wimber always underreported miracles, wanting to avoid any semblance of "hype." Others report healing incidents involving Wimber not reported in his own books (e.g., Venter, *Healing*, 126–27). Venter worked with Wimber in his early healing ministry, but I first knew of Venter after correspondence and reading his earlier *Reconciliation* (including their story, 29–78), learning only later of his connections with Wimber.

350. Wimber, "Zip," 28, estimating that 20 percent of the three thousand members of Anaheim Vineyard at the time "regularly see someone healed through their prayers."

351. Lewis, *Healing*, is one of the more carefully documented of the academic studies I have found regarding healing claims so far; it was helpfully recommended to me by Professor Peter Davids. Part of the work has been reprinted in Lewis, "Analysis."

352. Lewis, *Healing*, 22.

ment in hearing, with no further need for a hearing aid; and so forth.³⁵³ (Some of these claims are more unusual, hence more compelling as miracle claims, than others.) Lewis offers statistical analysis and argues that it is extremely improbable that particular prophetic words about particular conditions at this conference reflect merely coincidence.³⁵⁴ Some other studies involving some faith healing activities have yielded analogous results.³⁵⁵

Wimber himself is now deceased, but I interviewed a few of his long-term associates and other ministers in the Vineyard movement that he directly influenced.³⁵⁶ One was Bill Twyman, who was mentored in healing ministry by Wimber from about 1982 to 1998.³⁵⁷ He related to me that he has prayed for thousands of people, and has consequently seen large numbers improved and healed, sometimes during the prayer and often about two days later. As we talked, he thought over sample cases in his ministry that he could recall quickly offhand (I confirmed with those I met afterward any incidents that involved them); I offer a minimal sampling here.

For example, when Bill was with John Wimber in Canada on one occasion, Wimber called for the blind to come forward for prayer for healing. Bill recounts that on that occasion Wimber had him pray for one of the lines, and the colorblind person for whom Twyman prayed could instantly distinguish colors.³⁵⁸ The next day, when Bill returned home from that conference tired, someone asked him for prayer. The man was scheduled to have cataracts removed because he was blind in one eye. Bill told him to cover his functional eye and simply commanded, "See!" Twyman recounts that tears issued from the eye that had been blind, and the man shouted, "My cataracts are gone! I can see perfectly!" Bill retorted, "You're kidding!" but the man could read the time on the wall clock perfectly with his previously blind eye. Now confident, Twyman decided to follow up with another

353. *Ibid.*, 21–43. Lewis reports other healings elsewhere in the book, e.g., healing of sciatica (209–10); and, among healings not at the conference, the healing of congenital blindness (288–89); deafness (the wife) and long-term insomnia (her husband; 289–90). Cf. the medically attested disappearance of severe sarcoidosis after prayer, including the apparently immediate disappearance of nodules from the patient's eye (321).

354. *Ibid.*, 135 (after accounting for all the factors via conservative estimates), suggesting one chance in twelve hundred, with a probability of 0.000833 (statistically significant). He compares this quite favorably with scientific studies concerning telepathy and mediums (141). Cf. the unusual knowledge exhibited after an apparent out-of-body experience (190–91). If he is correct, this might also compare favorably with this practice in some different charismatic circles, where some observers have associated it instead with merely random guesses.

355. Benson, *Healing*, 188, citing 67 percent of those prayed for claiming improvements on physical problems such as back aches and arthritis and 77 percent for psychological problems. These do not appear to have been organic ailments, and Benson acknowledges that the survey did not pursue medical corroboration, "but relief was, nevertheless, afforded to people who had been suffering."

356. In addition, other works recount eyewitness testimony, such as the healing of deafness (Jackson, *Quest*, 13, 100, witnessed by Jackson); and other accounts of healing activity when he prayed (e.g., 50, 59, 116–17).

357. Interview, Nov. 11, 2007, in Corona, California. He was at that time pastor of the Inland Vineyard in Corona.

358. Cf. Llewellyn, "Events," 256, for another report of organic color blindness being instantly healed.

prayer, and, grabbing the man's hand, commanded the nub of his severed thumb to grow—and nothing happened. Bill concluded this account by explaining that they pray for whoever is in need, but God sovereignly chooses whom and when to heal. This emphasis is faithful to Vineyard teaching³⁵⁹ and is held among many who pray for the healing of sick persons.³⁶⁰

Among Bill's other examples, a non-Christian woman was present one day as he was leading a Bible study in his home. She had a lump on her shin, and as his wife, he, and others were coming to lay hands on it to pray, it was healed before they could touch it. He notes that those present witnessed the lump instantly disappear. The visitor quickly became a Christian as well.³⁶¹

Bill provided numerous other examples as they came to him randomly. One of these recoveries interested me, but because it did not so far sound very complete and might be healing naturally, for all I could tell, I was initially reticent to include it in this already-long book; Bill had already supplied me with more stories than I had space for.³⁶² As Bill had heard the story, the doctor initially held out minimal hope for recovery.³⁶³ At the time, I was toward the beginning of my process of interviewing people about their experiences with healing, so I was still a little skeptical, or at least very cautious. Less than three months before our conversation, Jamie Gillentine, Bill's relative and one of the ministers at Anaheim Vineyard, had experienced a diving accident on August 23, 2007, that shattered the sixth vertebra (C-6) in his neck.³⁶⁴ Although it is possible to break the neck without smashing the spinal cord, the accident smashed 30 percent of his spinal cord, hemorrhaging it and lodging bone fragments in it. After examining the MRI, the doctor warned that in an injury like this one, if all went well, they could expect Jamie to be quadriplegic. After surgery, Jamie could use most of his arms except his hands, but nothing below his chest. He did not trust that God would heal him,

359. Wimber and the Vineyard traditionally emphasize God's sovereignty (Jackson, *Quest*, 115, 230).

360. This feature of healing theology, allowing for mysteries in God's will, appears in many accounts, e.g., Neal, *Power*, 23, 90; McKenna, *Miracles*, 20, 38; Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 61; Baxter, *Healing*, 265–90 passim; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 123–24; Chevreau, *Turnings*, 185–88; Best, *Supernatural*, 87; Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 67–70; Godwin, *Strategy*, 53; Father Richard Bain in Winston, *Faith*, 137–38; Crandall, *Raising*, 151, 154, 179, 192, 197; Bruce, *Care*, 81; Yonggi Cho (in Yung, *Quest*, 210); Eleanor Sebianio (personal discussion, Jan. 31, 2009); Sheila Heneise (interview, April 5, 2009); Louise Koffa (interview, Oct. 6, 2010); earlier healing teachers like A. J. Gordon in Curtis, *Faith*, 88, 197, 199; J. C. Blumhardt in Kydd, *Healing*, 44 (God gives either healing or strength to bear it); cf. Hunter, *Christianity Beyond Belief*, 136. Even Aladura church members, known to pray with great confidence, acknowledge that “God grants only what he wishes” (Ray, “Aladura Christianity,” 284).

361. It is said that Foluso Abiola's long-term abdominal lump disappeared during prayer in Lagos's Deeper Life Bible Church (Ojo, “Miracles,” 47, citing W. F. Kumuyi, *Deeper Life Magazine*, Oct. 1989).

362. Twyman, interview, Nov. 11, 2007. I have omitted some of his reports.

363. As Bill had heard it, workman's compensation had already spent \$25,000 getting Jamie's (the relative's) home ready for a paralyzed person. The doctor had warned that if Jamie regained anything (a proposition he viewed as doubtful), it might be a year before they would know.

364. His emergence from the water, despite being paralyzed from the neck down, was itself unexpected (suggesting to some the possibility of “angelic help”), as noted in “Jamie's Story,” a summary sent to me with permission of Anaheim Vineyard via Joe Gorra (Dec. 9, 2009).

but he held on each day and began to view the therapists' invitations as joyful challenges. Thousands of people were praying for his recovery.

Sometimes people do recover, and Jamie had significant help from physical therapists; he thus admits that he cannot say what percentage of the recovery was from natural healing and what percentage revealed specific divine action. It was, however, very rare to get that much ability back, and so quickly. Toward the end of writing this book I had grown in personal confidence that extraordinary healings do occur, and accordingly I checked into his progress. Video clips revealed some of his agonizing progress in physical therapy, wearing braces. By the end of the clips, though, he was *running*, with a clear smile of joy at what he was now able to accomplish. The video was posted March 13, 2008, less than seven months after his injury. At the least, Jamie's faith clearly provided courage that he could work to improve; even the harshest critic should affirm the motivational value of faith in a case like this. And who can blame Jamie and Anaheim Vineyard for affirming that Jamie had some divine help along the way?³⁶⁵ On minimalist scientific criteria, one might not prove miraculous intervention; yet I suspect that given the outcome, many people if in the same situation would have valued the same sort of help.

I also interviewed Bill Jackson (affectionately known as Jax), a Vineyard minister involved in training many Vineyard pastors. When the machinist at Jackson's factory walked by him, the words "carpal tunnel" came to Jax's mind, so he asked the machinist what it meant. It turned out that the machinist had a bad enough case of this disorder that he was supposed to have surgery the following week. Instead, Jax prayed for him, the man was healed without an operation, and the man was converted, becoming the initial foundation of the church that Jax was planting.³⁶⁶ Bill Jackson noted numerous other sudden recoveries, including of a woman who had a secondary renal collection unit with no outlet, which was collecting toxins. The area visibly receded as they prayed and receded further by morning. I afterward talked with the woman in question, and she confirmed this event.³⁶⁷

Gary Best, a senior Vineyard leader in Canada, recounts numerous healings,³⁶⁸ often following precise revelations about the needs, such as two crushed knuckles

365. Details of Jamie's injury and recovery appear on an audio recording (also at "Beautiful News," Feb. 17, 2008, at <http://www.radiovineyard.com/audio/021708CA.mp3>) and a video recording (also available elsewhere on the internet) appears at <http://kingdomtriangle.blogspot.com/2008/03/jamis-story.html>, posted March 13, 2008 (accessed Aug. 28, 2009). I also subsequently received "Jamie's Story," a written account sent by permission of Anaheim Vineyard.

366. Interview, Nov. 13, 2007, in Corona, California, also in Jackson, *Quest*, 131. He also recounts the healing of a blind eye when he prayed (Jackson, *Quest*, 126). In the interview he also reported that his wife had been healed of dyslexia during prayer some years earlier.

367. Due to the limitations in our conversation, I failed to ascertain whether the unit was afterward removed surgically or supernaturally (only that it was removed), but the immediate and urgent situation was visibly resolved through prayer before she understood the nature of her condition.

368. Best, *Supernatural*, 29, 77–78, 79, 101n7, 108, 124, 126, 127–28, 129. Best notes sadly that some are not healed (214–15) or are healed only partly (216). He also affirms doctors (228) and acknowledges God's sovereignty (87). Best's book was among my favorites, due to its humility and honesty.

(shocking the person who was healed),³⁶⁹ blindness,³⁷⁰ and deafness.³⁷¹ In one case, a six-week-old baby, having fallen some distance onto its head, was unconscious, its face contorted and turning black; they prayed, and the baby recovered completely before the ambulance arrived.³⁷² I recount a healing reported to me by Todd Hunter, an Anglican bishop who was also a Wimber associate, in chapter 12.

Global Awakening and New Wine

I offer here some brief examples of claims from the ministries of Global Awakening and New Wine. I address the latter in somewhat more detail because I was able to interview Bruce Collins, the overseer of that group. Although my treatment of Global Awakening is brief, Candy Gunther Brown has devoted careful and detailed attention to this group.³⁷³ Randy Clark, a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and at one time a Vineyard pastor, leads Global Awakening. He reports a number of healings,³⁷⁴ including many cases of deafness,³⁷⁵ inability to walk or walk properly,³⁷⁶ and even hydrocephalus,³⁷⁷ AIDS,³⁷⁸ and Down syndrome.³⁷⁹ He includes the testimony of Carole Baerg, who had been given less than three months to live, who was miraculously healed when prayed for in 1994 and has been traveling widely in ministry since that time.³⁸⁰ He also records a colleague's claim of visible miracles such as tumors falling off and "missing parts" being "restored."³⁸¹ He personally shared with me some recent incidents, although at a point too late in the production of this book to elaborate them;

369. *Ibid.*, 56. For the healing of fingers crippled by arthritis, see Pytches, *Come*, 88.

370. *Best, Supernatural*, 125 (in one eye).

371. *Ibid.*, 88.

372. *Ibid.*, 94–95.

373. For now, see Brown, "Awakenings." Although Clark works with a range of traditions, he does not endorse prosperity teaching (354).

374. Besides those specified here or elsewhere in this book, see Clark, *Impartation*, 22, 35 (a severe spinal injury), 115, 125 (bone cancer), 127, 128 (bladder cancer), 133, 145, 164, 165, 188, 198–99 (a seriously crossed eye instantly and completely healed), 200–201 (cancer), 203 (a baby said to be dead in the womb, born healthy after prayer), 210 (about four hundred people healed in eight days); also Brown, Mory, Williams, and McClymond, "Effects."

375. Clark, *Impartation*, 125, 129, 133, 136, 143, 169 (five cases), 204, 213.

376. *Ibid.*, 125 (paralysis), 126 (a boy unable to walk or speak, instantly cured), 132 (burned-off kneecaps restored), 134 (healing of knees), 170 (a boy's withered legs, previously unable even to stand).

377. *Ibid.*, 27 (ending seizures and the use of diapers; a permanent healing twenty-one years before the book was written).

378. *Ibid.*, 125. Flint Hicks shared with me a testimony of AIDS being healed that is apparently widely known in Fiji (interview, Jan. 29, 2009, also supplying the woman's written testimony), but the recovery seems fairly recent, and I have not been able to verify or disconfirm it.

379. Clark, *Impartation*, 135 (including the appearance), 143. Because Down syndrome occurs at the chromosomal level (not always in all the chromosomes; Dr. Tahira Adelekan, phone interview, April 24, 2009), some cases of healing claims might involve effects of Down syndrome on various functional limitations rather than the chromosomal issue itself. The question can be resolved by chromosomal testing, but my sources do not normally address the question.

380. Clark, *Impartation*, 202–4. For the distinction between HIV and AIDS, see relevant notes in ch. 9.

381. *Ibid.*, 166.

these included a sudden and complete healing of a foot that led to the canceling of its imminent amputation.³⁸²

Bruce Collins, from the United Kingdom, is overseer of the international network of New Wine, a multidenominational renewal group originally based in the Anglican Church. He shared with me several testimonies that he has received from people for whom he has prayed in various parts of the world.³⁸³ (He provided names and in a number of cases scanned copies of the healed persons' or witnesses' letters.³⁸⁴) Of the sample that he gave me (those that occurred to him during our conversation), I also offer merely examples here.³⁸⁵ In November 2008, among those he prayed for in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, was a woman apparently in her eighties who had ruptured a disk in her spine; surgeons had attempted to help her but had explained afterward that the surgery was unsuccessful. At the time, she struggled to walk using a walking frame. After Bruce left, the woman came into the church's administrative offices; reporting that her doctor declared that her spine was now completely normal, she demonstrated the claim happily by touching her toes.

Bruce recounted some recent healings he witnessed elsewhere. In October 2008, in New Zealand, he prayed for someone who had tumors on his bowel, liver, and adrenal glands, normally a dangerous situation, since the growths had apparently spread.³⁸⁶ Bruce felt such confidence that God was hearing their prayer that he took the unusual step of assuring the man that the doctors would find nothing of consequence. The next day, the doctor insisted that they start exploratory surgery, yet over the next month nothing was found. Though unable to explain medically the disappearance of the tumors, the doctors gave the man a clean bill of health.

A doctor in his own church, a fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners, had diabetes, and Bruce prayed for her in November 2006. Being a careful physician, she mentioned nothing further to him until she had had many tests, but the following June she told him that she in fact no longer had diabetes, a result confirmed again in a more recent test.

On another occasion, a student in training for ordination, part of a church that denied the authenticity of miraculous healings in Scripture, accompanied Bruce to Estonia; as she and others prayed, a blind person was healed. A man dying from a cancer-riddled liver was completely healed and took up cycling and walking

382. Randy Clark, personal correspondence, April 1, 2011, mentioning also that he and those working with him have witnessed a wide range of cures, including those of blindness and deafness.

383. Bruce Collins, phone interview, April 11, 2009. I am grateful to Derek Morphew for connecting me with Bruce.

384. I have omitted these details to protect the individuals' privacy.

385. Of those I have omitted in the main text, on Feb. 4, 2009, he and others prayed for an elderly lady in Cardiff, Wales, who was using walking sticks. After about twenty-five minutes of prayer, she was walking briskly, almost jogging. At Christ Church, a person's jaw was completely healed, as was another person with a prolapsed disk who could now touch her toes.

386. As noted above, once cancer has metastasized, it is normally incurable, especially without intervention. In this case it disappeared without any radiation or chemotherapy.

seven miles per day. This event stunned the man's daughter, a nurse for twenty-five years.³⁸⁷ These experiences did not fit the student's theology at the time, but she consequently moved to a more trusting stance on Scripture. Her vicar had already preached against the reality of healings, but when she returned to tell him what she had experienced, she also prayed for his chronic back problem. The next Sunday, he announced from the pulpit that he had been healed and was needing to rethink some of his theology.³⁸⁸

Examples from Some Charismatic/Third Wave Churches

Healing reports also abound in other charismatic or Third Wave churches, many of which seek to keep some record of some of the healings claimed by members. I do not have direct means to evaluate most of these samples, but they do illustrate that claims are far more abundant than I could list. Many healings have been reported in the Embassy of God megachurch in Kiev, Ukraine, some including medical documentation.³⁸⁹ In one account, at seven months old, Nikita fell from a baby carriage and sustained a skull fracture, with a hematoma of 250 cubic centimeters running through the crack into the skull. His eyes would not focus, and the left side of his body was paralyzed. After prayer, the parents felt that God would preserve their child; he kept getting worse, and they were praying five to six hours a day. They prayed for other children there who recovered, but Nikita kept getting worse. It was hard to maintain faith, but after feeling God speak again, the father trusted that God would act. The next day, Nikita's paralysis ended, and his eyes shifted back into position. The next day, the pneumonia he had contracted left. As they took him from the hospital, the chief doctor declared that a miracle had happened, beyond what the staff could do. Age four at the time of the article, Nikita had nothing to show for his injury except a scar.³⁹⁰

In another account, a woman who had had her spleen removed to save her life later felt something moving inside her where her spleen had been, and she believed that God had created a new spleen for her. When doctors examined her, they did not believe that she had a spleen removed, but then they found that the documents were clear. As she praised God for a new spleen, an unbelieving neurologist sent

387. In the student's correspondence, she notes that the doctor told the man that the bad news was "that he would no longer be eligible" for the "experimental treatment" they had planned, "because there was nothing to treat" anymore.

388. Cf. Simpson, "Gospel of Healing," 373: "I have seen the theologian often answered after his most logical assaults upon it [divine healing] by the healing of some of his own people in a way he could not answer or explain," adding that he often took healed persons to see skeptics and found the skeptics unable to respond.

389. I am grateful to Yulia Kolodotchka Bagwell, who does Russian translation, for confirming for me the relevance of the legible medical reports (July 1, 2010). Some complain about some public controversies surrounding this ministry led by Sunday Adelaja; others counter that local Ukrainian politics and other local issues have encouraged misinformation. (One may compare some church leaders in the United States who have received increased scrutiny or even misrepresentation for political reasons on either side of the partisan divide; I know one of these ministers, in this case on the left, fairly well.)

390. "Healed from Trauma," including medical documentation.

her to a psychiatrist, who recognized that she was healthy.³⁹¹ Similarly, a man whose heart had scarring felt touched by the Lord and kept standing in faith for a few years, until new tests showed his health completely restored, with no trace of the scars, which naturally shocked the doctor.³⁹²

The Healing Rooms website reports hundreds of popular-level testimonies of healings, both emotional and physical, in connection with prayer.³⁹³ In the past few years, Bethel Church in Redding, California, has also claimed a number of healings, both in Pastor Bill Johnson's books and (for an even larger selection) on the church website.³⁹⁴ Johnson reports that he witnessed some visible cases firsthand, but the majority of these cases (especially on the website) convey self-reports of those claiming healing. Nevertheless, they again illustrate that many believe that they have experienced supernatural healing.³⁹⁵ These reports include instant healing of a neck that previously required a brace to hold the head in place;³⁹⁶ the instant restoration of an esophagus eaten away by cancer;³⁹⁷ instant healings of a three-year-old's clubfeet;³⁹⁸ deafness;³⁹⁹ a dangling arm without feeling "from the elbow up";⁴⁰⁰

391. "New Spleen," including medical documentation.

392. "Healed the Scar," again including medical documentation.

393. See <http://www.healingrooms.com> (accessed July 27, 2010), which lists more than two hundred emotional cures; more than two hundred for back problems; more than one hundred regarding cancer; but also cases of bone diseases, broken bones, diabetes, and even some cases of blindness. Note also the story of Sylvia K., revived from apparent death (suspected to have been dead for four hours; submitted May 26, 2001).

394. E.g., Johnson, *Heaven*, 17, 42 (numbness from a stroke), 52 (lupus and severe pulmonary hypertension), 53, 54, 172 (diabetes), 173, 187; idem, *Mind*, 33–34 (carpal tunnel so serious that the hand had been frozen in a fist), 45 (a broken wrist instantly mended). The website (<http://www.ibethel.org/features/testimonies>; cited by the date of posting) includes accounts such as disappearing tumors (March 18; Aug. 25, 2005); a patient bedridden for years from an aneurysm (Jan. 1, 2005); a woman able to walk painlessly "for the first time in six years" (Oct. 10, 2005); the hole in a baby's heart healed during prayer (while a specialist was watching the screen; Dec. 8, 2006); restored teeth (Dec. 19, 2006); partial restoration of an autistic child (Nov. 7, 2007); a restored kidney (March 10, 2008). Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 45–46, also reports the permanent, tested disappearance of autism (though again, the vast majority of cases of autism we know have not disappeared).

395. Collecting actual medical documentation has not so far been the church's primary priority, nor has it been an easy task for those in the church seeking to procure it (as anyone seeking to procure documentation from ordinary people in almost any context can well imagine). The church's Pam Spinosi (personal correspondence, April 21, 2008) gave me what help she could. Nevertheless, James Heth, the son of a NT scholar friend of mine, sent me reports of his eyewitness experiences with healings involving this church (April 2008, including his blogs of April 16–17).

396. Johnson, *Heaven*, 27.

397. Ibid., 53–54 (the cancer disappeared as well as the esophagus being fully restored); also in idem, *Mind*, 36.

398. Idem, *Heaven*, 188: "For the first time in his life his feet were flat on the ground," and he suddenly began running for the first time.

399. Ibid., 187; idem, *Mind*, 39 (cf. also partial deafness in 88; the person regretted everything now being too loud); more cases posted Aug. 25, 2005; Nov. 27, 2006; Jan. 18, 2007; May 7, 2007 (born deaf); July 12, 2007; a person's inability to speak on Jan. 23, 2007.

400. Johnson, *Mind*, 49: the doctor had said it would always dangle, but now for the first time the woman was able to pick up her young daughter in her arms.

AIDS;⁴⁰¹ the healing of a deadly, debilitating nerve disease never known to reverse;⁴⁰² instant bone healings;⁴⁰³ and a partially severed thumb growing out instantly.⁴⁰⁴ One particularly moving story is that of Lee McDougald, who after twenty-seven years of suffering, twenty-two surgeries, and eventually a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease, was prayed for by Randy Clark, Bill Johnson, and Jack Taylor, and was suddenly and completely healed in 2007.⁴⁰⁵

Another church widely known for its prayer and worship ministries, International House of Prayer, has a number of healing testimonies posted on its website.⁴⁰⁶ Some of the more dramatic reports in recent years include a liver swollen to almost twice the size, normal by the next morning.⁴⁰⁷ Other claims include: A cyst scheduled to be removed surgically vanished within two days of prayer. A cancer patient facing the removal of half the liver and pancreas received prayer; testing the next day revealed no tumor or cancer at all.⁴⁰⁸ A person who previously needed to read lips was after prayer suddenly able to hear ministers' words.⁴⁰⁹

My wife's recent student Lauren Mason joined the prayer ministry at this church. In this connection, she shared with us various recent testimonies from this ministry that she knew firsthand, including healings of visual impairment, and that another student medically confirmed that she was healed of anemia. Lauren also witnessed the immediate and complete healing of fellow student Jonathan Pollard. She had known that he had been largely paralyzed from what was thought to be Guillain-Barré syndrome for two months, but was surprised to see that after prayer he rose from the wheelchair to which he had been confined and within moments began running around the auditorium.⁴¹⁰ After I watched the incident, which was

401. The Bethel church website, March 24, 2008.

402. Website, April 1, 2006.

403. Website, Nov. 7, 2006.

404. Posted on the website, Oct. 9, 2007.

405. The testimony (at <http://www.thehealedguy.com>) was brought to my attention by Sam Storms. I also corresponded briefly with Lee, who granted me permission to use the information on his website (personal correspondence, Aug. 28, 2008).

406. I accessed the list at <http://ihop.org/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=1000049944> on July 2, 2009.

407. The person had been experiencing pain throughout the body for two months, and the pain vanished completely by the end of the evening of prayer.

408. Testimony from April 27, 2006, naming the person.

409. A named person's testimony, Oct. 2006. Further, a young woman with congenital ovary problems could not menstruate; after a speaker prophesied that someone with her name was being healed, she went to the restroom and discovered that she had begun menstruating. A doctor recommended open-heart surgery for a serious heart obstruction, but after prayer the heart was beating regularly, and the doctor confirmed that the heart was now perfectly fine (testimony from Oct. 27, 2006, naming the person). Other cure reports include a June 25, 2006, testimony of a named person medically discharged from the Marine Corps who was suffering from a host of problems (pulmonary emboli, pneumonia, nerve damage, and addiction to painkillers) and was instantly healed. In a testimony from July 27, 2006, the left leg of a named person who had suffered polio nearly six decades earlier grew to match the right leg. A breast lump disappeared after prayer in a named person's testimony from July 28, 2006.

410. Lauren Mason, personal correspondence, May 3, 5, 6, 8, 2010; interview, June 3, 2010. People had been praying, but this was only his second night back in the prayer meeting. People do often recover from this syndrome, but normally gradually—not being able to run immediately after being in too much

captured on video,⁴¹¹ Jonathan and I corresponded,⁴¹² and he confirmed the event in greater detail.⁴¹³ He explained that it had earlier been too painful to put pressure on his feet, but that after others had prayed for him, while he was praying in the service, around 11:55 p.m., “I felt what seemed like two tennis balls of fire laying on the top of my feet.” After walking perhaps fifty feet unaided he took off running around the sanctuary pain free.⁴¹⁴ He also provided medical documentation concerning a change in his condition.⁴¹⁵

These are merely some conspicuous samples from churches that circulate accounts of their healing testimonies, and a survey of churches known for praying for healing would turn up many more examples. Many other churches report healings with relatively little publicity.⁴¹⁶ For example, one church that does not publish its reports on a national level yet has kept a healing log is Vineyard Community Church in Cincinnati, which in 2008 supplied me a list of healings reported there.⁴¹⁷ Some of the healing claims involve simply improvements or the disappearance of pain, which sometimes happens even without prayer,⁴¹⁸ but some appear more dramatic. Thus in one case (providing the person’s name and contact information), a woman who was too old for a kidney transplant received prayer. After prayer, she reported, the doctors found her kidneys fully functional and wanted to know what she had done differently.

Cursory as they are, the preceding examples should suffice to make the point that many people in the modern West continue to believe that God has healed them and that at least some of their claims do appear to involve unusual recoveries. How would objective outsiders view such claims? Some claims that people offer cannot withstand scrutiny, but some others prove much more compelling. I will try to address this disparity among the evidential value of various claims to some degree in chapters 13–15.

pain to put pressure on the bottom of one’s feet. He reports that doctors had felt his life was in danger when he was first hospitalized.

411. At http://cmp.ihop.tv/gp.php?pid=zZzFzChe0FUVH7cy_PIH9uCDBehUxVx; accessed May 3, 2010; also his testimony at the fifty-five-minute mark at http://cmp.ihop.tv/gp.php?pid=zYsSrPhHn_612mVuiLx14weh7Dpwoc; accessed May 6, 2010.

412. Jonathan Pollard, personal correspondence, May 15, 16, 19, 22; July 16, 22, 2010. When we began corresponding he was enjoying painting his room (personal correspondence, May 12, 13, 2010).

413. Especially Jonathan Pollard (personal correspondence, May 20, 2010), which I have greatly condensed below.

414. Although his muscles grew sore from running after having been unable to walk for two months, as one would normally expect, the soreness dissipated in a week and his doctors found no more signs of Guillain-Barré syndrome, or even signs that he had previously had it (personal correspondence, May 20, 2010).

415. With personal correspondence, July 22, 2010 (which also provided further explanation).

416. Cf., e.g., one mentioned in Van Brenk, “Wagner,” 236, who notes that many were reported cured; a Presbyterian church noted by Gwladys Keating (personal correspondence, July 25, 2010).

417. Vineyard Community Church, Cincinnati, healing log, 2008.

418. I do not mean to downplay the potential value of prayer for such matters (noted in the study cited by Anita Manning, above); my observation simply involves how persuasive such anecdotes appear as evidence to those who are cautious about miracle claims.

Listing Some Further Claims

To avoid the temptation of continuing indefinitely, I will simply list below a sample of some further individual healing claims from popular literature and other sources; I merely summarize them here for the sake of space. They should illustrate further, however, the sort of range of claims that exist even in the West. Some such cases are the sorts of experiences that one might expect on rare occasions, recounted by those who happen to survive; others are physiologically impossible without a supernatural explanation. Although scientists normally would count all such evidence anecdotal because it involves merely individual examples, even in large numbers, it should suffice to reinforce my illustration of the point that claims of first- and secondhand knowledge of healings remain common today (hence that we lack reason to attribute such claims to legendary development). There is no way for me to confirm the validity of many of these authors' sources, but in a number of cases the reports are directly from eyewitnesses, especially the authors themselves. Some of the authors also affirm that they investigated all the claims they report. These claims include accounts, usually from eyewitnesses, of such recoveries after prayer as the following:

- An "underground" outside researcher noted a healed throat condition and the healing of lower spine degeneration after prayer.⁴¹⁹
- A Baptist pastor was told he could never speak again due to damage to the myelin sheath to his vocal cords; after enduring this problem for three years, he suddenly found his speech fully restored after reading Ps 103:3.⁴²⁰
- While pastoring, Presbyterian evangelist Don Dunkerley prayed for a visitor who had been given six months to live due to her cancer. The next day she felt fine, and the doctor declared that the cancer was gone. As of the time of Dunkerley's writing, fifteen years later, it had not returned.⁴²¹
- A Pentecostal Holiness member in North Carolina was healed so thoroughly of his heart condition that not only was no treatment necessary but also tests could not find any evidence of the previously confirmed heart attacks.⁴²²
- One woman, nearly dead from severe meningitis, recovered overnight after prayer, to her doctors' astonishment.⁴²³

419. The report of Dr. David C. Lewis (Religious Experience Research Project, Nottingham University, Alister Hardy Research Centre, Oxford), afterward used by Wimber with Lewis's permission (Lewis, "Signs"; see esp. 269). For other healings of spinal diseases, see Salmon, *Heals*, 57–62.

420. Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 145–46; cf. Witty, *Healing*, 206. Cf. Julia Foote (Alexander, *Fire*, 88).

421. Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 75–76.

422. Turner, *Healers*, 105–6 (following Reinhardt, "Stripes," 130–32).

423. Harris, *Acts Today*, 19. Harris claims to have included only accounts that he was able to confirm. At the time at which I was acquainted with Harris, he held a respectable position in his denomination; while I have no means to guarantee the accuracy of all his claims, I am confident that he did not fabricate them. As noted earlier, my wife's younger sister, as a baby, was expected by doctors to die during the night from meningitis, yet was recovering unexpectedly by morning, after their father prayed by the bed throughout

- A person dying of kidney failure was instantly healed during prayer.⁴²⁴
- A bladder hernia was healed without medical help.⁴²⁵
- A hydrocephalic girl was “healed instantly of a wandering eye, bedwetting, and an open spine” during prayer.⁴²⁶
- A severe and long-term case of gastroesophageal reflux was accurately described in a prophetic word and instantly and permanently cured during the prayer that immediately followed.⁴²⁷
- A woman dying from an infection was healed completely as she took the Lord’s Supper.⁴²⁸
- A hand whose tendons had been cut was instantly healed and able to move.⁴²⁹
- A pastor prayed for a child with a failing kidney shortly before an operation; after the operation, the doctor reported in astonishment that a fully functional kidney, not previously detected on ultrasound, lay behind the failing one.⁴³⁰
- A man with advanced multiple sclerosis, who had lost most motor control and in ten years had dropped from about 230 pounds to about 90, had no faith that he could be healed. After prayer he was fully healed, got documentation, and began traveling to give his testimony.⁴³¹
- A young woman deteriorating from intense pain over the course of five years was finally bedridden in a sterile environment and receiving fifteen shots a day. She was suffering progressively worse seizures, and it appeared that she

the night. Others also claim recoveries from spinal meningitis (e.g., Fant, *Miracles*, 39–44); Flint Hicks’s daughter also recovered from meningitis expected to kill her or leave her a vegetable (interview, Jan. 29, 2009). The danger of meningitis depends on the kind (bacterial is virulent; viral usually clears up on its own) and the stage to which it is advanced; young children and the aged are particularly susceptible to harm from bacterial meningitis.

424. Harris, *Acts Today*, 70–71 (members of Harris’s church; the healed man lived on twenty-five more years, to the age of eighty-nine). Healing from failed kidneys appears also in Koch, *Zulus*, 178–79.

425. MacNutt, *Healing*, 35–36, with testimony from the physician.

426. Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 63, noting also the knowledge and changed lives of many in the family’s Baptist church. See also idem, *Healing*, 131–32, including the physician’s report (from Dr. James R. Friend, Bakersfield, Calif.; July 6, 1986). He mentions other healings (e.g., *ibid.*, 201).

427. Moreland, *Triangle*, 169–70.

428. Harris, *Acts Today*, 7, noting that the funeral arrangements, already made, had to be canceled.

429. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 122.

430. Dave Workman, pastor of a church in Cincinnati, Ohio, on the oral report given him by the mother; shared with me April 30, 2008.

431. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 59, on the story of Pat Wiggins. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 20–21, notes the evidence for the healing but ultimately dismisses this case because a neurologist who had treated Wiggins noted that his form of multiple sclerosis was atypical, and his “impression” was that the cure was psychiatric. Reading even the evidence that Spraggett cites, I do not think that the most natural conclusion. Multiple sclerosis often alternates between “remissions and relapses before the final stage of permanent disability,” and natural remissions involve gradual convalescence, not a rapid cure (Cranston, *Miracle*, 281, noting on 281–82 the three miraculous cures of this disease recognized at Lourdes; for these examples, see 285–89).

would die soon. A prayer of faith raised her immediately from her bed, with instant disappearance of all symptoms and full restoration of all functions.⁴³²

- A church keyboard player, increasingly disabled by multiple sclerosis and ready to give up the keyboard in 2005, was completely healed and is still playing keyboard in good health more than three years later.⁴³³
- A person experienced visible (also complete, albeit gradual) healing of massive eczema.⁴³⁴
- A person's eyesight was healed so that she could no longer even see properly through her glasses.⁴³⁵
- Around 2003, a lay minister's atheist in-law contacted him about his dying mother because they needed someone to conduct the funeral service; when the minister and his sister visited the frail woman, who was in her eighties and weighed about 85 pounds, they had to put on masks and gowns. After they prayed for her and she accepted faith in Jesus, she recovered and remained in good health, although she did pass away two years later.⁴³⁶
- A woman suffering for a decade with painful, swollen legs found the pain vanish instantly and the swelling within hours after prayer; eventually she could run and dance.⁴³⁷
- Although doctors told the family of a Baptist minister in a coma that he could not survive, he recovered after experiencing a vision of Jesus, and in six weeks he had returned to preaching.⁴³⁸
- The same minister's daughter was confined to bed with nephritis, but three days after he saw a brief vision of Jesus standing over her, she tested negative for the sickness.⁴³⁹

432. The story of Niki Ochenski, reported at <http://www.awmi.net/tv/2002/week44> (this segment aired Oct. 28, 2002); <http://www.awmi.net/tv/2002/week45a>; <http://www.awmi.net/tv/2001/week45a> (all accessed June 14, 2009; brought to my attention by Jim Baker, in personal correspondence, April 3, 2008). One need not affirm that every person will be restored in the same way to appreciate the restoration in this woman's life. Andrew Wommack Ministries confirmed that she remains in complete health, "living a normal life" (personal correspondence in response to my query, June 22, 2009).

433. Bruce Collins, phone interview, April 11, 2009. A woman with advanced multiple sclerosis, having lost use of three of her limbs and nearly blind, was reportedly instantly healed, able to walk and see (Storms, *Convergence*, 47–48; also in idem, *Guide*, 50–52, noting a testimony purporting to be from the healed person, mailed to him; the mailer indicated that the woman remained alive and well thirty years after the healing).

434. White, "Lady," 83; cf. the healing of incurable eczema in Bredeesen, *Miracle*, 34–35; Sung, *Diaries*, 125; Ayers, "Eczema"; Salmon, *Heals*, 63–64; Buckingham, *Daughter*, 165–67. Davies, *Healer*, allows that flaking eczema could have been included in the ancient understanding of leprosy. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 35, reports an instant, visible healing of eczema but attributes the ailment to psychosomatic causes. Would even a psychogenic ailment disappear instantly and visibly?

435. Bennett, *Morning*, 98.

436. Craig Lester, interview, Jan. 28, 2009, who also recounted some other unusual recoveries. At the time of our interview, Craig was a seminarian from Seattle.

437. Lawrence, *Healing*, 23–24.

438. Beadle, "Healings," 6.

439. Ibid. Nephritis (Bright's disease) appears in various testimonies (Shearer, "Believe," 5; McNutt, "Healed"; Woodard, *Faith*, 90–91).

- A skeptic was convinced as he witnessed the growth on a baby disappear at the moment of prayer.⁴⁴⁰
- Two cataracts were healed.⁴⁴¹
- One informant (attested also by his wife) noted that his biopsy in 2006 showed prostate cancer; another doctor confirmed it. After receiving prayer at his church, he knew that God had healed him; to prove it, he insisted on another biopsy, which came back negative; we talked three years later.⁴⁴²
- In Sicily, after a three-month-old expected to die was instantly healed and some other healings occurred, the praying church began growing.⁴⁴³
- Although doctors expected a youth to survive his cancer only another month, he was cured after prayer with a prayer group in San Francisco.⁴⁴⁴
- A patient who had been dying after the surgical removal of his stomach experienced both the recovery and formation of a new stomach.⁴⁴⁵
- Terminal, metastasized cancer was instantly healed during a prayer service, after being prophetically identified.⁴⁴⁶
- A severely burned young man close to death was healed even of the severe burns that should have left him virtually faceless.⁴⁴⁷
- A child's medically attested broken neck, with a chipped and dislocated vertebra and doctors' expectation of permanent paralysis, was completely healed and returned to normal immediately after prayer in the hospital, without surgical intervention.⁴⁴⁸
- A six-month-old boy with a dangerous liver problem was instantly healed.⁴⁴⁹
- A girl long immobilized in her lower limbs by polio was healed.⁴⁵⁰
- Marshall Prince, a ten-year-old polio poster child who had worn braces since the age of two, was instantly and publicly healed during prayer, including his withered foot being made normal.⁴⁵¹

440. Harris, *Acts Today*, 100–101, reporting that the skeptic was then healed, including the restoration of three of his ribs that had been surgically removed, with (according to the account) medical records to prove it.

441. Ogilbee and Riess, *Pilgrimage*, 43.

442. Edward O'Kelley and Frieda O'Kelley, phone interview, July 7, 2009. Edward is a brother-in-law of Lee Coffey, who knew the story and referred me to him. Unfortunately, despite their attempts to find their documentation for me, they were not able to locate it among their many papers before my deadline.

443. Perna, "Sicily."

444. Oursler, *Power*, 49.

445. Harris, *Acts Today*, 68–69 (admittedly one of the more shocking stories).

446. Baxter, *Healing*, 194–206, summarizing Kuhlman, *LeVrier*. Baxter confirmed that the healing remained before producing the chapter (Baxter, *Healing*, 184).

447. Harris, *Acts Today*, 71–74.

448. Rumph, *Signs*, 119–24. The prayer was immediate, before surgical intervention could begin.

449. Storms, *Convergence*, 49 (Dr. Storms being an eyewitness); idem, "View," 213. Cf. the account of another liver healing in Anderson, *Miracles*, 184–85.

450. Edmunds, "Sick."

451. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 74. Cf. a withered hand healed in Bulgaria, Seibert, *Church*, 98.

- A child at a children's home "was miraculously healed of poliomyelitis" and became "the talk of the city."⁴⁵²
- A person near death was completely and instantaneously healed through prayer.⁴⁵³
- An aneurysm was healed immediately after prayer, rendering surgery shockingly unnecessary.⁴⁵⁴
- Cancer had eaten a hole more than an inch in diameter in the roof of a person's mouth, but even the wounded area was completely healed after prayer, surprising the doctors.⁴⁵⁵
- A chronic bladder infection was healed.⁴⁵⁶
- A back and glaucoma were both healed after prayer.⁴⁵⁷
- A person was unable to breathe through her nose from birth until, at age eleven, she was touched by Jesus in a vision, and thereafter she could do so.⁴⁵⁸
- Due to a car accident, a fifteen-year-old was not expected to walk again; after prayer, within ten weeks he was playing basketball again.⁴⁵⁹
- A seminarian prayed for his father who had been suffering terrible pain in his back and abdomen for two months, and he was immediately healed.⁴⁶⁰
- A woman with a severe, recurring skin rash was instantly and permanently cured during another's prayer, despite her own skepticism.⁴⁶¹

452. Hinson, "Healings" (the city being Hot Springs, Ark.; the report is offered a few weeks after the event being reported). Likewise, a baby with polio, unable to bend his leg, was healed within hours of the prayer and became completely normal (Alexander, "Marvelous Healings"). Other healings of paralysis due to polio appear in Salmon, *Heals*, 108, 110–11.

453. See, e.g., Cunningham, *World*, 88 (cf. also the more gradual accounts, 28–31, 136–39).

454. Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 31.

455. Fant, *Miracles*, 88 (the testimony of H. P. Rankin concerning his earlier healing in 1934; the cancer never returned, and he went from 128 pounds to 170 in under three months). Others also claim healings after prayer from cancers that never returned (e.g., Fant, *Miracles*, 69–70, on Barbara Bowen, cured on Aug. 9, 1922); Anderson, *Miracles*, 162–68; Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 32, 34, 51–53, 58–59; cf. DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 99–100 (summarizing five cases). Though without details, cf. also the disappearance of the tumor of Beth Wiseman's son (mentioned in the epilogue in Wiseman, *Paradise*, 304).

456. Schlemon, *Prayer*, 54–55.

457. Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 110.

458. Glew, "Experience," 81.

459. Shaub, "Analysis," 118, from his interview with Pastor Ralph Maselli about his injury and healing many years before.

460. Ball, "View," 128–29. Apart from cases cited for other reasons, I have deliberately not included many healings of backs (including one particularly noteworthy case that I witnessed firsthand), but they are many; cf., e.g., the Anglican vicar in New Zealand whose bad back had confined him to bed for a short time but who experienced immediate healing after prayer (in Bennett, *Morning*, 162).

461. Crump, *Knocking*, 40–41. Crump notes that this occurred when a televangelist asserted over the television that someone was being healed of this disorder, even though the woman was watching only for entertainment and was not attracted to such programs before or since. He personally knows the healed person and her situation. Cf. the instant healing of rosacea reported in Bruce, *Care*, 85.

- A young man, emaciated from lymphatic and bone marrow cancers, recovered fully after prayer.⁴⁶²
- A man seeking God in prayer was “instantly healed” of a long-term “speech problem.”⁴⁶³
- A “slipped vertebral disk” was healed over the course of two to three weeks after prayer, though this condition normally requires surgical intervention.⁴⁶⁴
- A man whose right foot had been turned outward all his life, making his walking irregular; the foot was mostly healed during prayer, with the remainder of the healing coming over the next few days.⁴⁶⁵
- A severely burned leg without feeling was restored after a few minutes of prayer, and the third-degree burns eventually vanished.⁴⁶⁶
- A seventy-seven-year-old heart patient whose condition was inoperable, and with other organs failing, was healed in response to faith.⁴⁶⁷
- Broken wrist bones were healed.⁴⁶⁸
- A girl supported by braces was healed as other children in the church prayed for her; bystanders “could hear her bones cracking” as they were being “straightened.”⁴⁶⁹
- A “4-inch cancerous tumor,” diagnosed as terminal, disappeared after prayer.⁴⁷⁰
- A short, shriveled, and reddish arm was instantly and visibly healed and grew out in response to prayer.⁴⁷¹
- A man who cracked his skull in a fall (Oct. 11, 1919) and was never supposed to work again was healed instantly during prayer (Nov. 8, 1920) and returned to work.⁴⁷²

462. Chavda, *Miracle*, 124–25, though not explicitly clarifying whether the healing was gradual and whether medical treatment was involved. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 79–80, recount the medically inexplicable complete disappearance of a breast lump after prayer.

463. Synan, “Charismatics,” 205 (the person was then a prominent figure in the Nazarene Church, which believes in divine healing).

464. Heron, *Channels*, 122–23 (with a medical note).

465. Bill Jackson, personal correspondence, March 24, 2008, along with the testimony of the healed man.

466. Chevreau, *Turnings*, 143–44. The book includes other healings (e.g., 35–36 [of a foot that otherwise soon would have been amputated], 105–6, 142, 166–67, 181–82, 214).

467. Reed, “Case History,” esp. 39, 43.

468. Williams, *Signs*, 140–41. The healing of broken bones also appears in Lambert, *Millions*, 115–16 (though over the course of three weeks); Moreland and Issler, *Faith*, 136 (the healing of fractures, apparently immediately); Huyssen, *Saw*, 187 (the healing of broken ribs, apparently within hours). After a skull operation, note the claim of bone growth through prayer in Salmon, *Heals*, 51; although gradual, it was impressive enough to warrant notice in the *Johannesburg Star* (July 11, 1949). For other cases involving bone diseases, see Salmon, *Heals*, 52–53 (both gradual).

469. Jackson, *Quest*, 256.

470. Faris, “Healed” (reporting on a recovery about twelve years earlier, with no recurrence of cancer; the testimony is endorsed by the district superintendent). When medically documented, the instantaneous disappearance of a tumor was accepted at Lourdes (Woodard, *Faith*, 56).

471. Rumph, *Signs*, 110–11. Cf. also the healing of a hip, 114–16.

472. The claim is in “Fell Sixteen Feet,” concerning D. A. Cowgill (listing his address as 917 N. 9th St., East Saint Louis, Illinois).

- A mostly bedridden, eighty-three-year-old woman who had suffered for a decade from spinal arthritis and angina of the heart was permanently healed after the prayer of a charismatic Episcopal priest.⁴⁷³
- Destroyed flesh, including missing toes, reportedly gradually grew back, with hundreds of clamps and tubes reportedly being dissolved.⁴⁷⁴
- An engineer's gash wound was completely and instantly healed during an Episcopal priest's prayer.⁴⁷⁵
- A Baptist pastor's daughter was born with cerebral palsy, with no medical hope for recovery; he was happily astounded when she was healed after prayer, transforming his subsequent ministry.⁴⁷⁶
- A man with a severed ankle tendon had his foot locked in place with pins to prevent movement; once healed after prayer, he could walk around, moving his foot freely despite "the complex mechanisms meant to keep it stationary."⁴⁷⁷
- A woman long suffering from severe asthma and chronic bronchitis was instantly healed.⁴⁷⁸
- Inspired by faith in Jesus's resurrection while watching the *Jesus Film*, a terminal cancer patient who was expected to die soon was healed, and scheduled tests the next day showed that her previously cancer-riddled body was cancer free.⁴⁷⁹
- A scar in the eye disappeared, although medically this does not happen on its own.⁴⁸⁰
- A woman who had been diagnosed with low blood sugar, allergies, a long-term heart murmur, and a pancreatic problem was immediately healed of all of them after the person praying prophetically discerned each of these disorders.⁴⁸¹
- A person was healed of deafness and inability to walk when a believer prayed.⁴⁸²
- A young man was expected by doctors to die, but after four days he was out of bed, in conjunction, he claims, with a vision from Jesus.⁴⁸³

473. Bennett, *Morning*, 63 (admitting that she had much more faith that she would be healed than he did when he prayed). Cf. spinal healings in Zagrans, *Miracles*, 15, 144–45.

474. Harris, *Acts Today*, 74–78, over the course of 1975 to 1979. But in such a case, see critically Randi, *Faith Healers*, 265–67.

475. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 239, based on the priest's testimony to Dale Matthews.

476. Synan, "Charismatics," 184–85, on John Osteen and Lakewood Baptist Church.

477. Johnson, *Mind*, 89.

478. Storms, *Guide*, 45–46 (reporting, five years after the healing, that the condition had never returned). Jackson, *Quest*, 285, reports another healing from asthma along with scoliosis.

479. Eshleman, *Jesus*, 110.

480. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 15.

481. Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 39–40. Dr. Deere, an eyewitness, maintained contact with the healed woman for more than a year afterward, confirming that the healings "remained."

482. Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 51–52.

483. *Ibid.*, 51.

- A sonogram revealed that one of the kidneys in a six-month-old fetus was dead and no longer growing; the sonogram that followed the subsequent prayer (ten days later) showed both kidneys the same healthy size, and the baby was born healthy.⁴⁸⁴
- A nearly dead person completely recovered after organ failure, with the organs all returning to full function and the person remaining in optimum health.⁴⁸⁵
- A baby was growing sicker with lung scarring after measles (a condition almost always fatal) but was healed during a prayer service.⁴⁸⁶
- An older woman, not previously exposed to the Christian faith, was healed instantly and permanently of a long-term lung condition.⁴⁸⁷
- A baby's malformed epiglottis was completely healed after prayer, shocking surgeons who had to cancel the surgery.⁴⁸⁸
- A man was healed of celiac sprue disease (which had kept him from eating most grains); that he can now eat anything surprises his doctors.⁴⁸⁹
- A pastor in Maine was immediately healed of a throat condition through prayer, hence spared the need for surgery.⁴⁹⁰
- X-rays showed an injury at the skull base of Therese Marszalek's two-year-old son Joseph, comparable to an adult's fall on the head onto concrete from twelve feet; Joseph was completely healed within hours, and the doctor called it "an absolute miracle."⁴⁹¹
- A child's chronic bladder and urinary problems were healed immediately in a prayer setting in church.⁴⁹²

484. Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 127–28 (Deere being the one who prayed).

485. Rumph, *Signs*, 173–81. The recovery was relatively sudden; although it followed days of prayer, it surprised everyone. Sheryl Alexander, a graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary, prayed for a dying woman wearing a continuous oxygen mask whose organs had begun to shut down; the next day, to her astonishment, she learned that the doctor had now deemed the woman well enough to go home (personal correspondence, Nov. 30, 2008; March 29, 2009).

486. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 25–27.

487. Pullinger, *Dragon*, 123. For healing of other breathing conditions, see also 171 (additionally recounting another unexpected recovery); other healings, in 73 (stab wounds), 142, 201, 202, 230. Although initially suspicious, after more thorough investigation Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 99–105, came to very favorable conclusions about Pullinger's activity.

488. Rumph, *Signs*, 49–52. For healing of a serious back injury, see *ibid.*, 54–58 (if one wished, one could report other healings of chronic and severe back problems, e.g., Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 36–37; for an immediate reduction in back problems, Csordas, *Self*, 68–69; I witnessed another case of immediate healing of a back pain, as reported by the person experiencing pain, during a prayer); for an immediate, total, and permanent healing of reflex sympathetic dystrophy syndrome, see Rumph, *Signs*, 68–76.

489. Richard Riffle (known to my brother); his testimony was shared with me in writing Dec. 13, 2007; cf. another case in Zagrans, *Miracles*, 31–34.

490. Sheila Heneise, interview, April 5, 2009; she was the one who prayed for him.

491. Marszalek, *Miracles*, 165–66.

492. *Ibid.*, 8–9 (noting the doctor's confirmation on 10). The book (sharing individuals' testimonies in their own words) includes many others, such as a Native American's instant and permanent healing of

- After a doctor ministered spiritual healing, a patient's fibromyalgia went into immediate remission and as of three years later had not returned.⁴⁹³
- Because a baby was born with no hip sockets or ball at the end of the bone, the doctor planned to put her in a cast and warned that she would need a cast throughout her life. The church prayed, and when the doctor checked before putting on a cast, he found that, contrary to the earlier X-rays, the baby now had hip sockets and a ball at the end of the bone. He declared the child healed.⁴⁹⁴
- A long-term, sizable tumor disappeared immediately.⁴⁹⁵
- A progressively worsening case of neck and back trouble due to whiplash, making even walking difficult, was instantly healed during prayer.⁴⁹⁶
- The day that a man's leg was to be amputated because of circulatory problems, he "suddenly was able to walk again."⁴⁹⁷
- A woman nearly dead and with multiple bone breaks (and some crushed bones) recovered after five days of prayer. Although surgery had been impossible, X-rays showed that the bones had been restored.⁴⁹⁸
- A mother cites the immediate healing of her baby's abscessed ears after a confident minister prayed.⁴⁹⁹
- According to one source, so diseased was Alice Newton of Leavenworth, Kansas, that her abdomen was more swollen than a full-term pregnancy; after two years of prayer, one night she had a dream of Jesus's crucifixion, and woke up healed (including of the swelling). So remarkable was the healing that the Leavenworth and Kansas City newspapers celebrated the story.⁵⁰⁰

his heart and other long-term injuries (59–62); a hospitalized, elderly man's lungs filled with fluid from pneumonia, instantly cleared after prayer (as shown in the tests, 64); the healing after prayer of a man dying from a lung problem (90–92); instant healings of long-term knee problems leading to canceled surgeries (68, 95–97); in Northern Ireland, the healing of a heart problem and hernia (withdrawing from the medicine without withdrawal symptoms; 230–31).

493. Speed, *Incurables*, 83–87 (the author is both the physician and eyewitness). She also notes other cures, including that of cancer (183).

494. Hock, *Miracles*, 47–49, attesting a case that he knew directly.

495. Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 84–85, citing attestation.

496. Bartow, *Adventures*, 117. He also reports an injured and barely functional hand healed.

497. Peterman, *Healing*, ix; Randy Clark shared with me two imminent amputations canceled through healings (personal correspondence, April 1, 2011). Hock, *Miracles*, 40–41, recounts his own experience avoiding amputation (a few days after being stabbed with a knife infected from an animal carcass). A severed part of his thumb also grew back, much to the surprise of the doctor who had planned to amputate the rest of it (44–45).

498. Sanford, *Gifts*, 212–13.

499. Ikin, *Concepts*, 86–87 (on Agnes Sanford's initial, unexpected encounter with healing; on Sanford more fully, 86–93, including her report of a healing of a child from infantile paralysis on 88–89).

500. *Ibid.*, 104–8. I could not find this story in the source to which she attributed it, however (namely Dr. Rebecca Beard, *Mission*, 23–27); either she has confused her sources or she cites a different edition not available to me. Woodard, *Faith*, 155, cites Beard positively, but many would not consider *Mission* to be well-informed theologically.

- A Baptist pastor prayed in tongues for fifteen to twenty minutes for a woman dying in the hospital, injured in an accident, and then felt assured that she would recover; she did (albeit gradually).⁵⁰¹
- A woman with cerebral palsy from birth, with spasms so violent that they broke a physical therapist's bones, was nearly paralyzed. She felt led to ask for prayer from one pastor who had never witnessed a healing in his church. After prayer, she was completely healed, even her vision becoming perfect, and after eighteen years remained well.⁵⁰²
- Doctors removed a golf ball-sized brain tumor from a baby, only to discover that the entire spinal cord was now cancerous. After prayer following a vision of healing, one month after the diagnosis and just before the second week of chemotherapy would have begun, an MRI and spinal tap revealed that no cancer remained. Eight years later, the child remained cancer free.⁵⁰³
- Multiple sclerosis progressively reduced Janice Pridgen to a paraplegic; one year she spent nearly half the year hospitalized, and a diabetic coma nearly killed her. One day, fourteen years after her diagnosis, she felt that God was commanding her to rise and walk; she walked around the sanctuary three times and has been walking ever since.⁵⁰⁴
- Ninety percent of Victoria's blood cells were malignant from leukemia; she relapsed three times after remissions, but on the night that she was expected to die, a pastor, feeling that God had spoken, prayed for her. The next day no trace of leukemia remained, and she remained cancer free sixteen years later, with no relapse.⁵⁰⁵
- A mother's back problems (caused for three decades by curvature of the spine and pinched nerves) and her son's severe heart problems (caused by rheumatic fever) were both healed during the same prayer. A quarter-century later they remained well.⁵⁰⁶
- A day after Barbara Kaufman learned that her gallbladder was full of stones, she had a vision during prayer. Two days later, multiple X-rays confirmed that no stones remained.⁵⁰⁷

501. Sherrill, *Tongues*, 84–86. The pastor was by this time editor of a Baptist denominational magazine.

502. Robertson, *Miracles*, 31–37.

503. *Ibid.*, 145–48; for mention of other brain tumors healed, see Bredesen, *Miracle*, 106–9 (gradually, but it previously had been expected to kill the executive's daughter in three months); DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 32; Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 5 (and apparently 19; cf. 34).

504. Robertson, *Miracles*, 149–50.

505. *Ibid.*, 150–51. Robertson also recounts cancer that had spread throughout Mark's body; just before treatment could begin, he was completely healed (156–58). He reports other healings, including his son (17); someone about to die (expected to be "a vegetable" but fully restored; 109); and (according to a caller) an open, infected gash healed during a prophetic word (130).

506. Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 14–15. Cf. the cure of apparently severe rheumatic fever in Woodard, *Faith*, 86–87.

507. Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 20.

- Three vertebrae fused at birth were separated and healed during prayer.⁵⁰⁸
- After Maria Rodriguez was permanently healed of severe uterine cancer in 1976, she bore three children.⁵⁰⁹
- Her husband's cancer drove Nora, a Navajo woman, to God in prayer. He was healed instantly and they have subsequently remained loyal church members for twenty-two years.⁵¹⁰
- When Judge Kermit Bradford prayed for a hydrocephalic baby with a deadly brain tumor, the tumor disappeared instantly and the head soon shrank down to normal size; a local newspaper featured the story of the healing.⁵¹¹
- A doctor warned that Pearl Burton's hydrocephalic baby, Terry, had a tiny and damaged brain, and that he would be a lifelong vegetable. She continued to pray and new X-rays eventually showed a normal brain; he attended "college on an academic scholarship."⁵¹²
- A man dying in the hospital with multiple organ failure and believed brain-dead began to recover after prayer and lived healthily for many years afterward.⁵¹³

Such accounts represent only a very small sample of the claims.⁵¹⁴ One book from which I have drawn some claims reports more than thirty claims of healings through prayer, many of them instantaneous, including only those for which the author considered the attestation adequate.⁵¹⁵ Another book claims "over 70 medically confirmed healings" from the Chicago area alone; the book, on a popular level, does not reproduce the documentation, but many recoveries listed are consistent with other reports.⁵¹⁶ I noted earlier evidence that suggested that a large proportion of noncharismatic pastors knew of healings in their congregation that they considered miraculous;⁵¹⁷ surveys indicate that 28 percent of noncharismatic

508. *Ibid.*, 26 (noting X-ray confirmation). He also reports (*ibid.*, 60) vertebrae displaced due to an accident healed completely over several days after the patient, Ruby Gonzalez, saw a bright light.

509. *Ibid.*, 58–59.

510. Csordas, "Gender," 298–99.

511. Bredesen, *Miracle*, 38–40, reporting that the healing was long term and the doctors were (naturally) surprised. Brown, "Awakenings," 362, briefly mentions a testimony of healing from a brain tumor.

512. Llewellyn, "Events," 262 (citing her report).

513. The eyewitness account of Dr. Peter Stiles concerning his father (discussion, Sydney, Australia, April 16, 2011; follow-up correspondence, April 27, 28, 2011).

514. For other written examples of healing claims, see, e.g., Neal, *Smoke*, 21–28; Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 35, 45–46, 80–85, 90–98, 101–3 (including Nazarene and often missionary accounts); Glew, "Experience," 81–83 (a physician); White, "Lady," 74–75, 79–81, 83–84; Anderson, *Miracles*, 169–73; DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 31, 139–45 (the book draws esp. from a survey of Catholic charismatics); Woodard, *Faith*, 31–45, 64–65; Kinghorn, *Story*, 82, 113, 215, 303. Some eyewitness healing claims come from scholars formerly opposed to such phenomena (e.g., Deere, "Being Right").

515. Harris, *Acts Today*, 11–12, 14–58. Not all the claims are inexplicable medically, but some are.

516. Schiappacasse, *Heals*, passim; I have cited only samples.

517. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 66–67; Witty, *Healing*, 206.

Christians in the United States believe that they have experienced or witnessed a healing miracle, with Pentecostal and charismatic figures much higher still.⁵¹⁸

It would thus not be difficult to continue accumulating such claims almost indefinitely. I have simply taken many of the examples that came my way while writing this book. Some critics in the modern West may wish to dismiss the supernatural element in such claims reviewed in the past few sections, but it is difficult to dismiss the sincerity of all the claimants or the serious character of many of the reports they offer. It would be especially difficult for me to dismiss them, after conversing at length with a number of those reporting these accounts and being convinced of the sincerity of the vast majority of those with whom I conversed.

Conclusion

Massive numbers of people are claiming healings and other dramatic miracles throughout the world, including in the West. Those scholars who still write as if all such claims in antiquity must be legendary write as if in a social vacuum, oblivious to overwhelming testimony against their assumption.

It is of course precarious for a variety of reasons to compare Jesus or his first agents with twentieth-century North American healing ministers, even when one restricts the discussion solely to claims of healings.⁵¹⁹ But since we lack access to contemporary, extrabiblical accounts concerning Jesus or first-century apostles, modern analogies at least provide an additional, minimal sociological control that can be checked with modern sources.⁵²⁰

Based on such analogies, we can aver at the least that probably a number of people touched by Jesus and some early leaders in his movement found themselves cured. If some others did not, these negative cases would not dampen the spreading movement's enthusiasm over the cases that were accepted and recited. Since Paul expects that apostles exhibited signs (2 Cor 12:12), claims them for himself (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12), and seems to have anticipated signs in local congregations (1 Cor 12:8–10; 14:24–26), many in his day undoubtedly offered eyewitness claims of healings, and Luke offers in Acts only a sample of what he probably could have reported. Likewise, the Gospels recount some unusual and memorable healing stories but present these as merely a sample of Jesus's works (e.g., Mark 1:34; 3:10–11; 6:55–56; Matt 11:5//Luke 7:21–22; John 20:30).

I have not yet addressed the explanations for the sorts of recoveries to which people testify. But different sorts of recoveries may have different sorts of causes,

518. "Spirit and Power."

519. See, e.g., Percy, "Miracles" (most persuasively, 11–12). Jesus and his original apostles did not specialize in healing, but in the theology of the Gospels, healings were among the signs of the kingdom. Likewise, in Acts, signs confirm the message about Jesus.

520. On a different point (orality, literacy, and colonialism), see Draper, "Orality," 2: "The study of ancient cultures in the light of cognate contemporary cultures provides a useful yardstick against which to judge claims about what might have happened in antiquity."

so it is important to examine some kinds of recoveries that the vast majority of observers would concur are extraordinary. Before turning to proposed explanations of healing claims, therefore, I want to examine a few categories of claims today that also appear in the Gospels and that are not usually attributed to psychosomatic causes.

Blindness, Inability to Walk, Death, and Nature

Some Dramatic Reports

To put that differently, if I became convinced that at least a few people have been able to walk on water, then I would be willing to take seriously that Jesus may have done so. But as a historian, I find myself unable to say that the life of Jesus involved spectacular happenings of a magnitude without parallel anywhere else. —Marcus Borg¹

I took the dead body into the room while the people waited outside. In the room I prayed and pleaded with God to restore the life of the young boy. A few hours later, the boy opened his eyes and coughed. [With him] fully restored, I came out of the room and handed over the boy to his parents alive! —Leo Bawa²

In chapters 8–11, I have summarized some cases of healing by region and period. To continue the summary of miracle reports today, I cover a few sample areas of more dramatic miracle claims by specific topic. Where relevant I note some ancient claims; most of the kinds of individual reports about Jesus have at least some parallels in antiquity as well as in a variety of cultures, because they address some basic human needs. I focus, however, on modern claims, because my focus in this book is arguing that such claims can come from eyewitnesses and not exclusively from legend.

1. Borg, “Disagreement,” 232.

2. Leo Bawa, personal correspondence, Aug. 10, 2009 (p. 5). With his permission, I have made slight modifications of grammar and punctuation for U.S. readers, without altering any content.

Why This Chapter's Focus?

Many scholars who are skeptical about genuinely supernatural healing allow for some kinds of dramatic recoveries reported in the Gospels and Acts, provided that they are psychosomatic. In view of this approach, I want to rehearse here some of the more compelling sorts of miracles that are found today as well as in the Gospels and Acts. While the stories and summaries below contribute primarily to my main thesis—that eyewitnesses often claim what they regard as miracles—I believe that many of the accounts will also contribute to the secondary thesis, to be addressed in chapters 13–15, that supernatural causation should be considered in many cases.

I will thus note some reports of healing of blindness and inability to walk, which are not usually psychosomatic, especially in cases of blindness.³ Then I will turn to the categories of miracle claims most often denied and less common than many others: reports of raisings from the dead and nonhuman nature miracles. Not all of these individual accounts are of equal weight; I have sought to illustrate the range of claims. Nevertheless, readers who are consistently skeptical of reports of naturally inexplicable events should again consider the reasons for their reticence: if it is simply Hume's argument from the uniformity of human experience, I encourage them to reconsider the narrow parameters by which they have defined human experience. Other voices with a wider range of human experience than was available to Hume rightly clamor to be heard today.⁴

These sorts of claims usually imply more than a single witness. Because many peers in their communities would know of the cured persons' prior conditions, claims not believed by these peers (e.g., if the person had lacked previous functional limitations) would normally fade. The claims I cover here, however, typically have led to the growth of the churches or movements that claim them, often even to the extent of people reversing aspects of respected ancestral beliefs that stretch back for centuries. As in the Gospels, such reports naturally generate interest and a movement's growth. Thus significant local church growth has long been documented in response to signs, both in earlier centuries⁵ and more recently,⁶ for

3. Some writers have contended that blindness is sometimes psychosomatic (Dod, "Healer," 175); Jeffries, "Healing," 71, cites one case where a nerve specialist was able to cure blindness and argues that it was psychosomatic (while arguing that Jesus healed true blindness, in contrast to modern cures). Even if it might be psychosomatic in some cases (particularly merely poor vision that one only supposes improved in "faith"), it stretches plausibility to believe this is the norm with long-term blindness, especially where organic factors are conspicuous (in some modern reports, cataracts have disappeared) and to offer this as an explanation for a significant proportion of the cures of blindness noted below. In ch. 13 I note arguments about psychogenic blindness (physical conditions originating psychologically), but these would not explain a significant number of instant or almost instant cures clustering around a single teacher like Jesus.

4. Nevertheless, if someone who remains consistently skeptical has continued to read this far in the book, he or she must at least be commended for remaining open-minded enough to persevere thus far.

5. E.g., in Acts (with, e.g., Hardon, "Miracle Narratives"); accounts regarding Columba (Latourette, *History of Christianity*, 344; Tucker, *Jerusalem*, 41).

6. Wood, "Preparation," 61 (for eyewitness testimony concerning a village in Togo, Oct. 1979); Hickson, *Heal*, 137, 141; Clark, *Impartation*, 209; De Wet, "Signs," passim (for the breadth of his

example, in India,⁷ Nepal,⁸ and Mozambique.⁹ In one example I noted in chapter 9, an eyewitness shared with me the case of an aged skeptic's instant healing of an almost lifelong paralysis that sparked a people movement among what missiologists considered a previously "resistant" people group in Suriname.¹⁰ Such examples could be multiplied, and I offer some further such cases below. Hume doubted that healing claims involved matters of public knowledge, but (to paraphrase the book of Acts) these recoveries are not merely happening "in a corner."¹¹

Healing of Blindness

When a blind person receives sight in a medically inexplicable manner, such an event is sometimes considered newsworthy enough to merit public attention.¹² A doctor critical of healing claims notes that healing of blindness is unusual; normally those who are registered blind can recover sight by natural means only through medical intervention.¹³ Yet many such claims of miraculous healing exist.

research, see 92), esp. 1–2 (John Lake, in South Africa), 114 (in Sri Lanka, following the eyewitness, Daniel, "Signs and Wonders," 105–6), 119–21 (in the Philippines). For the resultant conversion of the healed individual or their families or immediate acquaintances, see, e.g., Hickson, *Heal*, 75, 86, 88, 128–29.

7. Pothén, "Missions," 189–90 (on the Filadelfia movement in 1980s Gujarat and Maharashtra); De Wet, "Signs," 89 (in Madras, following Sargunam, "Churches," 194), 110–11 (among Nishi tribals in India, following Cunville, "Evangelization," 156–57).

8. Stephen, "Church," 58 (suggesting the cause of more than 40 percent of Christian converts in Nepal); Ma, "Encounter," 137.

9. Baker, *Enough*, 74–76 (including resuscitations), 171, 173.

10. Interview, June 6, 2006; also in Norwood, "Colloquium," 24–26.

11. Acts 26:26, in a different connection and probably reflecting a common idiom; cf. Malherbe, "Not in a Corner." Lack of public attestation in front of nonbelievers was also a central criticism by Ernest Renan (1823–92; Loos, *Miracles*, 23); countless examples challenge Renan's criticism today, though many would have done so in his lifetime had he been willing to admit them. (Schweitzer complains [*Quest*, 191] that Renan was more interested in his literary public than in scientific objectivity; for Romantics like Renan [treated in *Quest*, 180–92], the thrill of recognition identified authenticity.)

12. Despite several years of blindness from irreversible macular degeneration, and lack of anatomical changes, ninety-year-old Marty Alvey, from a Portland suburb, spontaneously received sight; family members called it a miracle, and Alvey declared, "Why God did this for me I don't know, but if it only lasts another minute I have had the best blessing of my life!" Media reports cite also the amazement of specialists who examined his eyes; see Amy Troy, "Blind Oregon Man's Vision Returns, Surprising Doctors" (Aug. 10, 2009; http://www.king5.com/topstories/NW_081009ORB-blind-man-sees-TP.ca96d736.html?rss, at a Seattle NBC affiliate, accessed Aug. 12, 2009); also Sarah Harlan, "Legally Blind OR Man Regains Eyesight" (Aug. 12, 2009, at the Evansville, Ind., NBC affiliate, accessed at <http://www.14wfe.com/Global/story.asp?s=10887163>, on Aug. 12, 2009); Rich Shapiro, "And Then There Was Sight! 90-Year-Old Gramps Gets Vision Back" (Aug. 12, 2009, accessed at http://www.nydailynews.com/news/us_world/2009/08/12/2009-08-12_gramps_gets_vision_back_outta_sight.html). Given the lack of anatomical change, the occurrence seems miraculous; but even if this proved questionable, such spontaneous cures are extremely rare, and the reported *cluster* of them around Jesus and people who pray is significant.

13. May, "Miracles," 154.

Healings of Blindness in History

Healing of blindness has long been considered significant and appears in some ancient, extrabiblical miracle claims. Ancients frequently believed that, under extraordinary circumstances, blind persons could be supernaturally healed.¹⁴ Some thus contended that Isis both cured eye diseases and made blind,¹⁵ and in a list of healings at Epidauros, the lame and blind appear in a summary, perhaps as the most dramatic of cures.¹⁶ In a later report about a much earlier character, a Greek source claims that some Brahmans healed a man whose eyes had been put out.¹⁷ The majority of reports are much later than the events that they claim, but one cannot a priori rule out that some petitioners may have experienced restoration of sight.

This category of cures seems to have clustered around one ancient sage more than others, however. The earliest available traditions about Jesus multiply attest reports that Jesus healed some blind people.¹⁸ These healings appear in Mark (8:22–26; 10:46–52); in what scholars usually call Q material (Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22); in John (9:7); and elsewhere (Matt 12:22; 15:30–31; 21:14; Luke 7:21).¹⁹ Again, in the Q material, from *within the generation* of prominent eyewitnesses who knew Jesus, the opening of blind eyes, like the healing of those unable to walk, offers a sign of the impending messianic, kingdom era (Isa 35:5–6; Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22).

In later centuries, reports of blindness being healed continue,²⁰ including a public and well-known event in June 386 reported by Augustine and Ambrose.²¹ For recent centuries, I have noted some already (such as the healing of Ann Brookes's blind eye reported during the Wesleyan revival²² or healings of blindness through the prayers of Brother André²³). Some firsthand reports of eye recoveries also

14. Witherington, *Christology*, 170–71, cites, e.g., Tob 11:10–14; *Syll.* 1173.15–18; *SIG* 3.1168; see also *IG* 4.951.120–21 (quoted in Whittaker, *Jews and Christians*, 212). A Jewish writer or tradition suggested that Amorite precious stones could give sight to the blind (*L.A.B.* 25:12). On understandings of blindness in antiquity, see, e.g., Pilch, “Blindness.”

15. Horsley, *Documents*, 1:15, §2.

16. Epidauros inscr. 4 (Grant, *Religions*, 57). In Epidauros inscr. 4, Asclepius cuts open an eye and pours in medicine; in 9, he again opens eyes and pours in medicine.

17. Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 3.39. Some contemporary Indians may well have made these claims, but unfortunately, Apollonius's foreign travels tend to be where Philostratus departs most from known data and exercises the greatest creativity. Some Indian legends do report healing of blindness (e.g., in Dube, “Past,” 179, but this is in a story that Dube repeatedly calls mythical).

18. Witherington, *Christology*, 170, citing Mark, John, and Q (the Matthean summary and other examples he cites do not add to these).

19. Some of the special Matthean or Lukan material could well reflect Q material arranged differently by the other author.

20. E.g., see Kelsey, *Healing*, 185; Van Dijk, “Miracles,” 239; Gardner, “Miracles,” 1932.

21. See Augustine *Conf.* 9.7.16; see Herum, “Theology,” 43–45, noting also Ambrose's specific identification of the healed man.

22. Rack, “Healing,” 147.

23. Oursler, *Power*, 81.

surrounded Blumhardt in the nineteenth century, including those of a blind child²⁴ and partially blind persons.²⁵

Among other reports from the early twentieth century,²⁶ Anglican James Hickson cited abundant eyewitnesses around the world who reported numerous spontaneous cures of blindness through prayer during his healing ministry.²⁷ For example, one local minister reported that a man blind for more than thirty years was prayed for and healed by the end of the service.²⁸ In another account, a mother was hurrying her five-year-old blind daughter home, feeling she had wasted too much time at the service. Only at this point did the mother finally pay attention to her daughter's insistent claim to be able to see and discovered that it was true.²⁹ A bishop who had previously denied the possibility of modern healings testified to having confirmed various healings, including a number of cases of blindness.³⁰ In one case a pupil said to be "eaten away by abscesses" was restored and now could see.³¹

Among other older reports, a medically documented case of incurable, destroyed-optic-nerve blindness was cured at Lourdes. The woman was first able to see with apparently still atrophied nerves, and then her nerves themselves were restored.³²

24. Ising, *Blumhardt*, 209. A possibly fully blind woman appears to be partly healed (now just myopic) and can function with glasses (329). Cf. also 207 (his son's "eye trouble"). Cataracts and congenital blindness, by contrast, seemed more intractable (209).

25. *Ibid.*, 210 (noted by other eyewitnesses); also a theological student's vision problems (*ibid.*).

26. Note also from this period, e.g., the healing of a blind child (Gregory, "Healed"); Stephens, *Healeth*, 72–74; restoration of Raymond T. Richey's eyes that had been injured in his childhood (Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 125–26); claims in Turner, "Healed." One pastor in Wales in May 1925 claimed to witness the healing of a girl whose empty eye socket became a seeing eye after a few seconds of prayer (Synan, *Voices*, 91–92). One detailed story involved a case, which the account claims was medically certified, of a young man with previously empty eye sockets completely healed in the 1890s (Gibson, "New Eyes," esp. 9–10). Nevertheless, in the archives of the same period (at the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center) I found far more reports of blind Pentecostals involved in or receiving ministry than of people healed from blindness. One of the movement's key leaders, William Seymour, remained permanently blind in one eye (Bartleman, *Azusa Street*, 41). Earlier, Fanny Crosby, though remaining blind, believed herself healed from cholera (Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 68); cf. the narrative of miraculous intervention on behalf of a blind Afghan church leader in Otis, *Giants*, 159. For a renewal theology of disability, see Yong, "Disability."

27. Hickson, *Heal*, 29, 31–32, 37–38, 53, 54, 62, 65–66, 74, 76, 78, 85, 87, 118, 124, 126, 128–29, 135, 141 (noting thirty-six cases), 151, 162, 180, 191, 196, 205–6, 213; cf. 226 (I retain more details in my notes); partial blindness in *idem*, *Bridegroom*, 300. Some reports were from newspapers (e.g., *Heal*, 120, 121, 123, 131, 133, 135, 152–53). Most of these claims are taken from bishops' and other ministers' signed and dated letters to Hickson; most claim eyewitness experience; and most of the dates are only a few years before the book's publication, making forgery quite implausible.

28. *Ibid.*, 126 (a letter from Rev. W. H. Hallows in Zululand, Sept. 11, 1922, also reporting the testimony of the man's children).

29. *Ibid.*, 128–29 (in Johannesburg). The healing of the blindness in one eye of a girl in Johannesburg who kept insisting on being taken to the service led to the conversion of her family (*idem*, *Bridegroom*, 394).

30. *Ibid.*, 180–82.

31. *Ibid.*, 205.

32. Cranston, *Miracle*, 42–44 (on Mme Biré). At Lourdes the medically impossible functioning of an organ, such as seeing through eyes the optic nerves of which remain atrophied, appears as a special miracle (*ibid.*, 136).

In 1915, a young woman suffering long-term, organic blindness was cured during the Mass.³³ Some extraordinary claims also surround the ministry of John G. Lake and his early twentieth-century colleagues: it is reported that a destroyed eye, scheduled to be immediately removed, was instead immediately healed through prayer.³⁴ Likewise, a young man, challenged by a cessationist about continuing miracles, was said to have ended the debate by praying successfully for the healing of a woman's blind eye.³⁵ A doctor reported in 1916 a sixty-four-year-old woman with cataracts healed through prayer, her sight now functional. He contacted her eye specialist, who noted that he had previously planned to operate, "for I have never known a spontaneous cure for cataract."³⁶ Others in 1921 claimed to witness the healing of a woman with film over her swollen eyes, and that she left the meeting with "perfectly normal" eyes.³⁷ A twelve-year-old from Newcastle upon Tyne, born blind, was healed in 1927, "and the first face she saw in the world" was that of Pastor Stephen Jeffreys, who was praying for the sick.³⁸ Early Pentecostals gave numerous other testimonies.³⁹

South African Methodist Elsie Salmon reported the instant healing of a fully blind woman with two cataracts.⁴⁰ Doctors feared that the blindness of a poisoned nurse would be permanent; but the day after Salmon laid hands on her to pray, when the doctor removed the bandages, the nurse could see clearly.⁴¹ A woman blind for twenty years was healed in three days.⁴² Salmon reports other cures of the eyes or sight as well.⁴³ Elsewhere, during World War II, a wounded Scottish soldier lost one eye immediately and the other appeared beyond salvage, with six metal fragments "on the retina and over twenty in the rest of the eye."⁴⁴ The naval surgeon working with him reports that some time after prayer,

33. Duffin, *Miracles*, 61, measurements indicating the shift from 10 to 70 percent of sight.

34. Lindsay, *Lake*, 32.

35. *Ibid.*, 40.

36. Hansen, "Cures," 114 (translated from Norwegian).

37. "Revival in London," 14 (noting that she did not even need her glasses); no mention is offered of later follow-up. Cf. one or two cases of boys' sight improvement in Glover, "Miracles of Healing," 6.

38. "Revival in England" (taking the report from *Redemption Tidings*, a British Pentecostal magazine). On the Jeffreys brothers, see Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 197–99.

39. E.g., Mueller, "Blind, Deaf," 21 (claiming that the witness saw a person blind for ten years instantly and totally healed, and that the blind person's healing was also in the local Toledo newspaper); "Scotland Stirred," 5 (citing the *Elim Evangel*); Wise, "Healings." Note also the healing of the eye problem in Menzies, *Anointed*, 43–44 (in the U.S. Midwest in 1903).

40. Salmon, *Heals*, 68. Three days later the blindness returned, but she stood by faith and the next day it vanished, never returning in the following three years (68–69).

41. *Ibid.*, 67–68. The doctor concluded that it was miraculous (68).

42. *Ibid.*, 72–74.

43. Severe keratoma, healed over five weeks of prayer (*ibid.*, 69); an irreparably damaged optic nerve, healed over four months of prayer (69–70); almost complete blindness healed (the timing unclear, 70–71); a man blind for years healed over the course of a few days during the healing mission (71–72); the healing of a congenital, incurable eye disease (29). Eyes permanently blinded by a caustic substance were healed over the course of perhaps a month; the specialist acknowledged a miracle (30–31).

44. Woodard, *Faith*, 48 (noting on 49 that these were "too near the brain" for operation).

the fragments simply dropped from his eye, “since which time he has been able to see perfectly.”⁴⁵

John Sung’s journal claimed healings of blindness in Asia, especially in 1930s China.⁴⁶ Other Chinese ministers at the time also reported some healings, some of which surprised them.⁴⁷ When one blind boy was very ill, the father requested prayer, and the Chinese ministers, uncertain how to respond, told him to turn to God and God would help him. In response, the man immediately “removed the idols from his home to declare his faith in God. His son immediately showed signs of improvement.” Two days later, the doctor visited and noted that the boy was healed. “He was still blind, but after three days he received his sight.” Many people turned to Christ, and the ministers noted that they were “ashamed of our lack of faith.”⁴⁸ Reports of healings of blindness still occur in China.⁴⁹

Healings of blindness also reportedly followed Simon Kimbangu in central Africa.⁵⁰ An account of complete healing of blindness surrounds the early establishment of West Indian Pentecostalism in the United Kingdom.⁵¹ Such healings are said to have accompanied Kathryn Kuhlman’s ministry: a child nearly blind from a blood clot on the optic nerve was instantly healed during a meeting, with an attending doctor testifying that such a condition does not normally simply vanish.⁵²

Contemporary Reports of Healings of Blindness in Africa

Today such reports continue to remain common. As I have noted, this is especially true in much of the Majority World, where medical treatment is often tragically far less accessible than in the West.⁵³ The vast majority of the world’s hearing

45. Ibid., 50 (including distant prayer also by the pope, 47–48).

46. Sung, *Diaries* (mostly in 1930s China), 28, 36, 56, 111 (multiple cases), 116 (multiple cases), 153 (a girl in Singapore), 158 (multiple cases), 161 (four cases).

47. Not to mention Western missionaries. Despite common cessationism among many U.S. Southern Baptists at the time, some of their missionaries reported a bandit who had lost his sight regaining it upon conversion ca. 1932 (McGee, “Radical Strategy,” 91–92, citing here Crawford, *Shantung Revival*, 35).

48. Hai-po, “Works” (translated from a then-recent issue of *Hsin I Pao*, the Lutheran weekly of China, and one of the most explicit supernatural claims printed in *Gleanings*, for a Western Lutheran audience).

49. E.g., Danyun, *Lilies*, 330 (a man blind for many years; a woman blind for eight years).

50. Rabey, “Prophet.”

51. Michel, *Telling*, 64.

52. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 12.

53. E.g., Protus, “Latunde” (after fasting and washing with water, the latter as in 2 Kgs 5:14; John 9:7); Chavda, *Miracle*, 122–23 (a seventy-year-old woman, healed completely on her seventh, persistent entreaty); in various nations, Osborn, *Evangelism*, 1:930, 938, 941–42; 21:370, 400; 22:65; 22:67 (two cases); 22:783; 23:592; 23:713–15 (twenty-five cases, with photos of five testifying of restored sight); 23:722 (with photos of three more cases); Osborn, *Healing*, 281 (as many as ninety in one crusade), 287–88, 291, 293, 295, 296 (the sister of a worker), 298 (two), 300 (multiple cases), 301, 302 (two), 304, 306 (two), 308, 310, 313, 316, 317, 326; crossed eyes on 296, 297, 300; Clark, *Impartation*, 21 (tunnel vision), 121, 125, 133, 166, 169 (several), 211 (six instances, including one case where new corneas and pupils were formed); Johnson, *Heaven*, 187; idem, *Mind*, 53 (also, on 36, healing of lesser vision impairment, so glasses were not needed; see also examples of various sorts of eye restorations on their church

and visually impaired people live in the Majority World, and most lack access to conventional treatments.⁵⁴ Among other sources I noted a growing movement in Mozambique, where reports of healings of blindness and deafness are common;⁵⁵ a number of these have now been externally corroborated by a research team.⁵⁶ Two of my Baptist students witnessed the healing of a man's blindness in Cameroon when one of them, a Cameroonian minister, prayed for the man.⁵⁷ I have already noted a recent African report where three blind children were healed at once, together;⁵⁸ reports of other meetings where many were healed of blindness;⁵⁹ and other eyewitness testimonies of blindness healed,⁶⁰ including the visible disappearance of cataracts.⁶¹ Medically, cataracts can normally be removed only by surgery.⁶² I focus below on other examples.

A "fetish priest" who had recently lost his sight came to Seth Ablorh, a U.S.-trained Ghanaian doctor. Finding no pathology, Ablorh irrigated the man's eyes and asked if he might pray for him. The priest demurred but returned three days later, still blind and now willing to receive prayer. Ablorh irrigated his eyes again, prayed, and then retired to his office to pray further. Suddenly, his office prayers were interrupted, as people outside began shouting, "He can see, he can see!"

website, posted Nov. 27, 2006; Jan. 18, 2007; Feb. 28, 2007; Nov. 7, 2007); Bentley, *Miraculous*, 164, 177, 179–80, 208, 212, 220, 239, 243, 257, 262, 263, 264, 267 (twenty cases), 269, 276 (eleven cases), 291, 302 (124 cases), 304–6 (or vision impairments, 165, 170, 175, 299; though as I noted earlier there is today serious controversy surrounding Bentley's claims); Wagner, *Acts*, 202; Angela Salazar Aragona, April 14, 2002; cf. also Währisch-Oblau, "Healing in Migrant Churches," 70, on typical demonstrations of healing in West African Pentecostal churches. Although not all the above locations are in the Majority World or are weak in medical resources, the majority of the accounts involve these locations.

54. Brown, Mory, Williams, and McClymond, "Effects," 868 (citing World Health Organization figures of 80 percent of the 278 million hearing impaired and 87 percent of the 314 million visually impaired).

55. See accounts in Baker, *Enough*, 145, 169, 174, 182 (with further accounts of eyes white with blindness changing color as they were being healed, 76, 171–72, 173; idem, *Miracles*, 189); idem, *Miracles*, 8, 39–40, 68, 78 (often), 108, 113, 159, 160, 192, 193 (partial healing); Chevreau, *Turnings*, 19, 166–67 (partial damage).

56. Brown, Mory, Williams, and McClymond, "Effects." For example, two subjects' hearing thresholds improved by more than 50 db HL (ibid., 866); three subjects' vision "improved from 6/120 or worse to 6/24 or better, and one subject improved from unable to count fingers at 30 cm (6/2400) to 6/38 (ibid., 866–67), with an average visual acuity improvement of more than tenfold (ibid., 867). Cf. briefly Brown, "Awakenings," 363–64. While a backlash from skeptics may arise, there is no reason apart from skepticism to dispute this evidence while accepting evidence for other kinds of claims. If critics might charge that some reporters are sympathetic, the critics' antipathy is no less a bias, and the data remain. Indeed, would not a rational, initially neutral observer become sympathetic if they found evidence supporting such events?

57. Yolanda McCain, personal correspondence, Oct. 3, 2008; Paul Mokake, interview, May 13, 2009.

58. Daniel Kolenda in a Nigeria crusade, Oct. 9, 2008, forwarded to me by Michael Brown, Nov. 15, 2008, with additional observations.

59. E.g., De Wet, "Signs," 93–95; Osborn, *Evangelism*, 1:930, 938, 941–42; 21:370, 400; 22:65; 22:67, 782–83; 23:592, 713–15, 722; see also Marszalek, *Miracles*, 2 (Malawi), 159–60 (several cases in Uganda).

60. Shelley Hollis, phone interview, Jan. 10, 2009.

61. Baker, *Enough*, 76, 171–72, 173; cf. also the testimony of a retired radiologist in Brown, "Awakenings," 363.

62. Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009. That is, these are not cases of "hysterical blindness" such as those apparently suggested in Gildea, "Possession," 297.

Ablorh decided that something spiritual had caused the blindness and was convinced that something spiritual had cured it.⁶³

In May 1973, in Ogoniland, Nigeria, the eyes of a five- or six-year-old girl born blind looked like empty sockets with skin draped over them; no slits were visible in the eyelids. When Geoffrey Numbere, whom we encountered in chapter 9, prayed, she opened her eyes and could see; a blind boy was also healed at that time, and much of the village of Dere was converted.⁶⁴ In another African account, one believer was healed from blindness after a priest sprinkled on him consecrated water.⁶⁵ One writer I know recounts that the sight of one completely blind woman returned immediately during prayer in October 1980 in South Africa, and that the South African *Sunday Times* even reported the healing.⁶⁶ Others reported a number of healings of blindness during a revival among the Zulu people of southern Africa in the 1970s,⁶⁷ including eleven persons brought on one occasion,⁶⁸ a man blind for more than three decades,⁶⁹ and a blind woman whose eyes had never fully formed.⁷⁰ The director of the *Jesus Film* project similarly reports that an African woman blind for twenty-seven years was healed when she prayed along with the blind beggar in the film to receive healing from Jesus.⁷¹ Nigerian minister Joe Olaiya reports that blind and deaf persons were healed in his meetings, leading to many conversions.⁷²

My friend Dr. Bungishabaku Katho, an Evangelical Brethren minister⁷³ who is now president of Shalom University in Bunia, Democratic Republic of Congo, was part of a prayer group team evangelizing villages in 1993. The people of the village of Hayo, near Nyankunde, were dominated by a powerful witch doctor. One old man listening to them, however, went to retrieve his wife from the witch doctor's house, where she was being treated. Neither the hospital nor the witch doctor had been able to help her blindness, and the man brought her to the team as they had finished praying for people and were preparing to leave. The husband confessed that he was Catholic and acknowledged that Jesus is more powerful than a witch doctor. The three team members consulted one another; they had never been in such a situation before, but they decided that this challenge for Jesus was the very

63. Mensah, "Basis," 178.

64. Numbere, *Vision*, 121. The book mentions other blind persons being healed (186, 210; near-blindness on 189–90).

65. Protus, "Chukwu." Cf. also the account of the three-year-old with ulcerated, bandaged eyes healed when sprinkled with holy water in the United States (DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 31).

66. Jackson, *Quest*, 254.

67. Koch, *Zulus*, 71, 82, 94–97, 153, 196 (multiple cases), 232; blindness was not healed (though reportedly pain was) in the case on 79.

68. *Ibid.*, 94–95.

69. *Ibid.*, 96.

70. *Ibid.*

71. Paul Eshleman, *Jesus Film* Project support letter, Dec. 4, 1997.

72. Olaiya, "Praying," 111.

73. In Congo-DRC, this is Assemblée des Frères Evangélique; his church is called Communauté Emmanuel.

sort of event that they had come for. They had prayed for the woman for about two minutes when she suddenly began shouting, “I can see!” Though in her early sixties (in Congo, this is not young), she began dancing and jumping. Even those who had prayed were surprised, not having witnessed such a miracle previously, but they did find the woman completely healed. She lived on for another ten years, and the healing endured.⁷⁴

Gary Dickinson, a friend from college, happens to work with the Assemblies of God in my wife’s country, and reported a couple healings of blindness in the past year. Intrigued, I requested details. In one of the cases, a blind teenager named Julia came to their church’s youth group, and the youth prayed over her for an hour, until she was healed in front of many eyewitnesses. She remains part of the youth group.⁷⁵

In chapter 9, I noted Bruce Collins’s eyewitness testimony of an orphan in Kenya whose sight was healed. He also recounted the healing of another orphan’s eye there, and I have reserved that account for this chapter. Before Oliver was one year old, Bruce told me, the boy fell on an opened tin can, leaving his left eye completely blind. The eye bulged and appeared grotesque. Two of Bruce’s colleagues began praying for him, and within fifteen minutes the eye started to move and Oliver began to see through it. Other orphans began joining in the prayer, and within fifteen more minutes he could see color. Bruce has seen Oliver often in the three years since then, and he has completely normal sight in that eye, though the scar around it remains.⁷⁶

It is said that an Ethiopian Christian “blind for sixteen years received his sight through prayer” and the instructions of Jas 5:14.⁷⁷ When I asked Gebru Woldu, a minister from Ethiopia mentioned in chapter 9, if he has seen any blind people healed, he immediately responded, “plenty of people,” and that he always gets confirmation from doctors. He noted that after the period of persecution under Mengistu, his young church of two thousand obtained government permission to use the abandoned military hospital in Dire Dawa, though they lacked anything to sit on there. When he prayed, two blind persons received sight, and an astonished visitor asked if anyone could certify that they had truly been blind. Their many neighbors and relatives readily testified that they had been blind; it was common knowledge, and the impressed visitor donated chairs for the whole church.

Likewise, a community leader named Ambase, initially hostile to Gebru’s sort of church, had long been blind in one eye, with his other eye crossed; while they prayed, both his eyes were cured. Now an elder in the church, he always testifies of how he was healed and became a follower of Christ; “everybody knows him,” Gebru concluded. He notes that in cases where blindness was caused by cataracts, he has seen eyes white from cataracts healed as the cataracts disappeared during

74. Bungishabaku Katho, interview, March 12, 2009.

75. Gary A. Dickinson (personal correspondence, June 3, 2010).

76. Bruce Collins, phone interview, April 11, 2009, noting that he has photos of the child.

77. Koch, *Gifts*, 101.

prayer.⁷⁸ Other healings of blindness are reported in Ethiopia,⁷⁹ South Africa,⁸⁰ Côte d'Ivoire,⁸¹ and elsewhere.

Contemporary Reports of Healings of Blindness in Asia

I also have mentioned some healings of blindness reported in Asia,⁸² and in addition to rehearsing some of these briefly here I will supplement with some other reports. My friend Flint McGlaughlin shared with me an eyewitness account. Flint is director of enterprise research at the Transforming Business Institute, Cambridge University, and is also director of MECLABS. In 2004, with several others he was visiting an orphanage in India, where he led them in praying for a leper who was mostly blind.⁸³ To this point, the leper could see only shadows, and people sometimes would lead him around; when they prayed, suddenly he could see. Robin Shields, who was present on this occasion, noted that the man suddenly began looking everywhere in wonder. His eyes had been "flat and clouded," but now they filled with tears and "became clear." "He exclaimed, 'I can see!'" and the many onlookers cheered. "For several days," she added, "you could see him wandering the grounds. He walked round and round. Looking to the sky. Raising his hands looking in the trees. Walking up to people telling them of what this awesome God had done for him."⁸⁴ Flint and Robin shared with me photos of the joyful man and those rejoicing with him.

In 2002, the leader of a large house church network in China told a U.S. journalist about a revival of healings in China; "I personally know many blind people who recovered their sight."⁸⁵ Chinese informants offered similar testimony to a member of a U.S. congressional delegation.⁸⁶ Christopher Daniel of Sri Lanka quotes an observer of one of his own crusades regarding the healing of a man totally blind for five years: "Many in the audience knew him, knew of his blindness. They began clapping their hands with happiness."⁸⁷ One book reports that a seven-year-old

78. Gebru Woldu (interview, May 20, 2010).

79. Menberu, "Mekonnen Negera"; Negash, "Demelash" (in 1991).

80. De Wet, "Signs," 94–96.

81. *Ibid.*, 93–94 (in 1973).

82. E.g., Khai, "Pentecostalism," 268; long-term paralysis of one eye, in one of my interviews with a Chinese pastor in May 2007. In a different claim, an operation and a corneal ulcer had left Won-chul Shin with a score of 0.02 in his right eye before prayer; after prayer on May 9, 2002, his score was 0.1, far from perfect but a significant improvement (case study from WCDN website, including his ophthalmologic records, http://www.wcdn.org/wcdn_eng/case/case_content.asp?id=21&page=4, accessed May 6, 2009). Yet some corneal ulcers do heal on their own, depending on their extent and cause (Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, May 28, 2009).

83. Personal correspondence, Feb. 6–7, 2009.

84. Robin Shields, personal correspondence, Feb. 7, 2009. She also provided other details of location and so forth that I omit here. In a response to my follow-up query, she confirmed that he was telling others of his healed blindness; she also notes that this man and about fifty other people chose to affiliate with Jesus's followers that day (personal correspondence, Feb. 8, 2009).

85. Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 274.

86. Fever, "Delegation," 34.

87. Daniel, "Labour," 160, noting that he tested his vision.

Kuwaiti boy had been blind in one eye, with 30 percent sight in the other; yet he saw Jesus in a vision and was immediately healed.⁸⁸

In Rajasthan, India, Pastor Kantilal Anjaroli prayed for a blind woman named Reshma, from Siyara, who was healed and now attends worship.⁸⁹ In a fishing village near the Bay of Bengal, Jacob Beera, whom I knew from his connections with one of my home churches when I lived in Ohio, prayed for a blind man named Swami who wanted to see; he was healed and the next Sunday requested baptism.⁹⁰

A Filipino seminarian, Chester Allan Tesoro, visited a church in Mindanao that was pastored by a friend, where he reported that many miracles were occurring. This seminarian told me that he had noticed an older lady whose eyes were completely white; after the service, he suddenly heard her shouting, "I can see! I can see!" Initially she could see only light, but then she could see color, and then he was able to get close enough to recognize that her eyes were no longer white but brown.⁹¹ One scholar, Julie Ma, notes that earlier, many blind persons were reported healed in the Philippines through the prayers of Elva Vanderbout;⁹² for example, "an old woman who had been blind in both eyes since 1942 was healed and could once again see out of both eyes."⁹³ Ma cites a more recent case in which she and some of her colleagues prayed for Kapeng Andaloy, and she was instantly healed of long-term blindness and hearing problems.⁹⁴

Evangelist Don Stewart recounts the story of Dario Bautista, for many years blind in one eye because of lacerations from barbed wire. Bautista "felt something" in his eye during a healing service that Stewart held in Manila; within a few days he could see fully, and later he became one of the pastors in the movement with which Stewart was working.⁹⁵ A writer interviewing a healing evangelist who was ministering in the Philippines witnessed an older woman

88. Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 61.

89. C&C 37 (S, May 2008): 9 (from the Filadelfia movement noted earlier in the book). One writer reports the healing of a Hindu's blindness in the early twentieth century, but the blindness returned when the man returned to his deities (Clifford, "Permanent"; idem, "Healings"). D. F. Higbee reports the instant and visible healing of a cross-eyed boy who had not been helped medically, immediately converting the boy's previously skeptical father (Marszalek, *Miracles*, 34). Of course, many other testimonies exist (note, e.g., the summary in Pospisil, "Deliverances").

90. Jacob Beera, personal correspondence, Nov. 2, 2009, accompanied with this story in his *Hope Ministries Update* ("Sight for Swami," Aug. 2006, p. 1). I mentioned my connection with Jacob in ch. 7.

91. Chester Allan Tesoro, interview, Jan. 30, 2009.

92. Ma, "Vanderbout," 130.

93. Ma, "Encounter," 137; idem, "Vanderbout," 132 (additionally describing the healing of another blind, elderly woman); idem, *Mission*, 64.

94. Ma, *Mission*, 64–65, adding that Kapeng's knee pain also subsided immediately. Following this experience, Kapeng, her family, and many others in the village became Christians.

95. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 151. This report would meet even the extremely narrow criterion for healing of "self-evidently impossible cures, involving something like the regeneration of a lost eye or limb," articulated in West, *Miracles*, 121 (see also 13), with the assurance that such miracles are not claimed.

blind in one eye healed at the beginning of a meeting,⁹⁶ as well as other healings of blindness afterward.⁹⁷

In Indonesia, it is reported that an illiterate Christian girl named Anna felt led to pour water into the eyes of a blind woman; this woman received sight, and Anna is reported to have miraculously helped ten blind people to receive sight.⁹⁸ One witness testified of someone who lacked a pupil and iris in his eyeballs yet had miraculously been enabled to see.⁹⁹ An Indonesian Christian author recounts that he witnessed the instant healing of a seventeen-year-old man blind and deaf from birth, known to everyone in the village.¹⁰⁰ Other accounts of blindness being healed are reported there.¹⁰¹

Contemporary Reports of Healings of Blindness in Latin America and the West

Another researcher shared with me an interesting report of healing in Brazil. A member of her team, a university biomedical researcher, reported that two blind Brazilian boys received sight, as well as the healing of a boy who had been deaf and mute.¹⁰²

Many cures of blindness in response to prayer are reported in Latin America;¹⁰³ on one occasion, for example, it is reported that a blind woman in San Salvador was instantly healed during prayer, leading to massive crowds the next day because she was widely known in her barrio.¹⁰⁴ Other accounts involve healings in Mexico,¹⁰⁵ Argentina,¹⁰⁶ and elsewhere.

96. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 139–40 (the writer was Doug Wead; the healing required two prayers, as in Mark 8:24–25).

97. Ibid., 141; Stewart notes that many others were healed of blindness during that meeting. My friend Bruce Kinabrew tells me that his children witnessed the blind and paralyzed healed while praying for them in the Philippines (personal correspondence, June 23, 2008; Feb. 10, 2011).

98. Wiyono, “Timor Revival,” 286 (citing Koch, *Revival*, 137). Young, “Miracles,” 117, also cites Koch’s reports about Anna.

99. Wiyono, “Timor Revival,” 286, citing an interview with Rev. Benjamin Manuain (March 21, 2001).

100. Tari, *Breeze*, 14–15. He reports another blind eye cured and it looking different (20), and a child born blind healed (among other healings, 24).

101. E.g., De Wet, “Signs,” 121–23; a case of blindness caused by witchcraft, in Crawford, *Miracles*, 23–24.

102. He reports the restoration of sight in Brown, “Awakenings,” 362 (on 363 adding his informal test of sight), and (on 363) the healing of a boy who had been deaf and mute. Also reported, a boy’s right leg suddenly grew more than two inches to match the left (363). Not all claims on the trip withstood scrutiny: for example, one claim involving visual improvement from a long-term condition of 20/200 to certified 20/40 eyesight (about 85 percent of the visual efficiency of 20/20 vision; cf. Candy Gunther Brown, personal correspondence, Jan. 1, 2011).

103. So, e.g., De Wet, “Signs,” 103–4; Castleberry, “Impact,” 108, 112; Doleshal, “Healings,” 7.

104. Harris, *Acts Today*, 22–23.

105. Ramirez, “Faiths,” 94–95 (this particular claim appears to be from about 1920); Alexander, *Signs*, 86.

106. De Wet, “Signs,” 104.

Such claims also occur in the United States¹⁰⁷ and elsewhere in the West.¹⁰⁸ Without medical intervention, one medical doctor reports that she ministered spiritual healing to a man who was incurably blind neurologically (his optic nerve had been destroyed), and the man began to see that day.¹⁰⁹ I earlier noted how my friend Anna Gulick's vision was partially restored in one eye after prayer for this; while the restoration is only partial, this rapid physical reversal of long-term macular degeneration is medically inexplicable.¹¹⁰ It has had practical effects; she is pleased that she can now even read words with an eye that was previously blind.¹¹¹

Others have reported such information. The author of an article in one professional journal notes,

When my younger sister was three years old, she walked accidentally into the sword-shaped leaf of a Spanish bayonet yucca plant and punctured one of her eyes. It deflated like a beach ball. The attending physician pronounced her blind and offered what treatment he could. My parents prayed and asked the church to pray. In several weeks, my sister could see again. The church and my family praised God for a miracle. The physician sheepishly objected that he had misdiagnosed the injury and the eye had healed quite naturally.¹¹²

Misdiagnosis does occur, but so does unfair, retroactive attribution of misdiagnosis; see the brief discussion in chapter 14. It seems clear which view of the matter the article author holds in this particular case.

Dr. Rex Gardner notes that the sight of one schoolteacher, previously functionally blind, was restored fifty days later during prayer with a healing minister; the healing was so complete that he no longer even needed the glasses he had worn for twelve years before his accident.¹¹³ One U.S. pastor tells of a member of his own congregation, blind in one eye for sixty-five years, suddenly healed when

107. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 31–35; Neal, *Power*, 18; McKenna, *Miracles*, 16; Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, 103–4; idem, *Miracles*, 86; DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 13 (a seventy-year-old); Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 5, 16–17, 34, 62 (cf. 56: significant organic improvement); McClenon, *Events*, 131; Buckingham, *Daughter*, 187–88; Bill Twyman, interview, Nov. 11, 2007; Moreland and Issler, *Faith*, 149; cf. DiOrto, *Miracles*, 121–26 (lazy eye); Bredesen, *Miracle*, 15–16 (an eye burn); Zagrans, *Miracles*, 5, 56–57 (partial).

108. In Canada, Best, *Supernatural*, 125 (one eye); Bentley, *Miraculous*, 227; in Estonia, Bruce Collins, phone interview, April 11, 2009; elsewhere, Randy Clark, personal correspondence, April 1, 2011.

109. Speed, *Incurables*, 65, 67 (Speed is the doctor and eyewitness).

110. Anna Gulick, personal correspondence, April 19, 23, 24, 25, 2010; May 8, 17, 29, 2010; June 4, 10, 11, 12, 2010). Though her vision in that eye remains only partial at the time of this note, she can now count fingers at a distance of two feet, whereas in Nov. 2008 she lacked anything more than perception of light (June 10, 12, 2010, with the optometrist's report, mailed June 14 and received by me June 17). Likewise, the macular degeneration specialist noted both better eyesight and improvement on the ocular coherence tomography, without treatment (his report is dated July 6, 2010; mailed to me July 28, received July 31; further, April 15, 2011); and her glasses include a prescription for the previously blind eye (Aug. 26; Sept. 9, 2010), with improvements continuing (Oct. 30, 2010).

111. Personal correspondence, Aug. 28, 31; Sept. 3, 2010.

112. Parker, "Suffering," 216. For the healing of another pierced eye, see Duffin, *Miracles*, 64.

113. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 31–35 (the remark about the glasses is on 34).

prayed for. He cites both his own eyewitness testimony and that of members of his congregation; the sight had been lost due to the eye having been punctured.¹¹⁴ Emily Gardiner Neal reports that a blind woman's sight was fully restored during two prayers;¹¹⁵ also a nurse, blind for "four years, regained her sight."¹¹⁶ After criticizing a number of faith healers of whom he is skeptical, one reporter notes how Dr. Henry Smith Lieper, previously associate general secretary of the World Council of Churches, was healed of a medically incurable eye disorder after a Presbyterian pastor laid hands on him.¹¹⁷

A Nazarene writer recounts his interview with a minister who was instantly and permanently healed of organic blindness.¹¹⁸ One U.S. evangelist recounts that a popular girl in Savannah, whose rapid, documented retinal deterioration had led to almost total blindness and a local newspaper story, was instantly and publicly healed in one of his meetings.¹¹⁹ When a blind girl from a cessationist Christian college was healed, he says, the college even encouraged other students to attend the meetings.¹²⁰ Another writer reports that an elderly blind woman in England with a detached retina in one eye and a cataract in the other was instantly healed of blindness during prayer.¹²¹ As noted earlier, blindness was healed within a few days after Sister Briege prayed for a skeptical woman who had no expectation of healing.¹²² In another account, shortly after doctors had told a woman that she would never see again, the woman, blind for two years, experienced a vision of Jesus and her sight returned.¹²³

Even in my limited survey, I have come across reports of more than 350 modern healings of blindness. While I question some accounts, most of these reports come from sources that I trust, some from trusted friends who were eyewitnesses of the events. I cannot explain such a significant number of dramatic, often clearly organic cures on naturalistic terms, and I will suggest in chapter 15 that supernatural causation is a better explanation for most of them. For the moment, however, their explanation remains beside the main point. What is most critical for NT scholars from a historical standpoint is to note that such phenomena are widely claimed by firsthand sources, so that it is not imperative to deny the possibility of firsthand claims for such phenomena in the first century, however we may choose to explain

114. Harris, *Acts Today*, 8; I was acquainted with this pastor when he later held a respectable position in his denomination and am confident that he would not have fabricated his testimony. For the complete and instant healing of a person who had long had eye damage, see 18; for other examples of healing of partial sight impairment, see 28–29, 47–49, 159–60; for reported healing and sight through what had been an artificial eye, see 82 (for forty years, with the healed person appearing on television as well).

115. Neal, *Power*, 40.

116. *Ibid.*, 57.

117. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 26.

118. Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 103.

119. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 1–2.

120. *Ibid.*, 43.

121. Wagner, "World," 80 (confirming that she retained full sight a year later); Jackson, *Quest*, 255.

122. McKenna, *Miracles*, 16.

123. Huyssen, *Saw*, 144–45 (citing an account published by the Chicago Tribune Company in 1965).

them.¹²⁴ I will explore some explanatory options in the following chapters (chs. 13–15).

Healing of Those Unable to Walk

Healings of people paralyzed or for other reasons unable to walk are prominent in the Gospels and Acts (Mark 2:10–12; Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22; Matt 4:24; 15:30–31; 21:14; John 5:8–9; Acts 3:6–8; 8:7; 9:34; 14:10).¹²⁵ Augustine reports the known healings of paralyzed persons in his own circle of believers.¹²⁶ Bede (ca. 673–735) offers a vivid account of a cure of long-term paralysis.¹²⁷ Sixteenth-century church authorities inquired of at least eighty persons when investigating the cure of a young man who had been paralyzed;¹²⁸ in the early twentieth century, an injured child with deformed legs experienced healing instantly and walked.¹²⁹ I focus more fully, however, on more recent accounts, since these are the ones less widely known to most readers. They feature prominently in many modern accounts of divine activity, including in evangelism modeled after methods in Acts,¹³⁰ especially frequently in the Majority World.¹³¹

124. This is intended as an argument against the *a priori* assumption that such claims can never stem from eyewitnesses, not an argument against specific literary claims as to whether a particular healing claim is traditional or redactional.

125. There is no ideal terminology; because of current usage I have sometimes preferred “paralyzed” to older designations like “crippled” and “lame” where possible, but not all cases of inability to walk technically reflect paralysis. For a non-Christian example where a healer was twice (roughly seventeen years apart) deemed incapable of ever walking again, yet after months (four and two months, respectively) able to recover employing traditional healing methods, see Foltz, “Healer,” 159–60.

126. *City of God* 22.8. In earlier history, cf. Coptic Christian examples of healing of this ailment (Godron, “Healings,” 1213).

127. Young, “Miracles in History,” 114, citing *H.E.G.A.* 3.9.

128. Duffin, *Miracles*, 18.

129. *Ibid.*, 62.

130. E.g., De Wet, “Signs,” 94–95, 114; Edmunds, “Sick”; cf. reported healings in Buckingham, *Daughter*, 128, 133, 187–88; Johnson, *Heaven*, 102 (a man who had been unable to stand for years); *idem*, *Mind*, 35, 53, 79–80 (a man in South Africa paralyzed for eleven years), 81, 88–89 (also the church website postings for March 17, 2006; instant healings of long-term, partial immobility in *idem*, *Heaven*, 54, 188, 189; *idem*, *Mind*, 81, 88 [particularly dramatic], 89; website postings for Oct. 10, 2005; April 26, 2007; July 13, 2007); Bentley, *Miraculous*, 152–53, 164; an instant healing of a damaged leg reported to me by Bill Jackson (interview, Nov. 13, 2007).

131. E.g., Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 51–52; Osborn, *Evangelism*, 1:930, 938, 944; 21:368, 369; 21:370 (three cases); 21:400; 22:65 (about six cases); 22:66 (two cases); 22:67; 22:68 (two cases); 22:779; 22:784; 23:440 (three cases); 23:441 (three cases); 23:592; 23:597 (two cases); 23:716–17 (multiple cases); Osborn, *Healing*, 157–58, 281 (many), 286–87, 289, 290, 293 (three cases), 294, 295–96, 296 (many), 298 (many), 300, 304, 305, 307, 308 (multiple cases, including a completely paralyzed man instantly healed, then running), 309–10, 310 (many), 312 (multiple cases), 312–13, 314, 317, 319, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325 (two cases), 327; photographs between 258 and 259 (eleven cases); Baker, *Enough*, 168–69 (beginning to walk immediately after the command to rise, for the first time in two years, in Mozambique, though strength apparently came less immediately); *idem*, *Miracles*, 9 (two cases), 40 (after a crippled foot for ten years); Clark, *Impartation*, 143, 170; Chevreau, *Turnings*, 105–6, 142; Bentley, *Miraculous*, 177, 179, 205, 219, 236, 243, 247–48, 263, 264, 267 (forty cases), 269, 274, 276 (eight cases), 278, 285–86 (three

In some reported cases, like one in Malawi attested by an Anglican professor¹³² and another instance in Uganda,¹³³ the healed person began to run and jump in celebration like the man reported healed in Acts 3:8.¹³⁴ The Ugandan example, involving the healing of a twelve-year-old boy who had never walked before, led to many of Idi Amin's own officials being converted and protecting many Christians from the security police during his regime.¹³⁵

Earlier Reports

A missionary reported in 1866 that a southern African believer in 1858 found an old friend disabled in both legs; full of faith, he commanded him to rise and walk in the name of Jesus. His friend pulled himself up by "his staff and walked, to the astonishment of all who knew him."¹³⁶ In 1899, a woman of twenty-two, unable to walk since age nine, was cured. Although those skeptical of miracles dismissed the infirmity as hysterical, her own physicians apparently did not agree; one had previously suggested surgery.¹³⁷ Witnesses reported healings of paralysis in the ministry of nineteenth-century German Lutheran pastor Johann Christoph Blumhardt. For example, a paralyzed woman was carried to hear him preach and was touched spiritually by the message; that afternoon she began walking.¹³⁸

Again, earlier twentieth-century accounts of healing those unable to walk include the healing activities of John Sung in Asia¹³⁹ and James Moore Hickson in various locations.¹⁴⁰ A six-year-old Australian girl who had never been able to

cases), 291, 302, 304–5, 306; Menberu, "Mekonnen Negera" (the healing during prayer of someone bedridden for eight years in Ethiopia); Odili, "Osaele" (healing after twenty years' paralysis from stroke); Lindsay, *Lake*, 30–31, 49, 57.

132. Green, *Thirty Years*, 104.

133. Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 18 (on the ministry of Peterson Sozi).

134. See also a case reported by Nicholas B. H. Bhengu in Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 131. This is also reported in some Western examples (see Reiff, "Los Angeles Campmeeting," 13; two cases in "Healings in Australia"). The response to dramatic healing seems a common one in many cultures; see, e.g., Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 55; Todd Hunter, phone interview, Jan. 5, 2009; Sheila Heneise, interview, April 5, 2009, regarding Chile; Shelley Hollis, phone interview, Jan. 10, 2009; in Mozambique; Osborn, *Evangelism*, 22:66; cf. the older lady's rapid walking in Pastor Dawit Molalegn, Atsheber DVD 2 (the fifth track).

135. Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 18–20.

136. Cited in Gordon, "Ministry of Healing," 196.

137. Duffin, *Miracles*, 134–35.

138. Ising, *Blumhardt*, 212–13. Less dramatically, cf. the man with weak knees "hobbling along on crutches" in 1852, greatly improved after a year (*ibid.*, 380). In the late nineteenth century, Minnie Draper claimed miraculous healing after A. B. Simpson prayed for her, and she went on to work in the Christian and Missionary Alliance and then among Pentecostals (McGee, *Missions*, 131–32).

139. Sung, *Diaries*, 44, 48, 56 (many cases), 91, 111 (multiple cases), 121, 134, 135, 140, 162.

140. Hickson, *Heal*, 29, 43–44, 53, 62–66, 71, 75, 76, 78, 85–87, 124, 128, 141–42, 148, 151, 159, 162, 176, 180, 191, 196, 205–6, 217–18 (in newspapers, 120, 122, 123, 130–35, 140, 152–53); *idem*, *Bridegroom*, 300; cf. Mews, "Revival," 302–3. Those who have the time would find many of these stories intriguing (e.g., in Hickson, *Heal*, 205, the formerly disabled twelve-year-old who announced to his four-year-old cousin, "Look, I can walk").

walk was among those who were said to begin to walk in Smith Wigglesworth's meetings.¹⁴¹ A woman confined to a "spinal carriage" for eleven years, due to a medically incurable condition, testified that after George Jeffreys prayed for her, she walked up and down the aisles and had been walking well since then.¹⁴² In the central African village of Mondongo, Isaac Pelendo prayed for two older boys who had never walked because of a disease in infancy; they were healed.¹⁴³ Years later he prayed for a ten-year-old in Boyagbagea who had never walked, and he too was healed that day.¹⁴⁴

Elsie Salmon, starting in the 1940s, offers various examples. Her husband observed a long-twisted, S-shaped leg instantly become normal after prayer.¹⁴⁵ An attorney attested that his client was unable to walk before the cure but able to walk afterward.¹⁴⁶ The secretary of the South African Methodist Conference testifies of seeing among other cures a woman in "irons" who had not walked for six years leave the service with only a walking stick, thereafter fully restored.¹⁴⁷ A woman paralyzed from the waist down for eight years was healed in a service and remained healed.¹⁴⁸ A woman unable to walk for two years due to a car accident, whom the doctor planned to put in a cast, was healed after five minutes of prayer; she walked out, and as of her report three and a half years later, had suffered no relapse.¹⁴⁹ A woman whose leg was paralyzed for three and a half years could hobble only a few yards without falling; within five minutes of prayer, her leg became functional again.¹⁵⁰ In one case in which amputation had been scheduled for later in the week, a foot was completely cured instead; another (more gradual) healing saved a partly gangrenous foot from amputation.¹⁵¹ In another case, the leg of a doctor's adopted daughter was soon to be amputated, but within "a few minutes" of prayer the leg was restored.¹⁵² The toes of a boy's clubfoot straightened immediately in front of his parents, and his much shorter leg grew during the night, rendering special

141. Andrews, "Healings" (an eyewitness; the report is too fresh for memory lapse but also too fresh for follow-up). Some who had previously only limped with difficulty or could not walk at all now were able to walk swiftly or run, and an older woman nearly crippled because of back pain was now happily able to touch the floor ("Healings in Australia," 28).

142. "Grimsby Testimony," 28 (noting that she also was now able to withstand light without dark glasses, 28–29). This testimony was reproduced from *The Elim Evangelist* a month or two earlier.

143. Anderson, *Pelendo*, 56–60 (after two days to prepare in faith, and initially using walking sticks but gaining strength as they continued walking that day). The boys' names were Yaliko and Yigba.

144. *Ibid.*, 130. The boy's name was Samuel.

145. Sangster, "Foreword," 6. From Ikin, *Concepts*, 93 (who heard directly from Salmon), it appears that this is the same case as Iris noted below.

146. Arthur S. Wood, quoted testimonial in Salmon, *Heals*, 10.

147. Stanley B. Sudbury, quoted testimonial in *ibid.*

148. Edna Muriel Carter and Rev. R. C. Bellis in *ibid.*, 38–40.

149. *Ibid.*, 57–58.

150. *Ibid.*, 23. An English missionary paralyzed over half her body was healed (109–10).

151. *Ibid.*, 53 and 54, respectively. A man whose "seriously ulcerated leg" was "black from the knee to the foot" was fully healed in two weeks (89).

152. *Ibid.*, 108–9. She used a walking stick "for a few days" while the leg regained strength, and then could walk and returned to work. She remained well four years later.

shoes unnecessary.¹⁵³ Spinal problems that prevented walking were also cured.¹⁵⁴ A two-year-old paralyzed from the waist down was walking after a service;¹⁵⁵ cases of polio paralysis were also healed.¹⁵⁶

Finally Salmon recounts the story of Iris, who came for prayer because her leg was to be amputated the next week. Her leg had withered and doubled up thirteen months earlier. Salmon reports that she took the leg and “said, ‘Christ, my Master, do Your work,’” and with these words, *the leg immediately straightened out before our eyes and this dead limb at once became filled with life.*¹⁵⁷ Iris walked to the train station and up the stairs, refusing to sit; when she arrived home, her mother was so astonished to see her walking that she briefly fainted. The doctors were likewise shocked and canceled the amputation.¹⁵⁸

Such reports were not, however, limited to these well-known figures. Thus, for example, in 1918, a disabled African girl was instantly healed when two African Christians prayed for her.¹⁵⁹ In 1938, within a relatively short span of time, three people unable to walk were claimed to be healed in one ministry in India.¹⁶⁰ An early twentieth-century eyewitness claims that one Christian told a man in the Hauran, crippled from arthritis and lying on the floor, to rise and walk. He was healed and then walked to church after climbing over a stone wall.¹⁶¹ A minister told Marie Kharallah, a woman in Beirut unable to walk, to rise and walk; she did so, and contrary to her family’s expectations, she remained well.¹⁶²

In the West, in Norway in 1916, a twelve-year-old hunchbacked girl using crutches because of tuberculosis of the back was healed instantly during prayer.¹⁶³ A London man who had used crutches for two decades walked home without them after a healing in 1921.¹⁶⁴ A Houston woman’s injury in a streetcar accident had attracted widespread publicity, so her 1905 healing generated wide attention in

153. Ibid., 56. Apart from his foot, the boy’s long-term paralysis had been gradually restored medically.

154. Ibid., 60–61 (a medically incurable solidified spine functioning as a single bone; after the cure the man could move, walk, and work at will), 61–62 (the healing of a woman who would have been placed in a steel jacket; as of five years later, she remained well).

155. Ibid., 106–7.

156. Cases in ibid., 108, 110–11.

157. Ibid., 130 (emphasis hers).

158. Ibid., 130–31 (the story is also retold in Ikin, *Concepts*, 93, 96–102). She recounts also other recoveries of feet and legs that I have not noted (e.g., 89–90).

159. Ranger, “Dilemma,” 353.

160. Harvey, “Victory,” noting one boy without feeling in his legs who began to recover gradually and was ultimately able to walk long distances; a nine-year-old who had never walked whose knees were straightened during prayer and was cured; and a man unable to walk who was healed and still seen walking the next day when some visited his village. Reports of such healings also occur during the mid-century healing revival (Samuel, “Gatherings”; Pospisil, “Deliverances”).

161. Fant, *Miracles*, 70–71 (identifying the location as in the Hauran, at Karaba).

162. Ibid., 148–49 (identifying Beirut as in Syria, according to boundaries at that time).

163. Hansen, “Cures,” noting that the mother had some time afterward given him the crutches (Hansen was a physician).

164. “Revival in London,” 14.

that city.¹⁶⁵ A man limping with his feet too swollen for his shoes began to walk and jump after his doctor prayed for him, though initially with some pain, and within three hours he was walking completely normally in his shoes.¹⁶⁶ On October 26, 1919, an ex-soldier whose left foot was paralyzed and in a brace felt his foot shift position during prayer; having the brace removed, he walked without stiffness and according to the report found himself soon “able to walk, run and jump.”¹⁶⁷

A Methodist minister’s daughter had been crippled by infantile paralysis, but it is reported that after a day of prayer and fasting she was healed and able to walk.¹⁶⁸ A middle-aged woman who had never walked since birth “stood and walked, and then in sheer joy sobbed,” followed through Durham, England, by hundreds who were celebrating her healing.¹⁶⁹ Other cases are reported at Los Angeles in 1913,¹⁷⁰ and in many other locations in the early twentieth century.¹⁷¹ When Christopher Woodard, a doctor, prayed for a twelve-year-old with numb legs paralyzed from infantile paralysis, she felt something like vibrations or electricity. They removed the leg irons and she walked, rapidly gaining increasing strength thereafter.¹⁷² Native American minister Andrew Maracle testifies that in the mid-1930s, he was paralyzed from the neck down in an almost deadly accident and told that he would never walk again. Instead he was instantly healed during prayer, and when the doctor discovered this the next morning, he acknowledged a miracle.¹⁷³

Such events were also attested at Lourdes. A Belgian peasant on pilgrimage to a statue recalling Lourdes, whose chronically diseased leg needed to be amputated, pleaded for grace to be able to work; his leg was instantly healed, converting his agnostic physician.¹⁷⁴ Due to war wounds that doctors were unable to repair adequately (especially a bullet that cut his large axillary nerves, as well as epilepsy perhaps related to his head wound), John Traynor of Liverpool, England, was partly paralyzed; he had not walked or used his right arm since 1915 and could not control his bladder and bowels. Yet in 1922, at Lourdes, he found himself cured and rose up. When aides tried to restrain him, fearing that he might injure himself,

165. Menzies, *Anointed*, 47.

166. Glover, “Modern Miracles,” 2 (reporting in 1922 about an earlier incident).

167. Blackman, “Miracles” (the young man apparently remained part of the church).

168. Kortkamp, “Healings” (in this case not many more details are given, except that she started to school the next week).

169. “Revival in England,” also reporting that one who had been on crutches for seven years walked home without using them after prayer.

170. Reiff, “Los Angeles Campmeeting,” 13.

171. E.g., “Scotland Stirred,” 5; “Remarkable Healings in Australia” (two cases, one in the hospital); Ruesga, “Healings” (Mexico); Cadwalder, “Healings” (describing two earlier healings in Canada); Heim, *Transformation*, 198–99 (Germany, citing J. Seitz; the date is unclear). A boy at a children’s home was in and out of consciousness, paralyzed from a fall; after some time of prayer, when they had already reached the hospital, he revived suddenly and completely, walking and returning to the home (Hinson, “Healings”).

172. Woodard, *Faith*, 70–74.

173. Tarango, “Physician,” 116, citing Maracle’s testimony. These events precipitated Maracle entering ministry.

174. Cranston, *Miracle*, 162–63. After careful investigation, a team of twenty-one doctors recognized that, among other things, a piece of bone had instantly grown more than an inch (163).

he evaded them, running.¹⁷⁵ After seven or eight years of paralysis, running should have been physically impossible; but then, impossibility apart from divine grace is the point. The physicians who had accompanied him from Britain confirmed his state prior to the healing and the change afterward, although the Ministry of Pensions rejected the possibility that he could have been cured and therefore continued his pension for 100 percent disability. The Medical Bureau certified his cure as medically inexplicable. The church, which makes the final theological decision, never chose to certify this case as a divine cure, so it is not listed officially, but the medical records remain eloquent testimony to the cure.¹⁷⁶

Contemporary Reports of Healings in Africa and Asia

The majority of accounts available to me are more recent. For example, in Nepal, Mina KC prayed for a twenty-year-old Hindu woman named Janita who had been paralyzed from birth, helped neither by doctors nor by sacrifices. The next week Janita, who had never before walked, walked to church.¹⁷⁷ In another report, in a case not initially intended as evangelism, a Christian doctor recognized that a North Indian patient's legs, paralyzed in a permanently sitting position, were inoperable. Lacking another way to help the man, he therefore just prayed for him, and the man was instantly healed.¹⁷⁸ Also from India, in 2006 Jacob Beera prayed for an older woman who was unable to walk for a long time, carried to the church by her son. Halfway back to their home, the mother suddenly felt able to walk, and walked the rest of the way home. The next week she came to the children's home to share her testimony, including with Jacob.¹⁷⁹

Jacob Beera further shared with me his account of praying for a seven-year-old Hindu girl named Yesamma. Afflicted with polio soon after birth, she had to be carried everywhere, and was now laid on his church's platform, "curled up with arms and legs rolled up like a ball." It was about 1 a.m., after five hours of church service, and he was exhausted. Nevertheless, he offered a simple prayer, and "then her mother picked her up in her arms, apparently still unhealed," and took her home. Although Jacob lived near this family, he had not heard anything about her condition for two months, but after two months Yesamma walked into the service using only a walking stick. Even more dramatic than seeing her walking was noticing that "her limbs had straightened out." Over the following ten years the entire family gradually became believers in Jesus; at the time of his report, Yesamma was nearly eighteen and preparing for college.¹⁸⁰

175. Oursler, *Power*, 61–64; Garner, "Regressions," 1255.

176. Garner, "Regressions," 1255.

177. Mina KC (interview by John Lathrop, March 2, 2010).

178. Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 56. Pastor Kantilal Anjaroli, mentioned above, prayed for a man in Rajasthan named Beeka Bhai, who had been paralyzed and bedridden for four years, after which he was able to move (C&C 37 [5, May 2008]: 9).

179. Jacob Beera, personal correspondence, Nov. 2, 2009, accompanied with this story in his *Hope Ministries Update* ("I Want to Walk," Nov. 2006, p. 3).

180. Jacob Beera, personal correspondence, Nov. 2, 2009, accompanied with this story in his *Hope Ministries Update* ("A Miracle Brought a Family to Christ," Nov. 2006, p. 1).

In various accounts from China, a bedfast man with an incurable spinal disease was healed, and the next day was dancing in the meeting;¹⁸¹ another bedfast man paralyzed for eight years was instantly healed, and began jumping around the house before going outside to tell the neighbors;¹⁸² a Chinese pastor in 2007 also shared with me an eyewitness account of someone half-paralyzed being immediately healed.¹⁸³ Chinese believers shared with members of a U.S. congressional delegation that in one meeting where people had been resisting faith, suddenly “someone lame for 70 years got up and walked.”¹⁸⁴ We have also already noted dramatic healings in Myanmar, of a woman unable to walk for twenty years and of a girl.¹⁸⁵ In my friend Marie Brown’s meetings in Papua New Guinea, a paralyzed man was healed.¹⁸⁶

Likewise, Christopher Daniel claims that in one of his meetings in Sri Lanka two people who had been paralyzed could now move limbs that were once limp.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, Mark Buntain, who established a hospital and schools in South Asia, recounted the healing of a paralyzed young Sri Lankan woman, Nita Edwards. She heard an audible voice declaring that she would be healed on February 11, and felt that the time would be 3:30. When that day and time arrived, she saw Jesus in a vision, and suddenly “rocketed out over the end of her bed,” landing on her knees, her paralysis ended.¹⁸⁸

In Indonesia, a woman’s leg was broken during an accident; unable to afford treatment, she was unable to walk for a few years. When she received prayer, however, her leg was immediately healed, and she was able to walk; “all who saw it and knew the woman were amazed and acknowledged that Jesus was there to heal.”¹⁸⁹ A German researcher cites reports from his Indonesian source, including a named eighteen-year-old who had never walked but was instantly healed during prayer.¹⁹⁰ An Indonesian Christian reports that he prayed for a man with “skinny, shriveled sticks” for legs, whose legs were twisted and were also bloody and bruised from dragging them around. The witness confesses that he had little faith, but over the next few minutes the man grew stronger and began walking, finally walking home. In a few days, he recounts, the man’s legs had filled out fully.¹⁹¹

181. Danyun, *Lilies*, 327.

182. *Ibid.*, 333–34. Note also the man paralyzed for three years (344–45).

183. Interview, May 2007 (I promised to omit the pastor’s name).

184. Fever, “Delegation,” 34, also noting that a hostile official’s wife, incurably ill and unable to walk, was “miraculously healed” through prayer, converting the official.

185. Khai, “Pentecostalism,” 270.

186. Marie Brown, personal correspondence, May 31, 2006.

187. Daniel, “Labour,” 160.

188. Huyssen, *Saw*, 157–62 (citing the account in Buntain, *Miracle*). Young, “Miracles in History,” 117, cites a report of healing of paralysis through a vision in Pakistan.

189. Filson, “Study,” 154.

190. Koch, *Zulus*, 110–11 (this case on 110).

191. Tari, *Breeze*, 44–46. A believer offered prayer for another man, Stefanus Toto, paralyzed completely for four years, unable to walk or talk; the next day Stefanus was well, and soon after walked to church (*ibid.*, 129).

A church was planted in Thailand through a paralyzed person walking.¹⁹² A man in southern Asia who had been paralyzed for twenty-six years was healed.¹⁹³ An Anglican archdeacon from Southeast Asia working in the interior of Borneo reports that an aged, bedridden lady asked him for prayer. Local witch doctors had proved unable to help her. After the archdeacon and a colleague prayed, “she got up, began to walk and asked for food.” She became a Christian, despite local opposition.¹⁹⁴

A source in Iloilo City, Philippines, notes a number of persons who were bedfast who were healed during prayer.¹⁹⁵ I earlier mentioned Elva Vanderbout’s ministry in the Philippines, documented especially by missiologist Julie Ma. Among the healings of immobilized persons reported in her ministry, “a paralyzed woman who had spent most of Sunday morning crawling to the service was instantly healed. . . . She stood and walked through the aisle to the platform and testified of God’s healing power.”¹⁹⁶ One boy had broken his leg at the knee and thereafter could not bend it; unable to walk, he crawled or hobbled using a stick for at least seven years. When Vanderbout prayed for him, he discarded the stick, and from that point his leg gradually straightened.¹⁹⁷ A girl unable to walk for a couple of years was also healed, leading to her parents’ conversion.¹⁹⁸ An old man who was “bent over,” able to “walk only on his hands and feet, like an animal . . . instantly stood up and walked”; he was converted and stayed in the area to testify to everyone what God had done for him.¹⁹⁹ Among healings reported at a more recent meeting in the Philippines, a man paralyzed on one side of his body was instantly healed.²⁰⁰

Such reports are also common in Africa. I noted earlier Shelley Hollis’s eyewitness claim of a paralyzed woman instantly healed in Mozambique.²⁰¹ Ebenezer J. Obomau of Nigeria’s Delta region was grateful to God even though he was not healed of his paralysis during a crusade meeting; when he woke up the next morning to discover the paralysis now healed, however, much of his community was converted.²⁰² Agnes Mbabazi of Uganda brought for prayer her four-year-old child, who had never been able to stand; after five days the child was “walking well” and

192. Hosack, “Church.”

193. “Carried but Walked.”

194. Green, *Asian Tigers*, 108–9.

195. Angela Salazar Aragona, transcript (interview with Rosanny D. Engcoy, April 14, 2002; in the only case where she specifies the duration of the paralysis, it was “months”).

196. Ma, “Encounter,” 137; idem, “Vanderbout,” 132; idem, *Mission*, 63. In Ma, “Vanderbout,” 130, it sounds like many paralytics were healed during her ministry.

197. Ma, “Vanderbout,” 129.

198. Ibid.

199. Ibid., 132; idem, *Mission*, 62–63.

200. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 142.

201. Shelley Hollis, phone interview, Jan. 10, 2009.

202. Numbere, *Vision*, 183–84. Other cases are also mentioned (186). Others also claim healings (e.g., in “Our God Reigns,” 35); one person in Mozambique said to be bedridden for two years took off running when healed in Marszałek, *Miracles*, 6.

now walks to school.²⁰³ Gebru Woldu of Ethiopia reports that the sorts of healings in which God has used him most often are the healing of goiters and backbone problems; some of the latter cases involved people who could not bend or run or even walk, but when they have been instantly healed they have run.²⁰⁴

In Nigeria, a father carried a six-year-old boy who had never been able to walk, seeking prayer. Dr. Chauncey Crandall prayed, and as he was going on to the next person the boy began *running*. The parents fell to the dirt weeping and the two dozen people who had accompanied them from the village began shouting. Similarly, a drooling man, paralyzed on his right side from a stroke and unable to walk, was also healed as Crandall prayed.²⁰⁵ Elsewhere, a woman with great faith but apparently little sense insisted that her paralyzed baby was healed. Crandall, recognizing that the child remained paralyzed on the left side, refused to let her testify. The next day he was shocked to discover that the baby was no longer paralyzed.²⁰⁶

When I asked my students in a class in Kenya if any of them had seen any dramatic healings, one of them, Bernard Luvutse, provided me one that he knew from his own family. When he was a child, his paralyzed younger sister had been dragging herself on the ground for more than a year. When his mother heard that someone would be praying for healing in a distant village, she decided to take the daughter, though the father was too discouraged by this point to try to help. Crossing a river and traversing a long distance, the mother carried her daughter on her back and brought her to the prayer service. Starting in the week after this prayer, the girl began to recover quickly. She never had further problems after this recovery, and after thirty years she continues to walk well.²⁰⁷

A noncharismatic European researcher reported on many healings of paralysis in connection with a revival among the Zulu people of South Africa in the 1970s.²⁰⁸ Thus, for example, one paralyzed woman who could not even keep her scarf from blowing off was reported instantly healed during prayer.²⁰⁹ Another woman, carried in completely paralyzed, rose and walked when the minister so commanded; some clerks of the Magistrate's Court, investigating the case, were convinced after hospital records proved her prior illness.²¹⁰

203. Pastor Solomon Mukonjo, by Douglas LeRoy, personal correspondence, Nov. 9, 2009.

204. Gebru Woldu (interview, May 20, 2010).

205. Crandall, *Raising*, 152.

206. *Ibid.*, 155.

207. Bernard Luvutse, personal correspondence, Aug. 17, 2006.

208. Koch, *Zulus*, e.g., 75–77 (a woman crippled with arthritis), 79, 82, 88 (paralysis on one side), 89 (two cases), 98–99, 153 (partial paralysis), 190–91, 196 (multiple cases), 197–98, 290. On 72–73, a man unable to walk, with blood in his urine and apparently dying, was healed within a day of the prayer. On 277, twisted legs straightened during prayer, allowing the man to walk, but when he later sacrificed a cow to his ancestors in gratitude, he relapsed.

209. Koch, *Zulus*, 53–54. Her family, coming to carry her, found her walking instead.

210. *Ibid.*, 90–93. Anna Greta Khumalo, eighteen at the time of the healing, had not walked for three years (92); Koch names two independent witnesses.

Contemporary Reports of Healings in the Western Hemisphere

Immediate healing of the inability to walk through prayer has been reported in Latin America,²¹¹ including in a story about partial but previously lifelong inability that I recounted earlier.²¹² In another case, a man in Paraguay was paralyzed from the waist down due to having been shot in the head earlier. Carlos, a Christian businessman visiting the area, prayed for him, and “the man was healed instantly”; as word spread, “several other paralytics came for prayer and were healed,” leading to local success in evangelism.²¹³ A woman in a wheelchair in Colombia thought that she would never walk again, but the pastor prayed for her and she got up and walked. She testified, still well, just over a week later.²¹⁴

A doctor reports his astonishment as he saw a woman in Mexico, disabled “for years,” brought in a wheelbarrow. After the visiting ministry team prayed for her, “She got up on her feet and walked out!”²¹⁵ A Baptist doctor in Cuba reported witnessing the immediate healing of a twisted leg during her evangelistic crusades.²¹⁶ Also in Cuba, another woman, named Pucha, was brought for prayer on a bed; unable to walk, she could only move a hand. The church prayed and by the end of the service she was walking; the next day she walked to the service unaided, showing that she was completely healed.²¹⁷

I have a more detailed eyewitness account of a healing from Eliseo Navarro Jordan, vice president of the ICPC (the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba) and dean of the faculty at Elim Bible Institute. His account involved a boy in the church Eliseo had pastored in Placetas, Villa Clara, from about five years earlier. Onel and his family belonged to Eliseo’s church, and were neighbors of Eliseo. Onel was twelve or thirteen, and Eliseo knew him well, because Onel was close friends with Eliseo’s son and had grown up with him. But Onel had a serious problem with the bones in his feet; they were malformed and broken, and X-rays showed the lower bones becoming like sand. He could barely walk, much less play sports, and the doctor said that within a year he would not walk at all. When a visiting evangelist was preaching, however, Onel became convinced that God would heal him if the evangelist, Otto De La Torre, prayed. Prayer was offered, and the family kept Onel’s doctor’s appointment later that week. New X-rays showed the full formation of the foot, with no deformity, and the doctor insisted that the X-rays were mixed up. But sure enough, Onel was healed, and from then on has played sports and run like other children. Eliseo knows the family and has seen the before-and-after X-rays.²¹⁸

211. E.g., De Wet, “Signs,” 103–4; Castleberry, “Impact,” 112; Doleshal, “Healings.”

212. Steve and Sheila Heneise, personal correspondence, Aug. 20–21, 2008.

213. From Church of God testimonies sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, personal correspondence, Nov. 9, 2009.

214. Bomann, “Salve,” 197.

215. Crandall, *Raising*, 39.

216. Mirtha Venero Boza, interview, Aug. 6, 2010. Before the healing, doctors had immobilized the leg because it was so bent.

217. Dorka Rojas, correspondence, Oct. 12, 2010, based on the research document.

218. Eliseo Navarro Jordan, interview, Aug. 7, 2010.

A friend of mine has worked closely with Carlos Alamino, a Baptist pastor in Cuba. Carlos recounts that in his youth he was run over by a tractor, paralyzing him. As doctors were about to operate, he cried out to God, and movement suddenly began returning to his arms and legs; he got up and began to walk, astonishing the doctors. He went on to play baseball until God called him to ministry.²¹⁹

As he and his ministry teams have evangelized, they have also prayed for the sick, witnessing many healings, including those of people brought from hospitals.²²⁰ One man who had not walked for forty years had a large, infected ulcer on his leg, “infested with insects”; a few days after they prayed, he was completely well and became a regular supporter of the ministry.²²¹ On another occasion they prayed for a woman long unable to walk; her legs had been burned, her feet deformed, and her toes grown together. As they “prayed, God separated her toes and smoothed” the skin on her legs. “She walked independently back to her seat. These types of experiences were repeated day after day.”²²²

On Easter 1998 in Chile, three persons, including my eyewitness source, prayed for a young man on crutches. He walked away without needing his crutches; as a result, he was also converted and became a regular part of their youth group. During the prayer, a woman in the congregation had a vision of light moving up the young man’s leg. She did not understand why healing would be moving up his leg, assuming that the bone was broken across; the young man’s mother, however, explained to her that it was a long fracture. The young man was due for an operation that week to have pins inserted, because he had a twisted fracture up the bone. Because after the service he was now walking without crutches, however, the doctor took new X-rays, only to discover to his astonishment that the bone had completely mended.²²³

In a youth camp that summer, a girl sprained her ankle playing soccer. Her ankle was badly swollen, and the camp doctor warned her not to walk on it for some time; they planned to take her to the hospital for further evaluation the next day. When they prayed for her that evening in the meeting, the swelling immediately went down visibly in front of everyone, and she started jumping and dancing, completely healed. The two hundred or so young people, all of whom knew about her sprain, began shouting jubilantly, jumping and singing praise songs at the top of their lungs. They grew so loud that the neighbors called the police!²²⁴ Another

219. Alamino, *Footsteps*, 15–16.

220. E.g., *ibid.*, 43. Mental illnesses were also healed (49–50), and an illiterate man previously considered mentally disabled learned to read (59–60).

221. *Ibid.*, 31.

222. *Ibid.*, 46. Elsewhere they prayed for a woman unable to walk for eight years; she got up and walked, and continued with them for some time, but when she returned to her previous lifestyle the paralysis returned (52).

223. Sheila Heneise (interview, April 5, 2009), who was one of the three persons praying (the others being Chilean ministers), knows all the persons in question.

224. Sheila Heneise (interview, April 5, 2009) again knows all the persons in question. Cf. the similar report from an Episcopal parish in the U.S. Northwest: not long after an X-ray showed a broken ankle,

report involves a child in Ecuador with no movement in the lower body, healed and able to walk through prayer.²²⁵

In the United States, besides cases noted in chapter 11,²²⁶ the 1950 survey of several hundred mainline pastors mentioned earlier included five cases of healed paralysis. One case involved a two-year-old with infantile paralysis; a Presbyterian minister in the Midwest prayed, followed by “a complete and permanent cure with no muscular impairment.”²²⁷ Likewise, the researcher notes, “A Methodist minister in the same area reports the case of a woman 55 years of age, whose case had been diagnosed and treated by a physician, but who was hopeless of a cure”; she was permanently cured.²²⁸

Elsewhere, one source claims that a long-term, documented paralysis was healed instantly in answer to prayer in front of two thousand people.²²⁹ A Christian doctor prayed for and encouraged an “incurable” woman who had not been able to walk unaided for fifteen years, whose nerves were now degenerating. The doctor testifies that despite atrophied muscles, the woman, now released from her braces, started walking and then running around the room, and she remained permanently cured.²³⁰ Another source reports that a Methodist pastor was in a brace for thirty-eight years, suffering from a crooked spinal column and a ruptured disk; it straightened out instantly during a “prophetic word,” healing him.²³¹

A Nazarene writer testifies to the instant healing of his friend J. P. Wilson, a retired naval officer, from paralysis of the left leg during a prayer in church.²³² The body of Pearl Wiley Hanson, daughter of Nazarene theologian H. Orton Wiley, was so twisted that for thirteen years she could sleep only propped up, yet she was bedridden most of the time. Nevertheless, she felt called to serve in Japan; she made the voyage despite doctors’ warnings that she could not survive it. When a missionary and Japanese Christians anointed her with oil, she was instantly healed, her back and neck straightened.²³³

the foot still too swollen for the cast, the young woman was healed immediately after prayer and joined a baseball game. By the next morning there were no signs of the injury (Bennett, *Morning*, 98–99).

225. Salvato, “Presence.”

226. Including Neal, *Power*, 18, 41–42, 56; McKenna, *Miracles*, 16; and other sources; in Canada, Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, 104–5. Note also the medically inexplicable complete healing of Jennifer Rees Larcombe’s partial paralysis during one Spirit-directed prayer after eight years of non-healing in Marszalek, *Miracles*, 18–22; an arthritic woman healed instantly from pain during prayer, and quickly afterward able to walk, after using a wheelchair for eighteen years, in Bredesen, *Miracle*, 14–15 (cf. Luke 13:11); another case in Zagrans, *Miracles*, 20, 144–45. An ethnographic researcher studying an African-American storefront church in Durham, North Carolina, happened to be present when a woman who had been (briefly?) paralyzed by an illness had started walking (Bowler, “Bodies,” 82, recounting her own experience).

227. Braden, “Study,” 228–29.

228. Ibid., 229, citing also healing reports from a Methodist and a Lutheran pastor in Washington, D.C.

229. Harris, *Acts Today*, 104–5, on an event witnessed at the Oklahoma District Council of the Assemblies of God in Oct. 1942 (subsequent medical examination showed that the skull fractures had also been removed, 105).

230. Speed, *Incurables*, 17–23 (Speed is the doctor and eyewitness).

231. Bredesen, *Miracle*, 25–26 (reporting that X-rays confirmed the healing); cf. ibid., 17.

232. Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 47–48.

233. Ibid., 105, noting that from then on she could sleep and function normally.

The healing of a congenitally disabled congressman in California in 1951 reportedly became very public news.²³⁴ A teenager disabled by a degenerative bone disease was instantly healed after prayer in 1952, a healing that led to his conversion and ministry.²³⁵ Father Pat Crowley notes the encouragement to his faith when a woman paralyzed “from the waist down got out of her wheelchair and walked after prayer.”²³⁶ A source in the United States reports that a woman who had been unable to walk for two years, carried to a meeting, was healed and now skips rope.²³⁷ One journalist reports the account of an Emmy Award-winning actress largely healed of a serious leg problem through surgery but fully and finally healed when in faith she left behind her walking stick at a New Mexico church.²³⁸

One California pastor recounts the healing of a young man who broke his leg. The young man had been told that he would be in a cast for two years and would never walk without a cane, ruining his athletic aspirations. He was not yet known to the pastor when he visited the pastor’s very large church, yet when the pastor called out that someone’s leg was being healed, the young man was astonished to find himself instantly healed. His leg was completely better when the doctor examined it the next day, and he went through college on a basketball scholarship. The pastor later got to know the young man quite well, since he eventually became his son-in-law.²³⁹

Todd Hunter has had an interesting career: an associate of John Wimber, national director of Vineyard-USA, subsequently national director at the interdenominational Alpha-USA, and recently appointed an Anglican bishop.²⁴⁰ Before his appointment, Todd recounted an eyewitness experience that he considers one of his most dramatic in many years of praying for the sick. He was speaking from a high platform in an old auditorium in St. Louis, and about sixty people came forward for prayer. He saw a young woman in her mid-twenties, and, feeling that God was going to heal her of something, he announced this impression. Because of the height of the platform and the crowd in front of her, he had not seen the young lady closely, but as the crowd parted to look at her, he realized that she was wearing braces attached to crutches; she had not been able to walk unaided for months. He confessed to me that at that point he felt that this condition was more than his faith could handle and that he was regretting having called her up.

234. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 45, on California congressman William Upshaw, noting that this healing attracted some media attention. The contemporary account in “Congressman Walks” notes that he fractured his spine at age eighteen, was unable to walk without crutches for fifty-nine years, spent seven more years in bed, and now healed at age eighty-four was walking “normally, unaided.”

235. *Ibid.*, 155, recounting his own experience.

236. DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 99.

237. Dearing, *Healing*, 116–17. In the United States, see also DiOrio, *Miracle*, 167–71.

238. Wakefield, *Miracle*, 85, recounting the testimony given him by Kathy Baker.

239. Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 149–51. He lists other healings, which I have not duplicated here, on 139. Other sources frequently report healings during prophetic words (e.g., Robertson, *Miracles*, 130, 168–69), including many of the healing cases I have listed but not elaborated.

240. See, e.g., the interview in Neff, “Anglican.” His most recent book (at the time of my writing) is *Christianity Beyond Belief*.

Nevertheless, he needed to follow through, so he called her aside to talk with her, as was customary in the Vineyard healing ministry. As she was talking, he suddenly saw in his mind two football-shaped objects, each with the number 23, merging into one with the number 46, and he felt this meant “chromosomes,” hence something congenital. But as he talked with her and learned that her parents had been involved with the occult, he felt that it was spiritually rather than biologically congenital and prayed accordingly. Suddenly she put down her crutches and began running around the auditorium. Perhaps fifty people in the crowd knew her, and the room erupted wildly. Over the years many people who were present that day have reminded Todd of that occasion.²⁴¹

These accounts are merely samples, and one could continue almost indefinitely. For example, paralyzed by a bullet to his spine during World War II, Juan Santos of Puerto Rico had been unable to use his now-shriveled legs for sixteen years. After he was instantly healed, his wife and daughter each fainted at their first sight of him standing upright and walking, a healing that remained permanent.²⁴² A Methodist visiting Lourdes, disabled for twenty-three years from severe arthritis, was immediately healed and able to walk, and to do so “effortlessly.” This cure is not known by natural means to occur instantly as reported here.²⁴³ Deeming these examples sufficient for the point, I shall stop here.

Some argue that recoveries from paralysis may involve psychosomatic illness; while this may be true in some cases, one wonders that so *many* cases of it should be reported in the context of prayers for supernatural healing. Is a psychosomatic cure the most inherently probable explanation for the majority of cases of paralysis? Normally, chronic paralysis is irreversible.²⁴⁴ But even some of those who regard the restoration of paralyzed limbs as psychosomatic recoveries concede that the case would have to be different when someone dead for a significant period of time returns to life.²⁴⁵

Raising the Dead

Some modern writers argue that raising the dead, unlike most miracle claims, would involve a true miracle, but that no one today even claims that such events

241. Phone interview, Jan. 5, 2009.

242. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 103–6 (noting that there were government medical records because he was a veteran); Osborn, *Healing*, 290 (also the fourth photograph page between 258 and 259); a contemporary report in “Cripples Walk,” 9 (including before-and-after photographs). His healing is also recounted in Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 44 (along with many others during the meetings in 42–45).

243. Heron, *Channels*, 142–43.

244. Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009: “Paralysis (especially when it is chronic) is typically irreversible.”

245. See Mackie, “Miracles and Testimony,” 92 (though he specifies a period of forty-eight hours, which is far longer than necessary to be extranormal). Others regard raisings as “the most striking” of Jesus’s reported miracles (Miller, “Miracle Worker,” 22–23), or the least believable to antisupernaturalists (Broockingham, “Miracles,” 493 [though this is not his own view; see 495]).

occur.²⁴⁶ This argument, however, proves severely flawed, since raising claims are in fact fairly numerous today (though of course still extremely rare proportionate to the number of deaths). Presumably some such claims today, like some claims about many subjects, will prove deceptive, but I am fully convinced that a number of other claims reflect genuine eyewitness experience. That the writers of the Gospels and Acts believed that the resuscitations they reported took place should no more be doubted than the confidence of many people later in history and today who believe that they have seen, and have offered eyewitness evidence for, analogous experiences.

Whatever the alternative explanations various observers might suggest for the same events, there can be no doubt that eyewitnesses do claim raisings. Even in extraordinary cases for which no naturalistic explanation is readily available, an atheist or deist might grant the possibility of some phenomenon as yet unexplained;²⁴⁷ a theist has an additional and (on theistic premises) plausible option for explaining the cause of such events. In some of the following raising accounts, the person remained weak or ill, requiring further medical attention; whether weakness or sickness remained in any biblical raisings we cannot be certain, but it is possible in some of them (e.g., 2 Kgs 4:37; Mark 5:42–43; Acts 20:10–12). The primary issue for the biblical comparisons is what is explicit in most of those passages: someone dead, insofar as any observers present could detect, returned to life.

Biblical and Non-Christian Accounts

Ancients recounted stories of ancient or even mythical heroes who raised the dead, but these are normally told centuries after the alleged event.²⁴⁸ I do not know of ancient stories of particular persons, outside the persons under discussion (Jesus and his first followers), raising the dead, based on eyewitnesses and written within a generation.²⁴⁹ It is possible that I may have missed some, but one

246. Bishop, *Healing*, 231; Jeffries, "Healing," 71. Price, *Son of Man*, 20–21, rejects ancient resuscitation accounts because people are not raised from the dead today.

247. Though as Purtill, "Miracles," 203, notes concerning Jesus's resuscitations, one might well wonder how these as-yet unknown laws so frequently "operated coincidentally in the neighborhood of Jesus" (also idem, "Proofs," 48).

248. E.g., Aeschylus *Ag.* 1022–24; Euripides *Alc.* 124–30; Apollodorus *Bib.* 2.5.12; 2.6.2; 3.5.3; 3.10.3; Pausanias 2.26.5; 2.27.4; Lucian *Dance* 45; Diogenes Laertius 8.2.59; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.45; Libanius *Narration* 15; b. B.K. 117a; p. *Shebiit* 9:1, §13. Of these, the story of Apollonius is one of the most recent before being reported, yet Apollonius lived well over a century before that report, and the report may have been influenced by much earlier reports in the Gospels (see my discussion of problems with the narratives about Apollonius in ch. 2). For raisings in rabbinic sources, see further Loos, *Miracles*, 559–60 (following Strack-Billerbeck and P. Fiebig); Gentile accounts in Loos, *Miracles*, 560–62. Many early Jewish sources recount biblical resuscitations; the extrabiblical ones about biblical figures appear especially in fictitious or late legendary sources (Koskeniemi, *Miracle-Workers*, 290, cites for these Artapanus 3:24–26; *Liv. Pr.* 3:12–13).

249. Of someone thought dead reviving, being merely in a coma, there are some known examples (Valerius Maximus 1.8.12; 1.8.ext. 1; Pliny *Nat.* 7.52.173, 176–79; also noted by Anderson, *Raised*, 106–8, who discusses such cases more fully), at least some of which may reflect historical tradition, but in contrast

can at least affirm with confidence that they are not very many. By contrast, the summary that Jesus performed *multiple* raisings (Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22) belongs to first-generation Q material. Further, specific and likely independent healing accounts in Mark (Mark 5:35–43), special Lukan material (Luke 7:11–17), and John (John 11:39–45) confirm by multiple attestation the tradition that Jesus was from our earliest traditions reported to raise the dead.²⁵⁰

I should note that I am not treating Jesus's own resurrection here, which is of a character different from other resuscitations in the Gospels and, in view of the eschatological transformation claimed in the early sources, lacks both ancient and modern analogies.²⁵¹ The evidence that Jesus's followers somehow saw him alive after his crucifixion is, however, quite strong;²⁵² many (including myself) believe that a supernatural explanation is by far the most plausible one if one allows for it²⁵³ (an allowance that I believe other evidence in this book should support).

Accounts of raisings on or close to the eyewitness level are not limited to legends or myths centuries after the time they report; we have firsthand accounts of raisings today. Only a minority of the accounts are like Lazarus (a raising after a few days), but then Lazarus was also fairly exceptional in the biblical accounts as well.²⁵⁴ Most of the biblical accounts, like most of those today, involve someone fairly recently dead²⁵⁵ and without (by definition, for ancient accounts) modern medical attestation. Given the urgency of burial in antiquity,²⁵⁶ the widow of Nain's son had probably been dead only a few hours (Luke 7:12–17); Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:22–43) was not yet even prepared for burial, hence had been dead for less time than that;²⁵⁷

to Jesus's and his followers' ministries, they do not happen to coincide with someone praying for them or commanding them to rise.

250. See further discussion in Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:773–873. For Eve, *Healer*, 157, similarities to the Elijah/Elisha raising accounts render the Gospel accounts suspicious; but while the narrators undoubtedly conformed the accounts to biblical models, should we not suppose that if Jesus were raising the dead, he himself would follow the widely-known biblical models? Certainly other healers (including those today) look to prior tradition for precedents.

251. The potential modern analogies, such as Sabbatai Zevi (cf. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 920; Greenstone, *Messiah*, 225–30), are probably derivative in character.

252. See, e.g., Craig, "Tomb"; idem, "Empty Tomb"; idem, "Historicity"; idem, "Rise?" 146–52; idem, "Resurrection"; idem, *Assessing*, passim (esp. 351–78); Wright, *Resurrection*; Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection"; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 330–48, 579–90.

253. Cf. Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 379–85, 600–601 (esp. 339–46); sources noted above.

254. Rejecting ancient resuscitation accounts, Price, *Son of Man*, 20–21, literally refers to "the rotting dead," perhaps envisioning any kind of corpse, but perhaps more specifically thinking of one that has been dead for more than a day. Yet there is only one account of such a late resuscitation in Scripture (John 11:39–44), and some of today's accounts do involve those dead for two or more days (e.g., Koch, *Revival*, 141; idem, *Zulus*, 168; Pytches, *Come*, 241 [two cases]; Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 118–19; Chevreau, *Turnings*, 54–56; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 81; Tari, *Wind*, 76–78; Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 152).

255. Perhaps often before the last bodily systems would have shut down, though also well after other parts of the body, including most of the brain, were too dead to be restored by natural means.

256. Safrai, "Home," 774, especially n. 7; cf. *b. Sanh.* 47a. Greek funerals allowed one or two days for burial (Klauck, *Context*, 72; perhaps in a cooler region).

257. They appear to be in the same town (Mark 5:23–24), and the announcement of her death came en route (Mark 5:35). Since Jesus appears to have avoided the major Galilean cities, he is in a small town

Eutychus had just died (and Luke's language is guarded; Acts 20:9–12); the child in 1 Kgs 17:17–24 seems to have just died; and the apparently longer but same-day case in 2 Kgs 4:20–37 seems urgent (2 Kgs 4:24, 29). If messengers come to Peter immediately and he comes to Tabitha immediately, her raising (Acts 9:36–42) could be the same day;²⁵⁸ Joppa was less than twelve miles, perhaps four hours' brisk walk, from Lydda,²⁵⁹ and urgency again seems an issue (Acts 9:38).

Ancients lacked sophisticated measures of death, and hence undoubtedly made some mistakes by modern understandings of the category,²⁶⁰ but they could tell when someone stopped breathing. They also could notice a pattern where persons were being cured through a person's prayer or command, a pattern that may be obscured for antisupernaturalist observers today who *a priori* exclude prayer from being considered as a factor. Given the few people who revive without medical help, is it merely a coincidence that we have so many accounts of raisings in connection with prayer? One who explains modern accounts naturalistically, yet concedes that many may genuinely stem from eyewitnesses, can concede the same for ancient accounts. Those inclined toward naturalistic explanations, however, should recall how often the resuscitations fit the timing of prayer.

Although most of my sources involve Christian prayer, some experiences are reported from other circles and from those not predisposed to believe them. One anthropologist reports that she has filled notebooks with reports from witnesses or second- or thirdhand informants among the Samburu about Nkai (divinity) bringing dead persons back to life.²⁶¹ While this is a fully traditional culture and criteria for death may differ from most of the cultures from which reports in the present book are derived, the claim still invites attention.²⁶² Nevertheless, the rare

with short distances, probably his home base in Capernaum. Matthew offers no geographic transition after Matt 9:1, so this seems to have been his view. Mourners (Mark 5:38) could gather quickly (e.g., *b. Sanh.* 47a), especially since the child had already been in the process of dying (Mark 5:23).

258. On normal roads, ordinary travelers on long journeys covered roughly fifteen to twenty miles in a day, but soldiers on a forced march could do twenty-five to thirty-five (Jeffers, *World*, 37; Riesner, *Early Period*, 311); this journey was less than twelve miles each way (see note below), with the messengers to Peter undoubtedly hurrying.

259. See, e.g., *Map Manual*, 13–1. The road would be good; Lydda lay on the road from Caesarea to the inland town of Antipatris (Dar and Applebaum, "Road," 91). Both lay on the coastal plain, with Joppa nearer the lower coast (see, e.g., *Satellite Atlas*, 1:46–47); for an aerial photograph, with a marking for the fairly straight Roman road, see *Satellite Atlas*, 2:128.

260. Cf. stories (some more plausible than others) of natural recoveries from apparent death in Valerius Maximus 1.8.12; 1.8. ext. 1; Pliny *Nat.* 7.52.173, 176–79; one also has many novelistic accounts of those only apparently dead being revived (e.g., *Apoll. K.* Tyre 27; cf. fake death as a comic motif, e.g., Menander *Aspis* 112–13, 343–87). Most people today understand the importance of differentiating a coma from death, however, and presumably even in antiquity they normally checked for even minimal respiration.

261. Straight, *Miracles*, 22, with accounts, mostly including eyewitnesses, on 130–31 (a case from nearly a century ago), 131 (a man presumed dead four days), and 132. She notes many witnesses to such resuscitations (5–6), and that such reports are one reason given for traditionally not burying the youthful dead immediately (150). Samburu Christians view Nkai as God (45).

262. Cf. the boy pronounced dead by a doctor in Wamba Hospital; the nurses tried to chase Nompoi (the mother) away, but she persisted, finding a pulse. The nurses finally realized that he was in fact alive, and after hours he revived (Straight, *Miracles*, 150–51). In this case, it seems, the usual Western medical

accounts feature people randomly reviving, rather than any connection with a specific prayer or command.

More astonishingly, in the *Journal of Anthropological Research*²⁶³ one anthropologist reported that during a shamanic funerary ritual in northwestern Ghana, he witnessed a corpse that had been dead for a few days dance and play drums for at least several minutes. "I saw the corpse jolt and occasionally pulsate" in reaction to the shaman's movements; streams of light invaded the room, and "the corpse, shaken by spasms, then rose to its feet, spinning and dancing in a frenzy. . . . The corpse [of a drummer] picked up the drumsticks and began to play." Soon it was again a motionless corpse, propped against the wall.²⁶⁴

In contrast to the accounts narrated below, this corpse remained a corpse; a local informant apparently interpreted the action indigenously in terms of spirits of the ancestors temporarily activating the man's body.²⁶⁵ The anthropologist fell sick afterward²⁶⁶ and felt that he recovered due only to a local "purification" ritual.²⁶⁷ Describing his experience thirteen or fourteen years later,²⁶⁸ he both continued to insist that it was a real experience shared with the other witnesses²⁶⁹ and tried to offer an impersonal, materialistic explanation for it, namely, a sort of group hallucination caused by the rhythmic drumming and his exhaustion.²⁷⁰ In view of scientific research about hallucinations, this explanation seems probably inadequate for an experience that various persons present shared.²⁷¹ Still, something like this

approach proved premature, although this hospital probably lacked the full apparatus of more sophisticated Western hospitals.

263. Grindal, "Heart." Paul Eddy brought this source to my attention. Edith Turner also claims that a man's stopped heart and pulse revived when her husband, anthropologist Victor Turner, placed his hand on the man's chest (though apparently within just moments of the pulse having stopped); see Turner, *Hands*, 71. A woman apparently dying was revived as a traditional healer tried to draw her soul back; the same woman had been reportedly revived before, with some near-death experiences (idem, "Actuality," 5). It is said that Sardar Birsā refused the request to raise the corpse of a Muslim supplicant, on the grounds that it was merely a fake corpse made of clay (Singh, "Prophet," 109).

264. Grindal, "Heart," 68. Oral traditions claim that the walking dead appeared in some nocturnal *juju* (black magic) rituals, if the relatives paid sufficient fees to the practitioners (Nicolini, "Notes," 119).

265. Grindal, "Heart," 69: "You saw the ancestors dance"; also 75.

266. Partly from a death threat (ibid., 73), but he was also nauseated at the scene (68, 77).

267. Ibid., 74.

268. Thirteen in ibid., 61; fourteen in ibid., 76.

269. Ibid., 61; while denying its possible objectivity on 76, he recognizes it as an "intuitive certainty" (a subjective reality) on 77.

270. Ibid., 61. The exhaustion could explain him hallucinating, but not the others. Denying that a camera could have captured the scene, he seems to deny its objectivity (76), a strategy necessary to reduce cognitive dissonance with his epistemology. McClenon, *Healing*, 62, who apparently prefers a more rigorous scientific depiction of trance, complains that Grindal's description is "shrouded in anthropological vagueness."

271. If "group hallucinations" occur, they are very rare, as Mike Licona's research has shown (cf. Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 136n196, 346–47; idem, *Resurrection*, 484–85, 573–74; personal correspondence, April 25, 2010; May 17, 2010). Many cited cases of supposed group hallucinations are misattributed, belonging instead to categories such as optical illusions, legend, or fraud (O'Connell, "Hallucinations," 71–75).

explanation is not impossible, given the intense ritual context.²⁷² Whatever the explanation, it differs in any case from conventional Western categories of what *should* be able to happen. The following cases differ, however, in kind and cannot be explained by a rhythm-induced hypnotic trance, both because that does not fit the circumstances of the reports and because the people remained demonstrably alive afterward.

Alternative Explanations?

To argue that ancient eyewitnesses could have believed that Jesus raised the dead, it is sufficient to demonstrate that eyewitnesses offer comparable claims today; one need not venture an explanation. If we do venture into the controversy of explanation, however, some approaches seem more plausible than others. I do not assume that all of the accounts I have found must be genuine raisings; even assuming that all reporters were truthful, in some cases (such as some babies whose eyes were “set in death”) the person may not have been quite dead yet. The boundaries by which death is defined work for most cases but can be fluid, and some people argue that the usual definition even in Western medicine (brain death) may be somewhat arbitrary.²⁷³ Those who would, however, use such observations to simply dismiss all of my accounts (complaining of my sources’ or my own naiveté) ought to consider *why* they dismiss all of them, and on what basis they hold their philosophic assumptions so strongly that they would dismiss abundant eyewitness testimony in which a number of people apparently dead are revived, without brain damage, after a sustained period.²⁷⁴

While one can posit various alternative explanations for a number of the individual accounts, not all of the accounts are so easily explained. In some cases, for example, like the dead girl reported by Albert Bissouessoue, the person was certainly dead. Moreover, the difficulty appears to be compounded as the number of examples so treated increases, until it gives the impression, at least to someone not inflexibly bound to antisupernatural premises, of explaining away evidence by filing it all in separate nonsupernatural categories. I know some of the sources firsthand, and some others are known to people that I know. Some cases might have naturalistic parallels, but some, including some where I find the sources of

272. O’Connell, “Hallucinations,” 70–71, acknowledges that group hallucinations are unusual, but on 75–83 offers six documented cases in the past 425 years (all in spiritually charged contexts), plus several cases that he regards as more questionable, showing that in some religious contexts collective hallucinations have occurred. These cases share common elements: visions are *expected* (84); sometimes stress (84); not everyone present sees the vision (85); those who see it do not all see the same thing (85–86); and the vision does not converse (86). Using these and other criteria, O’Connell distinguishes these cases from Jesus’s resurrection appearances (87–105). Reports of some corporate visions (usually with limited details) appear elsewhere (Boddy, “Face”; Koch, *Revival*, 143; Huyssen, *Saw*, 110).

273. Straight, *Miracles*, 145–47, cites the influence of the need for organ donation on formulating current medical definitions.

274. Some sociologists of religion have also warned against ruling out such claims on the basis of ideological bias (Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 153).

testimony convincing, are very difficult to explain on such terms, and their cumulative weight appears to render these cases mutually supportive. At the least, nearly all interpreters will agree that resuscitations are not best explained psychosomatically.²⁷⁵

From the historical standpoint, the primary point here is that eyewitnesses claim raisings. Because I will eventually address the question of extranormal causation, however, the reader should keep in mind that, apart from particular conditions that do not apply in any of the following cases,²⁷⁶ after just about four or five minutes without oxygen some brain damage normally occurs even if the person's breathing can be started again at that point (by human intervention, usually by special equipment rarely available in the following settings). A survivor would normally spend a few days in a coma, then a varying period of recovery, and if severe brain damage occurred would often face continued coma, seizures or uncontrolled body movements, progressive dementia, disorientation, or near-event amnesia.

If a person's respiration has ceased for six minutes, brain damage is normally irreversible even if one is revived, so that the patient would be in a coma and typically need artificial respiration.²⁷⁷ Most of the following accounts involve longer periods of time, yet those revived lack signs of brain damage, defying normal expectations of what is possible. A person's pulse can start again after stopping, but even in such cases a person will not recover fully unless there is medical intervention.²⁷⁸ Some newer medical techniques can restart a heart even more than an hour after cardiac arrest, but these again are only through technological, medical intervention and can offer hope of functionality only if the brain is preserved.²⁷⁹

275. So correctly, e.g., Purtil, "Proofs," 48. I say "nearly all" to allow for those attributing the raisings to some power exuded by the faith of others present rather than the dead person, but this explanation (which I find a poor alternative to a supernatural one: it substitutes one paranormal hypothesis for another, ignoring the theological contexts of the raisings) is not what is typically meant by "psychosomatic." Davies, *Healer*, 67, in principle allows raisings if the persons were merely comatose or not dead long—i.e., so long as supernatural explanations are not needed.

276. Such as severely lowered body temperatures due to, e.g., drowning in icy water; Greyson, "Experiences," 339, notes that the body may be artificially cooled to 60° F, ceasing the cerebral flow of blood, for more than forty-five minutes for a delicate operation. Also, since the brain stem is the last part of the brain to shut down, essential bodily systems might be preserved temporarily after severe damage to other parts of the brain. In the case reported in "Indian Baby 'Back from the Dead'" (http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/7463245.stm), which I initially read with great interest, a drug apparently suppressed perceptibility of the infant's heartbeat. This situation is obviously different from any story below, most of which lacked the application of *any* medicine.

277. After seven minutes the entire brain is normally irreversibly dying, and within fifteen minutes the heart becomes incapable of being revived. Dr. Maurice Rawlings, "Introduction," xi, gives four minutes before tissue death starts in the brain, and brain damage after ten minutes without CPR.

278. Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1 and 14, 2009. After six minutes, a person would not recover fully, and would not normally start respirating on his or her own (*ibid.*, April 14, 2009).

279. See, e.g., Associated Press medical writer Marilynn Marchione, "Jackson's Hospital Is Known for 'Raising the Dead,'" July 1, 2009, at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyID=106160320>, or http://health.yahoo.com/news/ap/us_med_michael_jackson_raising_the_dead.html; accessed July 2, 2009.

One might counter that some of the following cases could have involved pulses and respiration merely too faint to detect,²⁸⁰ an explanation one could also correspondingly apply to the cases in the Gospels and Acts.²⁸¹ Thus for example raising reports in dossiers for miracles of Roman Catholic saints declined after methods for certifying death became stricter and physicians became less ready to claim that a genuine resuscitation must have occurred.²⁸² In view of the abundance of the testimonies, however, I think that trying to explain most or all of them in such terms severely underestimates the ability of people in traditional societies, who live close to death, to detect respiration, especially when deciding that the person is dead means parting with a loved one. Moreover, even if they were merely in comas, one wonders why so many people recovered from such severe comas during prayer. That is, in a number of these cases I think that the supernatural causation that these accounts specifically claim offers the best available explanation for the results that they note.

Defending Hume's position, one philosopher concludes, "If anyone were to tell you that a man had died and come back to life you had better not believe him." Since the truth of his claim is surely more improbable than that he is recounting something false (deliberately or no), he argues, one should not believe him.²⁸³ One could accuse all the eyewitnesses concerning naturally inexplicable raisings of being liars, and perhaps cast me in that barrel for good measure since I claim to know some of them. But is that not a steep price to pay to defend an eighteenth-century philosopher's assumptions? Whether one must regard all resuscitations as improbable even in theological contexts depends again on one's presuppositions. By contrast, another philosopher doubts that even Hume, being an empiricist, would have insisted that the person had not been not raised from the dead if Hume himself witnessed it.²⁸⁴

Earlier Accounts

In history, claims of extranormal resuscitations specifically associated with prayer appear at various points. For example, Irenaeus claims that the gathered church in his day "often" accomplished such resuscitations (following the example of Jesus and the apostles).²⁸⁵ As noted earlier, an apparently second-century

280. Some observe that "even EEG curves and zero flatlines do not necessarily indicate death" (Van Brenk, "Wagner," 264, citing Hans Küng); but how long can a person remain in such a state before the damage becomes irreparable, especially without modern technology to revive the person?

281. That is, they would remain plausible on the phenomenological level even if the precise description of their state would differ from that posed by modern medical science.

282. Duffin, *Miracles*, 81, pointing historically to the influence of Paolo Zacchia (1584–1659), who "claimed that death could not be determined with certainty until the cadaver began to decay." Duffin also adds the observation that Protestant influence may have increased skepticism even within the Catholic Church about accepting recovery experiences as genuine resuscitations (83); from earlier reports, she judges that those labeled dead were at least "moribund" (81).

283. Sobel, "Evidence," 186.

284. Smart, *Philosophers*, 32.

285. Irenaeus *Haer.* 2.31.2.

source reports that the first bishop of Arbil in Mesopotamia was converted through witnessing the Syrian evangelist Addai raising a man in 99 C.E.²⁸⁶ Augustine cites accounts of raisings attested by eyewitnesses.²⁸⁷ A contemporary attributed three raisings to Martin of Tours (316–97).²⁸⁸ Writing roughly a generation after Benedict (ca. 480–ca. 547), Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604) attributed a raising to him.²⁸⁹ Bede reports a raising; another source claims that Columba, working among the Picts, commanded a dead boy to return to life and he did so.²⁹⁰ On September 6, 1303, Roger of Conway fell to his death and was discovered in the morning, “still as wood.” When someone invoked a saint, however, the boy began to move, and he recovered in a church in front of more than two hundred witnesses. This account appears in contemporary documents involving multiple eyewitnesses.²⁹¹

In another medieval account, a girl drowned in a pond in early afternoon and was discovered facedown after sunset, “her face and body . . . so badly bloated as to be unrecognizable.” Eyewitnesses noted that the father had to use a knife to pry open her mouth to put the tongue inside, and then the mouth would not close. Forty people present together prayed to St. Thomas Cantilupe, praying until midnight; at sunrise her parents laid her on the altar at church. Witnesses attested her recovery, as did the girl herself.²⁹² Similarly, Welshman William Cragh had been hanged for hours before he was cut down; witnesses described his face as black, his mouth bloody, his black and swollen tongue hanging out, and his eyes protruding

286. Young, “Miracles in History,” 110, citing Mashiha-Zakha, *Chronicle of Arbil*, 2–3, who cites a written source in the second century.

287. *City of God* 22.8; see also Herum, “Theology,” 63; Hebert, *Raised*, 41–45. On 33–40, Hebert cites various patristic claims.

288. Hebert, *Raised*, 47–53, citing especially Sulpicius Severus *Dialogues* (dating the work to 396, roughly a year before Martin’s death). Many raisings are attributed to Patrick (ca. 389–ca. 461), patron saint of Ireland (191–98), including corpses dead for years, but because the earliest major source dates to seven centuries after Patrick, our ability to evaluate what information is early is severely impaired. I have found raisings of long-dead corpses (beyond the maximum of a few days) only in hagiographic sources long after the alleged events.

289. Hebert, *Raised*, 55–56. Gregory recounts other raisings in 59–62. From the style one may suspect that edification sometimes trumped historiography (see appendix C), but I defer the matter to experts in the period in question. For stories about Bernard of Clairvaux, see Hebert, *Raised*, 65–67; for a plausible contemporary account from Bernard about Malachy, see 68–69; for a plausible contemporary report about Catherine of Siena, see 105–6. For other medieval accounts, see 71–118, 131–37, 155–74. Many of these accounts cite contemporary witnesses, involve then-living persons of great faith, and in some respects appear analogous to earlier and later accounts; some probably do report historical events. Nevertheless, many also contain fantastic details that appear to me inconsistent with the best attested current and biblical accounts; because I am (as already noted) suspicious of hagiographic embellishment in this period to a much greater extent than I find in the sources from the earliest Christian period (my area of expertise), I defer conclusive judgments to others, but differences are evident. Hebert, *Raised*, 119–30, addresses raisings attributed to founders of religious orders.

290. Gardner, “Miracles,” 1932, citing Bede *H.E.G.A.* 5.12; Adomnan *Life of Columba* 2.32. While accepting some of Bede’s other accounts, Young, “Miracles in History,” 114, is more skeptical about the raising.

291. Straight, *Miracles*, 135–36 (following Finucane, *Rescue*).

292. *Ibid.*, 136–37 (again following Finucane, *Rescue*). Cf. the baby revived near Budapest in Goodich, “History,” 155.

from their bloody sockets. That is, most observers would consider him genuinely dead. Nevertheless, bystanders prayed to St. Thomas (a favorite recipient of such entreaties), and witnesses claimed that Cragh returned to life.²⁹³

Whatever one makes of the quality of medieval investigations, such claims continued afterward and closer to our own time, for example, accounts regarding raisings through the prayers of missionary Francis Xavier.²⁹⁴ In an account of 1595, after doctors had given up and a mother and some neighbors had pleaded for an hour or two for the life of her apparently dead infant, the child recovered.²⁹⁵ On August 5, 1678, a doctor examined a motionless, cold boy with an apparently broken neck and no pulse; expecting a funeral in the church the next day, he instead discovered people rejoicing around the boy, who was now standing and well.²⁹⁶ It has been said that during the Scottish Reformation, John Welch, son-in-law of John Knox, prayed for a youth whom the doctors had verified as dead. The youth began speaking, completely well, and went on to become Lord Castlestewart of Ireland.²⁹⁷

Following Wesley's own eyewitness account, historians note that a man apparently dead returned to life when Wesley prayed for him.²⁹⁸ Wesley and one Mr. Meyrick had both been ill, but while Wesley recovered, Meyrick got worse.²⁹⁹ The physician expected Meyrick's imminent death;³⁰⁰ Wesley found his legs cold, and the man "(as it seemed) dead already." After Wesley and those with him cried out to God, "He opened his eyes and called for me; and from that hour he continued to recover his strength till he was restored to perfect health."³⁰¹ Likewise, Lutheran pastor J. C. Blumhardt's wife, Doris, revived from near death ("without breathing or pulse," he shared in a letter at the time) when he prayed.³⁰² After attempts to revive a woman who had hanged herself failed, Blumhardt prayed with those present, breathed into her mouth, and she revived.³⁰³

We have far more recent reports from the early twentieth century, including apparent raisings associated with evangelists Maria Woodworth-Etter,³⁰⁴ John G.

293. *Ibid.*, 137 (following Bartlett, *Hanged Man*).

294. Hebert, *Raised*, 177–83. Hebert attributes much of Xavier's missionary success to signs, comparing Jesus's ministry in the Gospels (180). Young, "Miracles in History," 116, however, warns that a Jesuit in Goa in 1584 could locate no witnesses (though this was thirty-nine years later).

295. Duffin, *Miracles*, 145.

296. *Ibid.*, 81.

297. Young, "Miracles in History," 116; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 84–85; Miller, *Miracles*, 55–56 (following *Howie's Scots Worthies*, which claims that Welch prayed for two full days). The story (including thirty-six hours of prayer) appears to have been transferred to Knox (1505–72) himself; see Koch, *Zulus*, 167.

298. Kidd, "Healing," 159; Tomkins, *Wesley*, 106.

299. Wesley, *Journal*, 55 (Dec. 15, 1742). Mike Finley tracked down the exact reference in Wesley's journal for me (Oct. 22, 2010).

300. *Ibid.*, 55–56 (predicted on Dec. 20 and again Dec. 25).

301. *Ibid.*, 56 (Dec. 25, 1742).

302. Ising, *Blumhardt*, 207. The letter also notes breathing into her lips, but this might follow 2 Kgs 4:34.

303. *Ibid.*, 219.

304. Woodworth-Etter, *Diary*, 156–57, raising a woman (Mrs. Sarah Nelson) who was "cold and limp," without pulse, in her meeting, who testified of having been to heaven and back, and then continued in the meetings. It is not clear from the narrative that the unconsciousness lasted very long.

Lake,³⁰⁵ Smith Wigglesworth (multiple times),³⁰⁶ and (reported with more restraint) Dr. Lilian Yeomans.³⁰⁷ Deaf and blind for two weeks and nearing death on February 17, 1912, Anglican Dorothy Kerin was mostly unconscious; the next evening, it appeared that her breathing and heartbeat stopped. Then she sat up, declared herself well, and went walking around. She reported that an angel had told her to rise and walk. Various doctors attested her cure, and X-rays showed that her tuberculosis-ravaged lungs were now completely healed.³⁰⁸

In most modern cases, we have these reports only because of writers' interest in the persons who prayed, so it is likely that we have only a small sampling of raisings that were believed to have occurred. In fact, a number of early twentieth-century accounts not associated with well-known figures remain extant.³⁰⁹ For example, the raising of a woman pronounced dead was associated with early West Indian Pentecostal church planting in the United Kingdom.³¹⁰

Accounts of resuscitated babies seem more common. A non-Pentecostal source reports that a doctor gave up on a baby who seemed fully dead, yet after prayer the baby returned to life, its color changing from black and blue to pink.³¹¹ When a sick twenty-three-month-old baby apparently died during a Louisiana church service in 1915, "its eyes set in death," the church prayed for roughly thirty minutes, after which the baby was restored.³¹² In a Church of God in Christ testimony from Arkansas in 1913, a baby sick for months apparently died during prayer for him; observers detected no pulse or respiration, and eyes and jaws "set." "So far as we could tell," the report claims, "he was perfectly dead." One of the women commanded the baby to return to life in Jesus's name, whereupon the child revived and began to recover; he seemed well the next morning, when he was in church for the Sunday morning service.³¹³ When a baby in Poland died, the father went aside and prayed until he felt sure that God had restored the child; when he returned he found his wife praising God, the child alive.³¹⁴ In 1923, a mother testified that her son, overwhelmed with fever, became lifeless, his eyes "fixed"; the mother began

305. In popular sources, see, e.g., Lindsay, *Lake*, 12–13, 32–33 (she remained well at the time of Lindsay's writing, twenty-five years after the event; cf. Maxwell, *African Gifts*, 40).

306. Young, "Miracles in History," 118; Pytches, "Anglican," 194, and idem, *Come*, 238–39, citing fourteen occasions. See the description of one in Stormont, *Wigglesworth*, 102–3.

307. Yeomans, *Healing*, 120–21 (without claiming that the woman was dead, Yeomans, a doctor, notes that she could find no pulse and claims that she was healed while on the verge of death).

308. Maddocks, *Ministry*, 101–2.

309. Besides accounts noted here, see also a 1907 account from the western United States reported in Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 67.

310. Michel, *Telling*, 64.

311. I. W. Keller, attested by Rev. G. Edward Davis of Louisville, Kentucky (Fant, *Miracles*, 141–44, esp. 143).

312. "Dead Raised to Life" (listing by name and location ten witnesses, presumably from the church service).

313. Reed, "Dead Raised," noting that many witnesses were present and the mother is ready to testify to anyone who asks.

314. Harris, "Miracle in Poland." For other claims of healings in Poland from that period, see, e.g., Ewald, "Healings."

rebuking death, and the son “sat up and praised the Lord.” After a few minutes he got up and used the restroom by himself, and returned dancing and playing “as if he had never been ill.”³¹⁵ In a later period, Alta Washburn prayed for an Apache infant that the mother was taking from the morgue to the cemetery; she reports that the baby returned to life, and word quickly spread on the reservation. Later she prayed for the same boy, now a man, before he was sent to Vietnam.³¹⁶

In Massachusetts in 1928, several Pentecostals went to pray for a man from Michigan who had come to visit relatives but was now in the throes of death. As they prayed, he got worse. Finally they could detect no heartbeat, his head was cold, “his eyes . . . set in death,” and they lost faith to pray any longer. But as the dead man’s wife expressed confidence in prayer that God could raise him even in that state, they regained courage and kept praying, rebuking death and commanding him to get up. Immediately, the report declares, the man began to revive, praying and singing in tongues, and within a few minutes he sat up. He then had to lie down again but showed up at the afternoon service, still weak but alive. His wife later reported that he had recovered fully and was working hard, with no illness remaining.³¹⁷

For the most part, I can only recount what these early twentieth-century sources claim, but one case afforded opportunity to trace back a story to within days of its origination. If this sample case is in any way representative, many of these claims would appear to reflect actual experiences. In 1907, the Azusa Street Revival’s publication cited a raising story in the *Nazarene Messenger*.³¹⁸ The citation was not invented; one researcher, Mike Finley, was able to find (for himself and me) a copy of the latter article in Nazarene archives, dating to within a month of the reported event. According to this account, fifteen-year-old Eula Wilson was bedridden for seven months, starting on December 9, 1906. She was attended by many of the most respected doctors in Wichita. Unconscious during her final eight days and experiencing convulsions, she lacked food, water, and medicine. Attendants used disinfectants because of the odor from fluids oozing from her mouth, nose, and ears. Neighbors felt that the mother, who was praying for healing, was pitifully

315. Yeoward, “Miracle.” On naturalistic grounds one might suppose a temporary coma until the fever broke, but this explanation does not seem to fit all the details, and the recovery under the conditions described at least seems quite unusual.

316. Tarango, “Physician,” 112, citing Washburn’s self-published autobiography. The young man did return safely. Most other cures reported in Washburn’s ministry were meaningful but less dramatic (Tarango, “Physician,” 112–13, cites a woman not using crutches since they prayed). In another case among Native Americans in the same denomination, a baby was born healthy who had been expected to be born dead (113).

317. Trotter, “Dead Raised,” including signatures of the witnesses. Perhaps this was a heart attack, but the recovery without any means except prayer would appear extraordinary.

318. “Raised from the Dead,” citing Frank McCluney’s lengthy “Correspondence,” both provided to me courtesy of Mike Finley (Oct. 10, 22, 2010). The report, which dates to ten days after the event, includes names, addresses, and apparently known local church contacts, although it does not seem possible to gain further detail more than a century later. It also refers readers to the *Wichita Eagle* for names of the doctors.

out of touch with reality (an understandable sentiment, given the frequency of denial). Finally at 7 p.m. on a Wednesday night the doctor, visiting on a house call, warned that she was dying; as far as all the gathered neighbors could tell, she was dead by 8 p.m., and they began preparing her for burial. At 2 a.m., she seemed to show signs of life, but “again relapsed into convulsions, which continued until 9:30 a.m. Saturday.” At 10 a.m. Saturday morning, June 8, 1907, she sat up and recounted an experience of heaven.³¹⁹ She then ate lightly, washed, and walked around with no impairment.³²⁰

The story could be traced back further than the Nazarene report, however. Mike checked archives and found the story in Wichita newspapers just after the reported events, quoting named witnesses.³²¹ Because the Azusa Street account seems to have added the healing of her eye to the Nazarene account,³²² I initially assumed that this might have been a case of elaborating miracle accounts such as scholars often suggest in the development of the Gospel tradition. Instead, we discovered that, whether by other information or inference, the later Azusa Street account correctly reported the earlier story; the *Wichita Eagle* already cited A. O. Burton, the doctor who had attended her before she died, as attesting that her sight was restored. Based on his medical experience, he did not understand “how she revived” when he had left her so close to death.³²³ Dr. Burton did note that she still had a slight fever shortly after her remarkable recovery, but the paper also reports that she went out to College Hill on the day of her recovery. Her neighborhood, who viewed her experience as miraculous, attested that she had been bedridden and that they had expected her death “any time” for the past half a year.³²⁴

One of my NT colleagues from Duke, Dr. Eric Greaux, referred me to a person whom he had known for nearly thirty years, vouching for her integrity.³²⁵ Barachias Irons is a Church of God in Christ evangelist, and she, consulting with her mother,

319. Her description fits descriptions of heaven in most other near death experience (NDE) reports that involve them, including not being allowed past a certain point; she also described accurately deceased persons she had not seen in life.

320. In the ten days before the report, there was no relapse of illness, and she was regaining weight and strength.

321. Mike Finley (Oct. 31, 2010) notes that the *Wichita Eagle* carried twelve articles related to Eula Wilson between June 11 and July 7, 1907; the rival paper, the *Wichita Beacon*, had five articles (June 11–22). The *Wichita Star*, focused more on agricultural issues, was silent. The *Beacon*’s final article (June 22) questions the severity of her previous condition, but unlike the *Eagle* does not name its sources.

322. The one obvious addition in the Azusa Street article was to make explicit the healing of Eula’s blind and damaged eye; given the nature of testimony, the mention of the damage in the earlier article might assume the later healing, but it is not explicit there.

323. “Saw God,” provided for me by Mike Finley, Oct. 31, 2010. I was also not sure whether to assume that she died Wednesday night or whether the original case would have been Friday night; witnesses in the fuller *Wichita Eagle* account indicate that she appeared to slip away *both* nights before recovering Saturday morning (this article may be a source condensed in the *Messenger*; I condense even further here).

324. *Ibid.*

325. Eric Greaux, personal correspondence, Aug. 27–28, 2009.

Mother Katherine Taylor, procured for me her well-known testimony.³²⁶ Katherine was testifying about the raising of her own mother, Mother Elouise Jordan, from the dead, an event that she personally witnessed. Mother Jordan (1907–82) was part of Mason Temple Church of God in Christ in Memphis, Tennessee. (This was the church where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke the day before his assassination.) In 1940, however, at age thirty-three, doctors diagnosed her with cancer in her throat. Although she was hospitalized at John Gaston Hospital (now called The Med), they sent her home because there was nothing that they could do for her. “She suffered with cancer for nine years,” and it ate through her throat so that mucous was coming from her neck.

In 1949, Mother Jordan’s daughter Katherine had gone to work when “her supervisor received a call . . . for her to come home, because her mother had died.” The entire neighborhood had known of Mother Jordan’s illness, so many people were standing outside, and a hearse arrived from the J. O. Patterson mortuary.³²⁷ Hearing of Mother Jordan’s passing, Bishop Mason, widely known as a man of prayer, arrived before the mortuary could take the body.³²⁸ He “prayed and rebuked death, and life came back into Mother Jordan’s body.” When Katherine Taylor reached the house, “Mother Jordan was on the porch in a pink night gown dancing and praising God.” Although the doctor had indicated that the cancer had destroyed her ability to speak, from that day forward “she spoke until she died of natural causes in 1982.”³²⁹ Insofar as we know, this testimony has not previously been published, at least in this form; yet it is so firmly part of the oral history that my friend Eric knew about it.

Current accounts are available to me in the greatest numbers. Although far rarer than most kinds of healings, both today and in the NT, large numbers of raisings are claimed in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and sometimes also in the West—far more than I can narrate below.³³⁰ Some videos circulating today even portray rais-

326. The mother has other testimonies as well, including being healed of twisted intestines before doctors could operate (1977) and shocking a nurse when she spoke after being dead thirty minutes in 1999 (Barachias Irons, personal correspondence, Aug. 27, 2009), but I lack the details for these accounts. For the remarkable growth of COGIC, see, e.g., Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 281.

327. Katherine noted that Elder J. O. Patterson Sr. later became her pastor and the presiding bishop after Bishop C. H. Mason’s death; at this time, however, he ran a funeral home.

328. Founder of the Church of God in Christ, Mason declared already in 1924 that hundreds had been healed when he prayed and laid hands on them, from toothaches to tumors (McClymond, “Mason,” 253). On early healing theology in COGIC, see Alexander, *Healing*, 113–23.

329. Barachias Irons (personal correspondence, Sept. 13, 2009), passing on the information for me directly from her mother, from whom she had it and whom she consulted, Mother Katherine Taylor. Evangelist Irons also provided a summary of this information in personal correspondence (Aug. 27, 2009; further details and some photographs, Jan. 19, 2010; also Jan. 21, 2010).

330. Many of these surface in popular Christian literature, e.g., an example in Lewis, *Healing*, 64–65; Osborn, *Evangelism*, 1:940–41 (a baby); Osborn, *Healing*, 281; Wagner, *Acts*, 476–77 (and less dramatically, 321–22); Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 14–21, 25–32 (esp. 32), 47–54 (esp. 53), 56–58, 89–97 (esp. 94–95), 97–104 (esp. 101–3; his father-in-law’s story), 105–6 (seventeen and a half hours after being pronounced dead, without breathing), 107–9 (esp. 108), 109–14 (esp. 113–14); Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 69–76 (Marvin Ford recounting his return after thirty minutes of clinical death, through Ralph Wilkerson’s

ings (I have watched two from Nigeria)³³¹ or recount interviews with those raised (e.g., one from Ethiopia I have watched), though I lack means to evaluate their authenticity.³³² A number of instances of persons returning to life, often through medical means after brief cessation of vital signs, involve visions of afterlife while dead, a topic discussed more in some other works of various kinds.³³³ I shall focus here, however, largely on written sources or the results of my open-ended interviews where some interviewees happened to supply accounts of raisings among their accounts of healings.

prayers); Clark, *Impartation*, 203; see also Rutz, *Megashift*, 3–14, 21–22, 29–34, 79, 104–5 (collecting many claims from more than fifty countries [cf. 30]; mentioned also in Wilson, “Miracle Events,” 265); Rumph, *Signs*, 155–73; Smith, “Baby”; Conn, “Visit to Heaven” (in Tonga); Carpenter, “Death”; Harris, *Acts Today*, 98–99, 101–3; Seibert, *Church*, 135–36 (Mongolia, after thirty-six hours); see also McGee, *People of Spirit*, 524–25. Mike Finley, whose book is forthcoming, has spent years collecting reports and knows of well over a thousand (phone interview, Oct. 2, 2010); in over forty cases, “medically trained personnel (doctors, nurses, EMTs) were present when the individual was determined dead, and then came back to life” (personal correspondence, Sept. 23, 2010).

331. One on the internet is from the controversial Synagogue Church of All Nations. The other involves Reinhard Bonnke and is mentioned further below.

332. I am not specifically challenging their veracity (some or all of them could well be accurate, in view of some raisings evidenced elsewhere), but I approach internet material, like unprovenanced artifacts in archaeology, cautiously when I lack sufficient means to verify its source and the source’s reliability.

333. See more than twenty accounts in Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 1–141; more than twenty more in Kent and Waite, *Beyond*, chs. 11–36; they call these “Near Death Experiences.” While some accounts sound more convincing than others, NDEs are sufficiently common and well-documented enough that there is little reason to dispute the premise of the collection as a whole. (On NDEs, one may note numerous works from different interpretive frameworks, e.g., Moody, *Life*; Ring, *Life*; Habermas and Moreland, *Immortality*, 73–105; Greyson, “Experiences,” and their bibliographies.) Interestingly, even someone blind all her life recounted seeing similar images, though not in color (Kent and Waite, *Beyond*, ch. 23, reported by Dr. Kenneth Ring), and a blind man also saw clearly while dying (even what people present were wearing), while returning to blindness after resuscitation (Rawlings, “Introduction,” xiii). See further, e.g., Shahid Siraj Din, attested as clinically dead for four minutes (Kent and Waite, *Beyond*, ch. 11); Rod Lewis, restored immediately after brief prayers by his wife (Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 129–30); and Paul McWilliams, clinically dead twice during his coma (Kent and Waite, *Beyond*, ch. 22); possibly also Hock, *Miracles*, 10–15; McCallie, *Trophy*, 4 (a nine-year-old describing Jesus as she died). Rawlings, “Introduction,” xiv, contends that lack of oxygen, drugs, and other factors cannot simulate these near death experiences; Greyson, “Experiences,” 334, 340–41, notes that brain activity does not account for these, including in a case in which the brain was monitored, yet the brain-dead woman correctly observed features in the operating room; also noting on 321 that cases usually involve psychologically normal individuals. In one study, 18 percent of 344 survivors of cardiac arrest are said to have reported NDEs “while their brains showed no wave activity” (Llewellyn, “Events,” 246). While some experiences resemble biblical accounts, some (for better or for worse, but probably unknown to most of the narrators) resemble a literary form found in apocalypses and climaxing in Dante (cf., e.g., *Gr. Apoc. Ezra*; *T. of Jac.*; Bauckham, “Visiting”; idem, “Visions”; cf. a Greek example from 2 c.e. in *Select Papyri* 3:416–21). Some of their details are clearly postbiblical, reflecting images from Dante (so also Alnor, *Heaven*, 51; for historical surveys of Christian imagery for heaven, esp. in medieval sources, see McGrath, *Heaven* [esp. 54–65]; McDannell and Lang, *Heaven* [esp. 69–110]; in U.S. history, cf. Janney, *Who Goes There?*). Still, some images may be contextualized. Moreover, while meeting loved ones in heaven was popular in the eighteenth century (McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, 213), it had much earlier precedents (e.g., McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, 60–61). Cross-cultural similarities coexist with some elements of cultural patterning (Greyson, “Experiences,” 345; cf. McClenon, *Events*, 49–51, 168–84); for cultural shaping, see O’Connell, “Hallucinations,” 90.

Raising Accounts in Africa

Accounts abound in Africa³³⁴ (occasionally even of Westerners there³³⁵). We first met William Burton in chapter 10, reluctantly acquiescing to the need to use medicine against malaria; yet he also reports many supernatural healings. In one case, reported in 1922, a Congolese evangelist fetched Burton to try to help his dying baby son Philipu, but when they arrived, wailing revealed that the child had already died. Burton meant to pray for the family's comfort but, overwhelmed by the Spirit, found himself instead praying, "Lord, raise up little Philipu." The father, who had not previously believed in divine healing, began praying the same, and the child soon opened his eyes; within two days he had recovered fully. Burton reasoned that perhaps the child had merely been unconscious, though everyone thought him dead; but he believed that God had acted in any case. So did the child's father, who thereafter went from village to village laying hands on people; the resultant healings opened up many villages to the movement's message about Christ.³³⁶

Elsewhere, the central African evangelical evangelist Pelendo reported on September 7, 1930, such a raising in the village of Mongila. A woman named Kuzuwa had accidentally severed an artery in her ankle and bled to death; people from her village found her dead in her field. When Pelendo was brought to where the villagers were wailing, he announced that God had sent him to heal and raise the dead as well as to teach the gospel, and then he prayed. "When I finished and said the Amen," he reported, "the woman said it right after me so that everyone could hear." After she was restored to life, the village served the God who had raised Kuzuwa, and visitors would come to learn about this God.³³⁷ Likewise, the black South African evangelist William Duma is said to have raised a girl.³³⁸ When asked about miracles more generally, my friend and coworker Rodney Ragwan told me that his grandfather attended Duma's weekly meetings in Durban and reported that miracles took place.³³⁹ Among the indigenous church movements with distinctive

334. E.g., Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 114–15 (on an event in Togo); a Ghanaian boy in Kent and Waite, *Beyond*, ch. 16. Some have, however, prayed unsuccessfully for raisings (see the example in Währisch-Oblau, "Healing in Migrant Churches," 72).

335. New Zealander Ian McCormack tells his story of resuscitation fifteen to twenty minutes after death in an African hospital (Ian McCormack with Jenny Sharkey, *A Glimpse of Eternity: One Man's Encounter with Life Beyond Death*, an ebook at http://www.aglimpseofeternity.org/content.php?folder_id=1, accessed Oct. 3, 2010; more briefly, Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 1–11). Some who know his work better have spoken to me favorably of him. I cannot obtain further documentation; he reports that he saw the medical records but explains that the hospital would not allow him to obtain copies (personal correspondence, July 25, 2009), a situation that does genuinely characterize some African hospitals.

336. Burton, "Villages," 5–6. People employed the designation "Congo" in this era more widely, and Burton evidently includes Angola in the designation here.

337. Anderson, *Pelendo*, 69–70. A similar story appears on 92–94, except that the narrator claims that this woman was merely unconscious (though dying, and apparently some thought her dead, 93); she regained consciousness when Pelendo prayed and was restored. Pelendo clearly did not expect persons to be healed or raised on every occasion (99–100, 107).

338. Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 123–24 (citing Garnett, *Duma*, 40ff.).

339. Rodney Ragwan (interview, Dec. 15, 2009), noting the prayer meetings on Wednesdays; he cited Garnett, *Duma*, as being an accurate representation of Duma. His wife, Eva Ragwan, also independently

customs,³⁴⁰ Samuel Mutendi, a major twentieth-century Shona Zionist leader, is said to have raised a girl named Miriam in the face of local hostility.³⁴¹

Extant claims are far more abundant for recent years. I have already noted the testimony of Professor J. Ayodeji Adewuya, a professor from Nigeria now teaching in the United States, whose newborn son was pronounced dead at birth by a midwife on January 1, 1981, but was raised after twenty minutes of prayer. Ayo was a witness, and his son has now finished his master of science degree at the University of London.³⁴²

After noting the raising and healing of a dead woman in Ethiopia, some researchers cite a major Ethiopian church leader's claim that such raisings are "considered normal" there.³⁴³ Others would not put the matter so strongly but know of raisings there.³⁴⁴ Western scholars are increasingly exposed to such reports; for example, when visiting to teach in Ethiopia, one heard and verified two reports of raisings. The first involved a six-year-old girl at her non-Christian funeral when a Christian prayed aloud for her; four months later (the time of the report) she remained well and a congregation of six hundred believers had formed.³⁴⁵ In the second case, an Ethiopian minister's mother (who did not approve of his practices) died. He felt that God led him to lay hands on the coffin and pray, at which point "she revived and began knocking on the inside of the wooden coffin"; people quickly fled the room.³⁴⁶

volunteered the example of this Baptist evangelist, citing her parents' discussions about him in the 1970s, including that he had raised people from the dead (personal correspondence, Oct. 14, 2010).

340. E.g., unlike mission churches, Mutendi practiced polygamy (Daneel, *Zionism*, 29). Many customs are distinctive to Mutendi's movement or to local culture. At least around 1970, most converts were also coming from non-Christian backgrounds (26).

341. Ibid., 15–16; Mutendi unfortunately seems to have assumed a messianic role (idem, "Churches," 182n3). Cf. also the tradition that Samuel Osoffa, founder of Nigeria's Celestial Church of Christ, raised his nephew through prayer in Jesus's name (Ray, "Aladura Christianity," 289); and that the early Aladura leader Joseph Babalola raised a dead child (Shaw, *Awakening*, 59).

342. Ayo noted this publicly in the Matthew section at SBL on Nov. 22, 2009, during discussion surrounding my paper (Keener, "Readings"), and subsequently confirmed the details in a phone interview (Dec. 14, 2009), adding information about the master's degree in further correspondence (Dec. 16, 2009). He named his son Iyanuloluwa, which is Yoruba for "the Lord is wonderful" (phone interview, Dec. 14, 2009). Ayo is professor of New Testament at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland, Tennessee (correspondence, Dec. 17, 2009).

343. Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 52, citing the General Secretary of the Evangelical Church Fellowship of Ethiopia at the time (Assayehegn Berhe).

344. Tadesse Woldetsadik (personal correspondence, Nov. 1, 2009). In response to my inquiry he affirmed the reliability of Pastor Berhe, whom he knows, and that some raisings have occurred, but noted that such raisings do not happen at all times and in all places. The difference may reflect the contexts in which they were quoted.

345. Tarr, *Foolishness*, 329–30 (mentioning verification on 330). His sources include both this Christian who prayed and another eyewitness, both students at the Addis Ababa Bible College where Tarr teaches when in Ethiopia (personal correspondence, Oct. 20, 2010).

346. Tarr, *Foolishness*, 330. She was quickly released from the coffin. Tarr mentions verification of both stories on 330; this includes testimony from one of the mother's children present on the occasion and (independently) a person they know who knows the raised mother (personal correspondence, Oct. 20, 2010).

When I asked Gebru Woldu about any raisings in Ethiopia, he immediately named a church member (Salam) who had been sick and died while they were praying for her. He protested to God that she had died during prayer, and pleaded for his mercy for the sake of God's honor in the community. After he had prayed for forty-five minutes, the women preparing the corpse, who had much firsthand knowledge of signs of death, were startled, as Salam awoke. "It was better to be there," she laughed, completely well and ready to eat. A year later she married a teacher, who is also a church elder (whom Gebru named). Everyone knows her, Gebru insisted: "Anybody can go and can check there," at the Dire Dawa Full Gospel Church.³⁴⁷

One book documents a boy in Kinshasa, Congo, returning to life hours after being pronounced dead and left in the morgue, at the moment that Christian evangelist Mahesh Chavda prayed. In this case the source provides medical attestation,³⁴⁸ including photographs of the raised boy and his earlier death certificate.³⁴⁹ Others tell of a local minister in the same country who raised a woman dead four days, despite the unbearable stench beforehand.³⁵⁰

In one report from Uganda, Church of God pastor Josephine Bayingana was summoned to pray for a sick man who had lost consciousness; by the time she was able to reach the distant location, the man had been dead for six hours. She sent the mourners out and prayed, and the man returned to life; he remains "alive and well."³⁵¹ Nigerian Pentecostal preacher Ayo Oritsejafor reports that when he boldly prayed for a dead child, she returned to life.³⁵² Some have claimed that the controversial Pentecostal preacher Simeon Kayiwa of Uganda has raised eighteen people from the dead.³⁵³ A missionary in Côte d'Ivoire reported a persecuted Christian revived after local believers prayed.³⁵⁴ When Lydia Thofosi died of sickness in South Africa, believers found no pulse and her fingernails had already turned blue. After her friends had been praying around her (not specifically for her return), she sat up (something she had been unable to do as she was dying), declaring that she had experienced heaven and Jesus sent her back.³⁵⁵ Many have also heard of

347. Gebru Woldu (interview, May 20, 2010; personal correspondence, May 21, 2010; June 3, 2010). Besides my own time with Gebru, others spoke well of him and referred me to him.

348. Chavda, *Miracle*, 9, 13–15, 131–41 (see esp. 137–41); also mentioned in Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 204–6. A woman prayed for her dead daughter for four hours until her raising in Ojo, "Miracles," 48 (citing a 1984 publication by W. F. Kumuyi).

349. Chavda, *Miracle*, between 78 and 79; also his address (140).

350. Pytches, *Come*, 241 (citing Steele, *Plundering*, 173).

351. From Solomon Mukonjo, among reports sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, Nov. 9, 2009.

352. Oritsejafor, "Dealing," 95.

353. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 96. I received mixed responses to queries about Kayiwa among my Ugandan contacts; he is controversial in some circles. One leader who knows him personally, however, insisted that "in the early days" many genuine miracles took place (consulted Oct. 29, 2009).

354. Koch, *Zulus*, 168.

355. *Ibid.*, 170–71, noting that she recovered quickly. Koch says that he got to know her well (as well as coworkers who witnessed the event). Koch also reports a man in a mortuary returning to life for a few days; God had told him to go back and how to find salvation (140–42).

Angus Buchan, the immigrant farmer in South Africa who prayed over a woman who had been struck by lightning and apparently killed. He felt led to lift her by the hands to stand upright, whereupon she was well. He admits that he cannot be sure whether she was previously unconscious or dead, but he was at least certain that she was now fully cured, and she remains well many years later.³⁵⁶

In Nigeria, when an evangelism team member, Lolo George, suddenly died in the midst of juju territory on the morning of October 15, 1973, Geoffrey Numbere and the other workers prayed until, around noon, she returned to life and began recovering strength.³⁵⁷ Several months later, when Franz Azia, brother of the local ruler of Okwale, died, local believers felt compelled to pray for his raising. They went in to pray for the corpse before burial while onlookers mocked, waiting for the coffin. After several hours of continued prayer and mockery, the man sat up, alive, and asked for water, and the gospel spread widely in Okwale. Frank Azia lived more than twenty more years and had more children, dying finally on September 2, 1995. Philip Azia, one of Frank's sons, was converted through witnessing the miracle and remains a pastor in Numbere's circle of churches today.³⁵⁸

Leo Bawa, a Nigerian friend of mine for about a decade whom I mentioned in chapter 9, shared with me his own experience of a resuscitation. One evening in Mayo Belwa in northern Nigeria, his host's neighbors handed him their dead child. "Initially I was confused and perplexed," he admits, but he recounts that he

eventually summoned up the courage by faith that all things are possible through God. I took the dead body into the room while the people waited outside. In the room I prayed and pleaded with God to restore the life of the young boy. A few hours later, the boy opened his eyes and coughed. [With him] fully restored, I came out of the room and handed over the boy to his parents alive! . . . The parents, who had been wailing and weeping, after witnessing the miracle of God were filled with joy. Many people who were skeptics and hitherto suspected me and my missionary work were filled with awe and gave praises to God.³⁵⁹

Evangelist Daniel Kolenda reported that after a meeting on December 12, 2009, a weeping mother asked him for prayer. She was holding the limp body of her three-year-old boy, whom both she and the ushers at this meeting in Nigeria believed

356. Venter, *Healing*, 294–95 (citing Buchan and Waldeck, *Faith*, 39–40). The story is also told with others from Angus Buchan's life in the film *Faith Like Potatoes* (Affirm Films, 2008). A South African friend assures me that Angus Buchan is well reputed in his circles (Johan Mostert, personal correspondence, July 4, 2009; Aug. 16, 2009). Young, "Miracles in History," 117, cites an account of a raising in South Africa after a man had been certified as dead (citing Shakarian, *People*, 183).

357. Numbere, *Vision*, 136–37, citing also an eyewitness's record from the day.

358. *Ibid.*, 140–42. Young, "Miracles in History," 117, cites a report of no fewer than six raisings at one location in Nigeria, in 1966–67.

359. Leo Bawa, personal correspondence, Aug. 10, 2009, p. 5. I have made slight modifications of grammar and punctuation for U.S. readers, without altering any content. The only other occasion on which Leo prayed for someone to return to life was for a friend (personal correspondence, Oct. 13, 2010).

to be dead; the ushers had tried to send her to the medical tent earlier, but she insisted on waiting until the service was over for prayer. He prayed for about thirty seconds and handed the child back. The next night the mother was back. "She had brought her son, and he was perfectly well. They told us that the child had come back to life almost immediately after the prayer."³⁶⁰

Kolenda works with Reinhard Bonnke, whose ministry has also noted another raising as pastors working with his ministry prayed.³⁶¹ Bonnke does not claim to have been present at the time of the raising, which militates against the suspicion raised by some Western internet critics that he may have staged the raising. The documentation includes a death certificate, the videotaped testimonies of the doctor who pronounced Ekechukwu dead, the mortician who believed him to be dead, the ministers who were present at his healing, and others, as well as of some footage of the event itself, which was somewhat public. Such a publicized occurrence has naturally generated questions. Inconsistencies appear, but I would judge them no greater than one often expects in oral testimony.³⁶² A number of the objections that Western critics have raised,³⁶³ such as skepticism that one would

360. Daniel Kolenda, "3-Year Old Boy Raised from the Dead!" (Dec. 15, 2009, on Kolenda's blog, <http://danielkolenda.blogspot.com/>); Kolenda had pointed me to his blog for other news (personal correspondence, Dec. 11, 2009).

361. The raising account appears on a separate DVD (*Raised from the Dead*), as well as in *Miracle Investigation*. Others have mentioned it widely, e.g., in http://www.cbn.com/700club/features/bonnke_raisedpastor.aspx?option=print; accessed May 24, 2009; Kent and Waite, *Beyond*, ch. 12; Alexander, *Signs*, 8; Rutz, *Megashift*, 9–12, photos between 136 and 137, including some footage and the death certificate.

362. The detailed observations in <http://op.50megs.com/ditc/ekechart.html> are valid, yet many such variations appear in different news reports of the same events or in the Synoptic Gospels (as any careful comparison will reveal), or sometimes even in a single witness's retelling of an event. For a NT scholar's perspective on oral tradition and variations in cultures with strong traditions of orality, see Dunn, *New Perspective*, 112 (with 110), 115, 118, 122; using memory studies, Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 333–34, 344–45; Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 275–85.

363. Critical questions have been raised (<http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/bonnke2.html>; accessed May 24, 2009); some of these are not well founded (thus, against some objections, the pastor did not deny but *admitted* to being both a pastor and unsaved; Nigerian medical facilities cannot be judged by U.S. standards; and a deliberate fabrication by Bonnke's ministry would more plausibly have had Bonnke present for the raising). The objection that no one would ask to be transported to a more distant hospital near one's home region reflects a lack of understanding of African culture, as noted above and as African informants have confirmed for me (the practice has occurred even in the United States; see McCallie, *Trophy*, 12). I lack sufficient evidence to resolve some of the other questions; as a biblical scholar I also wondered about traditional yet postbiblical elements of his visions like angels' "wings" and "mansions," though these may be mere imagery (on the mansions, cf. Alnor, *Heaven*, 42; Keener, *John*, 932–39, though the idea is old [cf. Irenaeus *Haer.* 5.36.2]). Scripture includes no images of those angels portrayed as human-like messengers (as opposed to cherubim or seraphim) with wings, whereas they do appear in postbiblical sources for angels (1 *En.* 61:1; 2 *En.* 1:5; 3:1; 4:2; 72:9; 3 *En.* 9:3; 18:25; 41:3; 42:2; 47:4; *Apoc. Sedr.* 2:4; *Ab. R. Nat.* 37 A; *b. Hag.* 16a) and demons (*T. Sol.* 2:3; 25:3; *Ab. R. Nat.* 37 A; *b. Hag.* 16a). Pagans cited wings for divine messengers like Hermes (on his ankles; Heraclitus *Hom. Prob.* 72.7; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 32.22; Fronto *De Fer. Als.* 3.10) and Iris (Virgil *Aen.* 9.14); also on Eros's (Cupid's) shoulders (Euripides *Hipp.* 1271; Pliny *Nat.* 36.4.41; Fronto *De Fer. Als.* 3.10; Achilles Tatius 2.5.2) and for demigod children of winds (Ovid *Metam.* 6.713–18). Some visionaries recognize that visions can be contextualized, as in the account in Bredezen, *Miracle*, 104; cf. Moolenburgh, *Meetings*, 171, 194. Ekechukwu's recovery is not quite instantaneous, in that he regained strength over the course of the meeting.

request transportation to more distant facilities that one trusts, show a lack of understanding of local African culture.³⁶⁴ All this to say that while I have no means of corroborating the story besides the information listed above, if one does not rule out the possibility of a miracle (and some of the critics themselves do not), none of the objections so far raised seem compelling enough to dispute it. If raisings do occur, there currently seems insufficient reason to exclude this one from among them, barring more convincing evidence to the contrary.

The raising of the dead, often with abundant witnesses, has been reported in numerous cases in Mozambique, in the movement that has grown around the ministry of Heidi and Rolland Baker and their colleagues, whom I discussed in a previous chapter.³⁶⁵ They reported at least fifty-three cases by 2007,³⁶⁶ and the cases reported have increased considerably since then. One widely watched DVD includes an interview with one man there who had been raised and immediately healed of his injuries; this raising, Rolland Baker indicated, was public knowledge.³⁶⁷ In one reported case, Pastor Surpresa Sithole was praying for comfort for a family twelve hours after a six-year-old girl's death and holding the child's hand. Unexpectedly, the girl returned to life, dramatically affecting the village.³⁶⁸

One pastor's wife is said to have raised three from the dead, praying over the corpses as she was washing them for their funerals. The first was a three-month-old girl, who had died from dehydration caused by cholera; after being raised, she remained alive and healthy. The other two (a girl of five months and a middle-aged woman) had died of malaria.³⁶⁹ Mozambican Pastor Jorge was said to have raised seven from the dead, some after a more extended period of prayer, some fairly quickly, one after the person had been dead for two days. He seemed surprised at the foreign interviewer's interest, since his movement apparently did not consider such activity any more unusual than any of God's other works.³⁷⁰ He simply expected God to heal and restore people as God did in the biblical narratives.

In addition to such sources in Africa, however, I have a more direct connection with a witness in my family. Had other reports not secured my attention, this one would have.

364. Although I have spent only about a year in Africa, Africans confirmed my understanding here.

365. Baker, *Enough*, 74–76; idem, *Miracles*, 89, 169; also in Clark, *Impartation*, 207, 209 (perhaps fourteen cases in Mozambique through the Bakers' extended ministry since 1998).

366. Baker, *Miracles*, 89.

367. *Finger of God*.

368. Clark, *Impartation*, 209; Johnson, *Heaven*, 75; cf. Chevreau, *Turnings*, 54 (where Surpresa notes that it has happened to him only once). Pastor Surpresa is a colleague of the Bakers (noted in, e.g., Baker, *Enough*, 72, 150; idem, *Miracles*, 25–26, 37, 63; Chevreau, *Turnings*, 54, 135).

369. Chevreau, *Turnings*, 53–54, from his interviews with Florinda, wife of Pastor Antonio Tanueque. Someone accustomed to washing bodies, by the way, should be sufficiently acquainted with death to be able to distinguish it from a coma.

370. *Ibid.*, 54–56, including more names and details.

Raising of My Wife's Sister

Stories of resuscitations are familiar enough among some circles of African Christians that I happen to have one in my own family. My wife's family are members of the mainline Protestant church in her country, Congo-Brazzaville. There she tells of her older sister, Thérèse Magnouha, who had been raised after dying. Having heard the story from Thérèse, we checked the story with their mother, Antoinette Malombé, whose memory of the details is naturally clearest and who is naturally Thérèse's own most important source.³⁷¹ We also later confirmed with an independent eyewitness, Ngoma Moïse, the basic part of the story for which he was present, which included her raising.³⁷²

When Thérèse was about two years old, Mme Jacques, as my mother-in-law is locally known, stepped out briefly to take food to a neighbor. When she returned, Thérèse was crying that she had been bitten by a snake, so Mme Jacques began strapping the child to her back so she could run to evangelist "Coco" Ngoma Moïse.³⁷³ She quickly discovered, however, that the child had stopped breathing. I later asked how long the child stopped breathing, so Mme Jacques estimated the time based on the approximate distance between her home and where she would have to run to reach Coco Moïse. She had traveled up a mountainous area and down the other side, and she calculated that Thérèse had stopped breathing for about three hours.³⁷⁴

Medical assistance was not available; once she reached Coco Moïse, they could only pray. They prayed, and the child began breathing; then they called Papa Jacques, who was at the time working in another town. He asked whether he should return home, but Coco Moïse assured him that the child would recover. Thérèse did begin to recover, and the next day she was fine.³⁷⁵ Today she is doing church work and recently completed her graduate-level seminary training in Cameroon. So far as humanly detectable to these persons who knew firsthand the signs of death, a child who did not breathe for three hours recovered without

371. Interviewed in person in Dolisie, Congo (July 12, 2008). I recount this narrative also in Keener, "Comparisons," 3.

372. Ngoma Moïse confirmed his recollection of the event in a brief phone interview (May 14, 2009).

373. "Coco" means "grandfather." Although "ngoma" appears as a term with spiritual connections in Swahili in East Africa (see, e.g., Giles, "Spirits," 62 and passim; Benjamin, "Squatters," 256n20; "drum" in Wilson, *Swahili*, 295; it can mean "drum" beyond Swahili as well), here it is simply a surname, like any other.

374. When I was an undergraduate, I passed out, and some fellow students, finding me not breathing and purple, prayed over me. I started breathing again but could not see; as I and they kept praying over the following seconds, my eyesight returned. But I would suppose that I had stopped breathing only for seconds, and remained clinically alive throughout. Thérèse, by contrast, was to our best possible knowledge dead for roughly three hours.

375. Other testimonies of snakebite healing also exist; e.g., a woman bitten by a snake was apparently dying, and when she said the pain reached her heart, she fainted; "her body became cold and her face ashen." They kept praying, and after an hour she recovered, "sat up without any support and told us the pain had left her body entirely," and the next day she "felt no ill effects" (Lindhölm, "Healings"). There is no mention of cessation of breathing, however. See also the cure (partly gradual) of cobra bite in India in Adeney, *Kingdom*, 127.

medical treatment, without brain damage, and without ill effects. Again, six minutes without air normally produces irreparable brain damage.

One inclined to doubt all claims of this nature might object that one cannot prove medically, without clinical data, that she was dead, simply because, so far as her mother could discern, she stopped breathing for about three hours. After all, no modern medical apparatus was available, whether to document death or anything else. I cannot be so skeptical: a mother has every reason to grasp at the hope of any breath she could find; she came from a culture much more familiar firsthand with death than most Westerners are; this event belongs to a larger context of a circle with *a number* of significant events associated with claims of supernatural causation; and three hours is a long time. If her recovery is explained miraculously in either case (if it is indisputably a remarkable recovery), there is no reason to place limits on *how* miraculous it must have been.

Most important, this extraordinary recovery is reported by someone whom we know well and serves to illustrate a much larger number of stories.³⁷⁶ And again, I would pose the converse question: For what reasons do some hearers seem desperate to evade each resuscitation claim, despite the number of cases, some of them apparently highly extranormal? Is it possible that they work with a reductionism ultimately rooted in Hume, deism, or atheism that makes them discount miraculous explanations at all costs?³⁷⁷ Why did Thérèse begin breathing again at the moment of their prayer together? How is it that Thérèse was in good health by the next day after such a serious health situation? And would Hume have been so convinced that miracles were against common human experience if he had such an account from his own in-laws? As I have mentioned above, Thérèse's recovery fits a larger pattern of such claims in her circles, which may be further illustrated by stories from Mama Jeanne.

Mama Jeanne's Accounts

Mama Jeanne Mabiala, a deacon in the mainstream Protestant body of Congo-Brazzaville mentioned earlier in chapter 9, happened to have three firsthand stories of raisings, which she readily recounted when I asked about healing testimonies.³⁷⁸ In the first case, which occurred around 2003, people brought a young woman whom they all viewed as dead to a prayer meeting in Dolisie; those present also thought that she already smelled like she was dead. Around 1 a.m., Mama Jeanne felt that God wanted them to bring this woman before the cross. The believers,

376. When I happened to mention this account, one of my students, from Haiti, told me her testimony, known to her from her mother, that she was pronounced dead in the hospital as a baby (including details such as the name of the doctor), but that she was resuscitated through her mother's prayers. She seemed eager to get me further information, but, as in many other cases that I have not been able to include in the book, ultimately appeared too busy for me to be able to confirm the story through a more formal interview.

377. Or, for those working from some traditional hard cessationist Christian perspectives, following a worldview that made peace with the Enlightenment, in which God *only* does miracles that can also be explained naturally.

378. In an extended interview (July 29, 2008).

some of them singing, gathered around the woman; they anointed her with oil. When they finished praying, the woman stood up and quickly went and sat down among them. Although some had been claiming that she had AIDS, she is now healthy and married. My brother-in-law Emmanuel Moussounga, a chemistry professor, was present during the interview with Mama Jeanne and attested that he knows the woman in question.

Since we still had time, Mama Jeanne offered me another raising story, this one from 2004. At this point she called in her nephew Emmanuel Nzaou, who was also an eyewitness of the event, so he could add his own impressions to the account. This incident involved a young woman from Passi-Passi (outside Dolisie) named Marie. Marie was suffering from malaria and was severely anemic, and she had reportedly not been eating or drinking or opening her eyes for three weeks.³⁷⁹ Those who were with her took her from the village and brought her to Dolisie. Unfortunately, they had no money for the hospital, and in any case, all the buses and taxis in the city were on strike that day. Marie died, but the people who were with Marie knew about the prayer meeting at Mama Jeanne's home and brought Marie's body there. Those who normally prayed with Mama Jeanne were coming for prayer, while Mama Jeanne was cooking cassava. Mama Jeanne had a mat used for prayer, and without asking for anything, Marie's companions laid her dead body on the mat. Delphine, one of the people there praying,³⁸⁰ exclaimed, "This is not the hospital! Take the body away!" She was afraid that they would all get in trouble for having a dead body there. The people said, "We don't have any money to go to the hospital. We brought her here so you can pray."

So Mama Jeanne asked those present from the prayer group (her nephew Emmanuel N., Delphine, and a woman named Marthe) to pray. She sent the other people out, but they kept looking in through the windows. Mama Jeanne told the prayer group to start a song; yet they were all so frightened, she told me, that they all started different songs. (At this point, as Mama Jeanne was recounting the story to me, her nephew Emmanuel N. protested, laughing, that he was not frightened.) Mama Jeanne felt the Lord urging her, "Call her name," so she asked the onlookers the woman's name. Those looking from outside the window answered, "Marie." Mama Jeanne thus kept calling her name, "Marie." At first Marie's responding voice was weak, but it kept growing stronger. When Marie woke up, Mama Jeanne ordered, "Take her to the hospital right away, because she doesn't have enough blood." The family protested, "We don't have a car." When they went outside, however, they spotted a Red Cross car coming on the road, so Mama Jeanne instructed Marthe and Emmanuel to run and stop the car. After some conversation, the white person inside agreed to take her to the hospital. They were going

379. This is the way the story was recounted to Mama Jeanne, and from her to me, but perhaps she had been able to take some moisture during this time. I do not have the medical expertise to evaluate these details. I relate Mama Jeanne's story of Marie also in Keener, "Comparisons," 3.

380. I have her full name, and our family knows her well, but we were unable to make contact so I could secure her permission to use her full name.

to carry her to this vehicle, but Mama Jeanne heard a voice saying, "She needs to walk herself." They helped her stand and helped her walk to the car. All the other people standing there were astounded, so she invited them all to kneel and pray.

Afterward, only the prayer group remained there; they prayed that God would move the doctors to receive Marie, since they had no money. As it turned out, the white man who was working with the Red Cross paid for all the treatment. Although Marie had not eaten for three weeks, around 1 a.m. she told those with her in the hospital, "I'm hungry." (In hospitals in Congo, family and friends can stay with a person in the hospital.) So the people with her got some cassava, fish, and water from a small market that was always open near the hospital. After she ate, she returned to sleep.

When Marie's mother came to Mama Jeanne's door, Mama Jeanne feared that Marie must have died. But the mother was smiling; as Mama Jeanne tells it, the mother knelt and exclaimed, "Your God is alive! My daughter ate." Marie recovered, and they returned to their village. Marie's husband wanted to find the white man to thank him, but they never found him or saw that Red Cross vehicle again. The account is not as dramatic as the raising of Lazarus, who was raised after four days with no need for medical help, but everyone present on this occasion believed that God had answered their prayer. Am I wrong to suspect that even most Westerners, if we had been present on such an occasion, would have concurred?

We still had time, so Mama Jeanne shared a third and final story. On another occasion, toward the beginning of the 1999–2000 war, Mama Jeanne helped a young woman named Flore to give birth in a village, because the local midwife had traveled. When the baby emerged, her umbilical cord was wrapped around her neck. The baby was white, apparently having died in the womb sometime during the night. Mama Jeanne felt a voice saying, "Breathe into the child." The mother and another lady were crying; Mama Jeanne told them to stop crying and pray. One woman was Catholic and pulled out her crucifix; the other was Protestant, and both began to pray.³⁸¹ After the baby opened her mouth and eyes, Mama Jeanne started patting her and she started crying, so Mama Jeanne cut the umbilical cord. Mama Jeanne's son was outside with Flore's father, a carpenter, who by this point had started building the baby's coffin. When the father came in and found the child now alive, he declared, "This child is one thousandfold grace!" so they named the child Mille Grace. She is now in school.

Other Accounts from Congo

Mama Jeanne was not the only person with such testimonies from our circle of acquaintances in Congo-Brazzaville. I mentioned earlier also Albert Bissoues-soue, a deacon at my brother-in-law's church; on one occasion, he noted, someone

381. Mama Jeanne also cleaned out the nose, ears, and mouth and then breathed into the child for a time; perhaps this action evoked texts like 1 Kgs 17:21 and 2 Kgs 4:34–35, but I do not know. (Those texts do not involve modern concepts of artificial resuscitation; see discussion in Shemesh, "Reviving.")

who died was brought to him some time later, and healed.³⁸² In February 1986 or 1987, in the district of Etoumbi, in the region of La Couvette, he was working as a school inspector. While in his office, he heard a commotion at his house some twenty meters away and found a large crowd gathered, crying and shouting, so he went over and urged them to be quiet. They had brought a dead, five-year-old girl, with blood in her mouth, nose, and ears, so he demanded why they were shouting at his place with a corpse.

The friend of the girl's father replied that she had died at 7 a.m., and the parents had taken her to six different witch doctors to try to resuscitate the child, all to no avail. The fifth witch doctor had demanded two black chickens for a sacrifice, but they had died on reaching his property; the next pair died on reaching his room, but he sacrificed them anyway and poured the blood into the girl's mouth, nose, and ears, to no avail. The final witch doctor requested 50,000 Central African francs (locally, perhaps a few months' wages) and a suit before he would sacrifice to the spirits in the nearby forest who were requesting these things; they paid, but the child remained lifeless. It was now about 3 p.m., some eight hours after the child's death, and they thought that maybe the Christian God would do something.

Papa Bissouessoue told them to abandon their fetishes and believe in the Creator, and in Jesus Christ who paid on the cross for humanity's sins. He described for me what happened next: "So I asked them to wash the child and remove all the blood. I took the lifeless body and carried it where I pray. I knelt and called on the name of Jesus Christ. I prayed for about half an hour, and Jesus performed his first miracle in Etoumbi through me by bringing this little girl to life. More than twenty people decided to come to church and follow Jesus and abandon their customs."

If it should be thought beyond the likelihood of coincidence that such resuscitations should happen multiple times during prayer in the same circles, it should be thought even more extraordinary that it happened not only with Papa Bissouessoue as he ministered in that area but also with his wife, Julienne, when Papa Bissouessoue had traveled to Brazzaville.³⁸³ One day, the daughter of the dispensary manager at the small hospital at Etoumbi got sick.³⁸⁴ The following day, the girl's situation deteriorated, and it became hard to find her vein to even insert a needle, and the child died. They called the pastor and the evangelists, who came and prayed, but nothing happened; the people were regretting the absence of "Mr. Inspector" (Papa Bissouessoue). They sent people to invite his wife to pray instead, but she was away washing clothes in the river, so the people found only her children. Their eldest daughter, who was about twelve, and the son of a friend, who was about the same

382. I interviewed him (July 29, 2008) in Brazzaville, where he mentioned this raising. My more detailed description rests on an interview with him by Dr. Emmanuel Moussounga, my brother-in-law, who wrote down the details on my behalf and provided them for us on Dec. 17, 2009.

383. Julienne Bissouessoue, interview, Dec. 15, 2009, by Emmanuel Moussounga.

384. The dispensary was like a small pharmacy at the small "hospital," which was probably staffed only with a nurse or nurses rather than having a doctor available. We might say "clinic," except in Congo that implies fees.

age, decided to go pray in Julianne's place, but when they reached the hospital and saw all the people crying, they were afraid and ran home.

Other people came for Julianne after she returned home, and when she reached the dispensary she found people half-naked and performing traditional mourning customs. She ordered them to stop crying and to remove the mourning palms, or she was not going to pray. "They obeyed," she explains, "and I went into the room where the dead corpse was. The pastor, the two evangelists, the nurse, and the pharmacy manager were there." She "asked the pastor to pray, after we sang, then the two evangelists, then when my turn came, I started singing a song that says, 'Lazarus, rise up.'" Recalling the story of Lazarus, she prayed, asking God to resuscitate the daughter, so that the people who were there would believe in him; "when I said 'Amen,' the girl opened her eyes and moved." Then they were able to administer medicine; only on the way home "did I realize what had happened and wondered, 'Where did I get the courage to act the way I did?'" Word spread widely. After the war in her country, my wife heard that during war the young son of Pastor Nsouami, who is now president of l'Église Évangélique du Congo, died and was raised during a desperate prayer. Pastor Nsouami briefly confirmed that story for us, affirming that the son remains alive today, a decade later.³⁸⁵

Moreover, Sarah Speer, a Canadian missionary nurse working in Congo, shared with me that she has witnessed a number of extraordinary recoveries in conjunction with prayer,³⁸⁶ including the spontaneous return to life of a baby who had been born dead. In this case, a mother unsuccessful in giving birth had been brought ten hours by a difficult mode of transportation from Enyelle; only the baby's arm protruded. They had taken the desperate woman to the government hospital first, but because the surgical block there was not clean, they sent her to Sarah's hospital.³⁸⁷ The medical team had to burst the uterus to remove the child (because the mother would have died otherwise), but he had no heartbeat and was not breathing. The medical team tried what they could, while another member prayed. After twenty minutes the baby was still not breathing. (Again, after about six minutes it is very unusual for someone not breathing to be revived.³⁸⁸) The accompanying nurse warned, "He's dead. Don't bother with him!" They needed to attend to the mother instead, on whom they were still performing surgery. But one of the nurses took

385. Patrice Nsouami (phone interview, April 29, 2010).

386. Because people in these areas have less access to sophisticated medical care, accounts of unusual recoveries are more common there, presumably because they are more needed. This is not to downplay the need for wider health care; infant mortality and death in childbirth remain far more common in these areas than in most of the West, and we cannot depend on miracles to cover all the situations we should be covering through economic justice.

387. Sarah Speer, phone interview, Jan. 7, 2009; personal correspondence, Aug. 20, 2009.

388. Phone interview, Jan. 7, 2009. Then the baby began to cry, alive, a result Sarah attributed to God's help. I first heard a story like this from Dr. Joseph Harvey, but as he had not been present and was consequently not certain about all the details, he referred me to Sarah, who had multiple stories. Sarah believes that Dr. Harvey was referring to a different occasion, when she also was not present, but she readily shared her experience of the situation above. My wife knows Sarah very well; Sarah lives simply and sacrificially, serving the local people wholeheartedly.

the baby into the other room, while her husband continued to pray. "Suddenly we heard the baby cry," Sarah testifies. "He came back to life!"³⁸⁹ They had given their best with what medical resources they had and were thrilled that on this occasion God had provided help beyond their resources.

No one has ever published Mama Jeanne's or Papa Albert's testimonies or any of the other stories that emerged in my interviews; I had access to these stories simply because these people are in the same circle as my wife's family. Again, this is a small circle in a non-Pentecostal denomination, and my suspicion is that such stories are far more common than what any of us would individually hear about. This may be partly because many of those who experience these raisings do not treat them much differently than the rest of their experiences in ministry, because they do not work from Western antisupernaturalist premises. They seek to depend on God's activity in every aspect of their lives.

Even if a more Humean reader might attribute all raising claims to misdiagnosis and coincidence to maintain a nonsupernatural approach, one should not doubt that many (perhaps most) others (including myself) would find at least some (or many) of these raising claims convincing evidences of supernatural activity. All readers should recognize that many people recount such stories even firsthand with sincerity. While obviously the vast majority of people who die are not raised, the pattern of so many being raised in conjunction with prayer suggests more than coincidence, all the more so when persons have been dead too long to be resuscitated naturally.

Raising Accounts in Asia

A number of reports come from Asia,³⁹⁰ such as a raising through the prayers of Baptist minister Lang Do Khup in Myanmar,³⁹¹ or the raising of a woman in northern Thailand in 1963 with Robin Talbot and his wife, OMF missionaries, as witnesses.³⁹² Timor, Indonesia, offers reports of the raising of a four-year-old boy, dead for four days,³⁹³ a woman dead for six hours,³⁹⁴ and an infant³⁹⁵ and others.³⁹⁶ When the lid was about to be placed on one boy's coffin, an elderly

389. Personal correspondence, Aug. 20, 2009.

390. E.g., in one Asian nation, a woman raised at her funeral (who then described her experience of heaven), among reports sent to me by Douglas LeRoy (Nov. 9, 2009); Gulshan Ester's testimony of a raising in Pakistan in Young, "Miracles in History," 117–18, at which she claims to have been present.

391. Khai, "Pentecostalism," 270; cf. Khai, *Cross*, 144.

392. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 138; idem, "Miracles," 1932. A contact of mine heard a report of a raising in Cambodia a few years earlier but requested that I not use his name because he had not had opportunity to follow up on the report to confirm or disconfirm it; he noted that it "sounded credible, but all stories in Cambodia should be verified" (a prudent practice elsewhere as well).

393. Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 81. See the documented Indonesian raising in Yusuf Herman, July 10, 2011.

394. Tari, *Breeze*, 58–59 (citing a friend who was an eyewitness). She was "stiff and cold"; they prayed for "a few minutes"; then she returned to life and recounted what she saw in heaven.

395. Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 82.

396. Tari, *Wind*, 76–78; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 77, 81–83. For six cases, see Pytches, *Come*, 240–41, following Koch, *Revival*, 129, 138, 141–42. Tari also reports (*Breeze*, 160–62) that in January 1973, two

woman felt compelled to pray for him; he “stirred, then rose up,” and remained healthy afterward.³⁹⁷ Two days after a two-year-old girl had died in the hospital, the decomposing body was restored to life.³⁹⁸

My next example is from India, where many resuscitation claims are offered.³⁹⁹ I noted earlier one researcher’s report that church growth among the Nishi tribals began “when a high government official’s youngest son” became mortally sick. After sacrifices to other deities failed, a pharmacist suggested that the official try “the Christian God, Jesus,” who once raised Lazarus. Returning to find that his son had died a few hours earlier and that neighbors had already gathered, the father promised the Jesus who raised Lazarus that he would worship him if he raised his son. “Immediately,” the report claims, “the eyes of the child began to flicker again and he was restored to life.” As a result, hundreds in the region committed themselves to follow Jesus.⁴⁰⁰ Another source claims the raising of a Hindu woman who had died nearly twelve hours earlier when her husband, just converted through a vision, prayed; he learned that Jesus had appeared to her while she was dead.⁴⁰¹ A dead girl revived through the prayers of Father Joshua David in Madras.⁴⁰²

In one case reported by two sociologists, local residents, including the Hindu village elder, also affirmed that a woman returned to life after being pronounced dead (with no breathing or pulse), and several hours after a pastor had begun praying over her.⁴⁰³ In another case, an Indian pastor prayed for a girl who allegedly “not only was dead but actually had worms coming out of her nose”; after about half an hour of prayer she returned to consciousness and shared her postmortem experience. This event generated “considerable attention in the community and was written up in the local papers,” as a consequence of which a number of government officials visited this pastor.⁴⁰⁴

A pastor in Mumbai recounts that in May 2007 more than a hundred believers were gathered at a camp when “one of our young people noticed a young boy, lying motionless at the bottom of the pool.” The boy, Vikram, belonged to a Hindu

new converts prayed for a man who had been dead for several hours that God would either raise him or comfort the widow another way; moments later he sat up healed and talked about his experience in heaven.

397. Crawford, *Miracles*, 26–28 (quotation from 27).

398. Koch, *Zulus*, 168, citing a European informant who had feared to recount the incident in the West.

399. Cf., e.g., three accounts in Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 57–58, 59, 60; Thollander, *Mathews*, 88 (a raising through Mathews [the book’s informant] of a boy who died from drowning three hours earlier; later, two reported raisings through others). Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 152, note several reports in addition to those cited below. From another source I also received information concerning a sample of some other specific raisings, with names, photos, and dates. Afterward, however, I was informed that this was unpublished, confidential information that was not intended for release to me, because of persecution and because the indigenous movement in question does not work with Westerners. Hence I have had to omit all details about those examples from my discussion.

400. De Wet, “Signs,” 110–11 (following Cunville, “Evangelization,” 156–57).

401. J. T. Seamands of Asbury Theological Seminary, in Hyssen, *Saw*, 56–58.

402. Koch, *Zulus*, 167 (Koch being a friend of David).

403. Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 151–52.

404. *Ibid.*, 152.

family visiting the resort. Jaya, a trained nurse, who was part of the church, found no pulse, breathing, or other signs of life, so Jaya, with Suneeta, an intercessor, took the boy and his father in an autorickshaw to find a doctor. The first doctor said he was dead; when they found another, he tried and failed to resuscitate him. The Christians kept praying, and an hour and a half later the rickshaw returned with Vikram alive. Vikram explained that he had heard the name of Jesus and then was rescued; his Hindu “parents were shocked,” explaining that previously he “had never heard the name of Jesus!”⁴⁰⁵

Dr. Julie Ma relates the story of a raising in Nepal. Despite prayers and sacrifices to local gods, Tamang’s mother died. A Buddhist lama chanted prayers over her for several hours, at Tamang’s request, but she remained lifeless. Hearing that Christians could heal, he called some of them from a neighboring village. As the entire village watched, the Christians prayed, and “his mother came back to life.” About twenty families (more than 160 people) became Christians, and “today Tamang leads 20 new fellowships in the Himalayas.”⁴⁰⁶

In May 1988, Pastor Joseph Maru, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Papua New Guinea, was visiting a mountain village named Urintogum to help with a baptismal service. The sound of loud mourning interrupted the service, however; a villager named Petrus had just died of a long-standing illness. At the continued insistence of the local deacons, Pastor Maru reluctantly agreed to pray. As villagers gathered to mourn and church members began to worship, Pastor Maru and the deacons ordered Petrus to rise. “In a few moments,” the report continues, “Petrus blinked his eyes and lifted his head.” Petrus accepted faith in Christ, regained strength over the next few weeks, and returned to full health, continuing to live in Urintogum.⁴⁰⁷

In an early Pentecostal publication, a missionary in Japan recounted in 1921 that when he returned to one village he was told of the raising of a man who had been connected with the mission but not genuinely converted. “The doctors felt his pulse and pronounced him absolutely dead,” but a local Japanese evangelist prayed for him, and he revived. The man who had died confessed that he had been in hell until the evangelist “prayed me back out of there,” and word quickly spread in the community that the man had been raised. A woman who had been pronounced dead and even had incisions into her body was reported raised through the prayers of the same evangelist.⁴⁰⁸ In 1932, a new believer there prayed for a

405. Willie Soans, personal correspondence, acquired for me and shared with me Nov. 3, 2010, through Ivan Satyavrata and Jacob Mathew, with photos of the boy and family after the event.

406. Ma, “Encounter,” 137 (also *idem*, “Mission,” 31), citing “Miracle for Tamang.”

407. Cagle, “Power,” based on what the author learned directly from Joseph Maru; I confirmed this report with the author in person (Wayne Cagle, Jan. 24–25, 2009; I also had found this story in Cagle, “Pray”). Dr. Cagle also supplied an additional testimony from Pastor Joseph Miap of Papua New Guinea on the raising of his two children, whom he found at the bottom of the river after searching for nearly an hour.

408. Moore, “Raised,” 20, also noting other accounts of Japanese believers’ prayers in faith for healings. Moore had the raising reports from the two people who claimed to have been raised, and he examined the incisions on the woman; the man sought baptism, and the woman began traveling among villages

man who was apparently dead until he revived; the man “got up” and came to the church meeting.⁴⁰⁹

Stories of faith raising the dead in China have been around for some time. For example, a Western Pentecostal visiting the interior of China in 1926 reported (on the basis of the man’s testimony) that “a man who had been pronounced dead by a Chinese doctor was raised to life through prayer.”⁴¹⁰ Similarly, Anna Gulick noted to me that during her commissioning as a Lutheran missionary to Japan in 1951, she was told of a Chinese Lutheran pastor who was challenged by soldiers to prove that his God could really raise the dead as he preached. They laid a dead corporal at his feet and told him that if his God could not raise this dead man, they were going to destroy his building. He prayed for a few minutes, then announced, “If my God cannot raise this man, you may shoot me.” In the name of Jesus, he then commanded the dead corporal to get up and walk—whereupon “the corporal opened his eyes, stood up and walked.” As the account went, that ended the harassment.⁴¹¹ I have this story at best thirdhand, since Anna had it through the executive secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church’s Board of Foreign Missions at the time, and I have no means to verify its source at this remove.⁴¹² But stories of raising the dead continue to flourish

preaching Christ. I can imagine the accounts being fabricated if these people were seeking to join the mission’s payroll (the way some missions worked in that period), but this does not seem to be the situation here, nor was the evangelist in question the only person with whom healings were associated in the article.

409. Taylor, “Healings.”

410. Simpson, “Dead Raised.”

411. Anna Gulick, personal correspondence, Aug. 23, 2009; interview, March 9, 2011; correspondence, July 1, 2011. It has been reported that those repressing Chinese Christians have on other occasions taunted that they should raise dead persons present (Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 275).

412. She attributed the story to Dr. Rolf Syrdal (1902–93), but my perusal of several of his writings, including articles from China (e.g., “Courses”), none of which touch on this topic, did not turn it up, and Dr. Syrdal passed away in 1993 (Kari Bostrom, personal correspondence, Sept. 8, 2009). Bruce Eldevik of Luther Seminary Library consulted Syrdal’s daughter and a colleague, who had not heard this story but mentioned that indeed some stories defying normal explanation had circulated on the mission field (correspondence with Melody Mazuk, Palmer Seminary Library, Oct. 12, 2009). Syrdal’s 1942 dissertation (Syrdal, “Mission Work”) is probably earlier than the story and does not recount stories about the ministries of individual Chinese evangelists; it does reveal Syrdal’s interest in revival, often accompanied with indigenous evangelism (e.g., 279–80, 337, 342, 431, 453–54, 457, 460, 507–8; cf. Syrdal, “Transcript,” 57; the Spirit in idem, “Taipingtien,” 7; idem, “Editorial 3”; idem, “Graduation,” 10; his personal commitment to evangelism in “Highways,” 9; “Brigade”; “Byways”; “Editorial 2”; “Seldom”), and dangers from soldiers (Japanese, e.g., “Mission Work,” 284–85, 443; cf. 513; conflicts involving early Communist soldiers, 511–12; idem, *Disciples*, 162–63; idem, “Transcript,” 20–32, *passim*, while noting that the missionaries did not oppose the Communists, 27, 76; in Anna’s recollection, the soldiers in this particular case were Communists), and often bandits (e.g., “Mission Work,” 336, 414, 418, 427, 463; idem, “Transcripts,” 34, 56). It also reveals his respect for the indigenous church as a sister church (e.g., “Mission Work,” 516; cf. 320; idem, “Transcript,” 3, 27, 46–47, 51–57, 66–67, 73–74, 82, 84, 97; knowledge of local culture in “Gods”; for Lutheran commitment to indigenous churches elsewhere in this period, see, e.g., Shoko, *Religion*, 51). These themes also appear in some contemporary Lutheran missionary accounts on the same field, with a growing emphasis on indigenous workers (Fuh, “China”; idem, “Hope”; “Thoughts Gleaned”; Ran, “Experiences”; Chien-Kuei, “Life”; Fosmark, “Sketch”; cf. Chen, “Facts”); revival (Nesse, “Awakening”; Nelson, “Editorial 3”; idem, “Editorial 4”;

in China, most of them in our own time and some of them as claims from the eyewitnesses themselves.

Philip Jenkins notes that house church Christians in China have many testimonies of the dead being raised.⁴¹³ I will not elaborate more fully here on the accounts mentioned already in chapter 8. As we noted, a Three-Self pastor (i.e., one from the official church) also reports such an event in his church courtyard.⁴¹⁴ In a different case, after an accident in 1992, Zhao Yu-e was pronounced dead on arrival at a hospital at 10 a.m. Despite ridicule, believers kept praying for her, and at 8 the next morning she recovered, leading to the hospital superintendent asking how to become a follower of Jesus.⁴¹⁵ In another incident, a boy died of sickness despite his mother's earnest prayers, but after three more hours of her prayers he was raised and healed, leading to the father's conversion.⁴¹⁶ In a further story, one believer died from a beating that left his head swollen. He was not breathing, but after the believers prayed, the brother opened his eyes and sat up slowly, recounting a vision.⁴¹⁷ After a four-year-old boy drowned, some new Christians who had experienced other healings prayed, and the child sat up, alive; even a traditional religious practitioner who was present converted, destroying her ritual objects.⁴¹⁸

Holm, "Awakening"; Sövik, "Growing"); and problems with Japanese soldiers (e.g., Ran, "Church"; Skepstad, "Call," 5); Communist soldiers (e.g., Anderson, "Sojourners"; Nilsen, "Hospital," 25; Rosvold, "Conference," 7 [though this ends safely in Sovik, "Experiences"]; Guldseth, "Power," 2; the loss of Bert Nelson in Skinsnes, "Nelson"; Nelson, "Editorial 2"; Syrdal, "Editorial"; idem, "Transcript," 22); and most often bandits ("General News"; Borg-Breen, "Clutch"; Nelsen, "Letter"; "Medical News"; Nesse, "Psychology"; Groseth, "Killed"; Thorsan, "Robbers"; "Personal and General"; Nelson, "Editorial," 1; Skinsnes, "Incidents"; Lee, "Ta-Tung-Chai," 15). (Soldiers helped against robbers in Lee, "Juning," 10; some robbers fought Communists in Hellestad, "More.") Occasionally, though written for Western consumption (hence probably muted, as in most missionary reports, except for indigenous accounts), accounts of supernatural phenomena appear, whether divine (Guldseth, "Power," 4; Hellestad, "Prayer"; Bly, "Glimpses," 10) or demonic (Lee, "Rulers," esp. 5–6; cf. Syrdal, "Editorial 2"). Several of these come from the brief period that Syrdal was editor (Hellestad, "Prayer"; Bly, "Glimpses," 10; and esp. Hai-po, "Works," probably the most explicit report of divine power in *Gleanings* for years, and in Syrdal's last issue as editor), though this was also a period of awakening.

413. Jenkins, *New Faces*, 114. Earlier, see, e.g., Sung, *Diaries*, 43 (but only for an hour), 45 (but secondhand), 59 (secondhand, after a day of death). From Hong Kong, cf. Pullinger, *Dragon*, 224–25 (secondhand, of a boy pronounced dead in two hospitals).

414. Lambert, *Millions*, 109, citing both his personal interview and articles. Lambert notes another resuscitation in answer to prayer, after two days of death, published in 1990 in a TSPM bulletin in Beijing (Lambert, *Millions*, 118–19). See also Oblau, "Healing," 319, citing a 1993 publication. A doctor had already pronounced the child dead in the hospital; after returning to life, the child "gradually recovered in the hospital." The evangelist who prayed dutifully played down the incident, while acknowledging the reality of miracles.

415. Zhaoming, "Chinese Denominations," 451.

416. Bolton, "Wife." In Danyun, *Lilies*, 91, a woman was said to be raised when another woman (Sr. Chan) acted in obedience, apparently removing the demonic snare that brought the first woman low; in the story on 92, three people who had suddenly and inexplicably dropped dead (presumably again from a demonic attack) were simultaneously raised.

417. Danyun, *Lilies*, 174–75.

418. *Ibid.*, 305–6.

Other raisings are reported in South Korea, such as the reported raising of Paul Yonggi Cho's son after hours of prayer.⁴¹⁹ A Baptist pastor in South Korea is said to have "raised seven people from the dead, three of them before their funerals."⁴²⁰ While I cannot verify the provenance of some raising stories, one account of a notable raising in Sri Lanka, with many eyewitnesses, comes to me through Shelley Hollis, who knew the people involved.⁴²¹ Noel Fernando was an Assemblies of God pastor also working at a Bible school, with a wife and two children. After he was taken to the hospital seriously ill, the Bible school sent out word to pray, but Noel died of a heart attack in the hospital. Because there was little privacy in the hospital, not only doctors and nurses but also many patients were aware of his death. Because he was still fairly young for a heart attack, they used a procedure to try to restart his heart; the procedure managed only to break a number of his ribs, but since he was dead it did not seem to make much difference anyway. The doctors finally gave up and pronounced him dead; because the doctor who needed to sign the release for the body to be taken to the morgue had left the facilities, however, the hospital had to hold his body. Meanwhile, believers elsewhere in Sri Lanka were still praying for Noel, unaware that he had died.

Some twenty-four hours after being pronounced dead, Noel returned to life, with all his systems functional except, ironically, the broken ribs. Other workers and patients in the hospital, who belonged to various religions, all recognized this as a miracle; some even laid food at the foot of his bed as offerings, in accordance with their traditional customs.⁴²² Some asked him if he saw darkness (fitting a common belief about a stage before reincarnation); he insisted that he had seen light instead.⁴²³ The doctors, shocked enough by his being alive, warned him that he would never walk and that he would probably have brain damage. It did take some time before he walked fully normally (if for no other reason, he still had broken ribs), but he had no brain damage; he fluently and regularly interpreted three languages. He remained completely whole and fully active for years afterward. Shelley worked closely with him and reports that what happened to him was also known to all of those working at the Bible school, who had been praying for him. Noel eventually passed away during the writing of this book, years after his first experience of death and apparently of unrelated causes.⁴²⁴

419. Venter, *Healing*, 294–95; Pytches, *Come*, 242–44 (citing Kennedy, *Dream*, and noting that the boy had wanted to stay in heaven).

420. Kim, "Pentecostalism," 32; Mullins, "Empire," 91.

421. Shelley Hollis, phone interview, Jan. 10, 2009; follow-up correspondence, including April 23, 2010. This raising is also noted in Hernando, "Function," 272n81, citing Mark Hollis, who also knew the people involved.

422. Analogous responses to wonders appear in Dan 2:46; Acts 10:25.

423. Shelley's daughter had interviewed him at length about his after-death experience, which I have not recounted here, as it extends beyond the parameters of this book.

424. Shelley Hollis, personal correspondence, Nov. 6 and 8, 2009. Historically, the person's eventual death has not been deemed relevant to the question of a miracle provided the cause of death was unrelated (see Duffin, *Miracles*, 67; but cf. the likely related cause in 94), since almost no one claims immortality.

Raising Accounts in the Philippines

The Philippines offers multiple reports.⁴²⁵ Chester Allan Tesoro from Mindanao, Philippines, was visiting a church known for miracles on a day that two parents had traveled on a three-position motorcycle (in the Philippines called a tricycle) from the mountains to take their baby boy to the hospital. By the time they reached the city, however, the baby was cold, so they came instead to the church, during the praise service. The mother carried the baby, wrapped in white, and ran forward to give him to the pastor. Since the pastor wondered why they had brought the baby forward, the father explained that they needed prayer for him. Neither the pastor nor Chester, who was seated three rows from the front, yet understood that the baby was dead. After realizing it, however, the pastor asked the entire church to pray for the baby, which was already cold. Chester drew near and asked the father if maybe the baby had died from the travel, and whether he was sure that the baby was dead. The father explained that the baby had been sick for weeks with what they thought was fever and flu. Chester says that after the people prayed, the pastor lifted up the baby, and he cried. The mother immediately took back the baby; the father was looking around with tears in his eyes. The motorcycle driver was waiting outside to take them on either to the hospital or the morgue; not a believer, he was amazed and stayed through the entire service.⁴²⁶

Also in the Philippines, Elaine Panelo recounted firsthand testimony to a resuscitation, although in one sense she is dependent secondhand on the testimony of others present, since Elaine was the one who died. She suffered with diagnosed liver cancer for a couple of years while working at a naval base, because she did not have the money to get treatment. In 1983 and 1984, her fingernails turned black; in 1984, the doctor told her that her condition had now progressed too far for treatment, and she was full of cancer. Elaine was finally brought to the hospital, dying and terribly thin, but with a bloated stomach that decreased as she was dying. After she was pronounced dead in the hospital, she was taken to the morgue, where a Baptist pastor prayed over her. This Baptist pastor was not even sure yet if she believed in divine healing but found no harm in praying for Elaine anyway. When the white bedsheet over Elaine's head started moving, someone supposed that a mouse had gotten inside, so they pulled the sheet back, only to find her moving. It had been an hour and forty-five minutes since she had been pronounced dead, and the Baptist pastor, as shocked as anyone else, explained to her, "You're alive. You were dead for almost two hours." Elaine did not believe that observation initially, thinking that she had just been asleep.

Elaine's health now seemed better, but she still had no money for treatment;

425. Besides those I note below, see also Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 83.

426. Chester Allan Tesoro, interview, Jan. 30, 2009.

she had never been able to take anything except some over-the-counter stomach medicine.⁴²⁷ In October 1985, she totally committed her situation to the Lord, accepting God's plans for her and expressing willingness to do ministry. Her guardian warned her that she needed to go to the doctor and confirm whether she was genuinely healed or not; she finally went for a checkup in 1989, which showed that she was completely healed. Not trusting the local verdict, she went to Manila for another examination, for which her guardian had secured a sponsor. There she encountered the same finding: there was no trace of cancer. Given my knowledge of Elaine and the larger context of her life story (of which I have excerpted only this relevant part), I have full confidence that she speaks with absolute sincerity. It appears that she was raised and healed in conjunction with the prayer of a Baptist woman pastor who had not decided yet whether or not she believed in contemporary divine healing.⁴²⁸

There is one more part of the story that Elaine shared with me, that suggests just how unusual her recovery must have been. She said that in 1990 she returned to one of the doctors who had informed her that it was too late for medical treatment and that she would therefore die.⁴²⁹ When Elaine shared her testimony, the doctor initially refused to believe that she was the same person, until checking her records. As a result of Elaine's testimony, this Filipino doctor and her husband were converted. At their last contact with her, they planned to become medical missionaries within the Philippines.⁴³⁰

Raising Accounts in Latin America and the West

Latin America provides numerous accounts. Nearly a century ago, a Latin American woman named Nellie was dying and after a few days was pronounced dead by doctors. Yet "after several hours of being dead," she claimed, "I rose and came back to life."⁴³¹ Such claims continue in Latin America; Roberto Almaraz, for example, says that in thirty years of ministry "he has 'seen numerous healings and resurrections.'"⁴³² An ordinary believer in Colombia, seeing two people apparently killed in an accident, prayed over them and they got up "dazed" but without even

427. She is not against medicine and now takes it for a hyperthyroid condition. But she could not afford it before.

428. Elaine Panelo, interview, Jan. 30, 2009.

429. This doctor was a Filipino woman married to a doctor from the United States at the U.S. naval base at Subic, where Elaine once worked.

430. This would not be the only occasion when a doctor was reported ultimately converted through a patient's miraculous recovery; see the story of Sadhu Sundar Singh in Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 28. Elaine did supply me with the doctors' names and found their previous location information (personal correspondence, Oct. 8, 11, 18, 2009), but most of that community in question had relocated due to a volcanic eruption, and I have not so far been able to locate the doctors to secure permission to use their names.

431. Sánchez Walsh, *Identity*, 43–44.

432. *Ibid.*, 44.

broken bones.⁴³³ Such events are reported in Nicaragua and Mexico,⁴³⁴ in Brazil,⁴³⁵ in Chile,⁴³⁶ in Argentina,⁴³⁷ and elsewhere.⁴³⁸

When the eleven-year-old son of Carlos Alamino in Cuba was injured in a car accident, lack of blood to the brain caused brain damage and damage to other vital organs, and he quickly died. Once the father laid hands on him and prayed, however, he began moving and the doctors quickly went back to work. He was released from the hospital two weeks later, and a number of doctors and nurses attended the thanksgiving service; lacking brain damage, he is now an adult with a bachelor of theology degree.⁴³⁹ More recently, Iris Lilia Fonseca Valdés, now a lieutenant in the Salvation Army in Cuba, shared with me her account. In 2009, she discovered that her six-month-old daughter had stopped breathing and moving. As far as Iris Lilia, who had been a nurse, could tell, the baby was dead. Yet after what she believes was more than an hour of Iris Lilia's prayer and yielding the child to God, the baby revived, and remains healthy.⁴⁴⁰

Such accounts also appear elsewhere in the Caribbean: in Haiti, a man brought his son, who had just died, to a visiting minister for prayer. The raising of the boy reportedly shocked voodoo practitioners in the area.⁴⁴¹ A ten-month-old baby there

433. Bomann, "Salve," 195–96. They may have simply been stunned, but their intercessor had witnessed them thrown from their motorcycle after hitting a truck head-on. Bomann heard this recent testimony from the believer in a small Bible study she happened to attend during her eight months in Bogotá's barrio (190).

434. Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 84–88; also David Hogan, on his website reporting that he has been personally present for 28 raisings, mostly in Mexico (<http://www.freedom-ministries.us>, accessed Oct. 2, 2010; Mike Finley directed me to this report). Hogan appears positively in Crandall, *Raising*, 31–33, 36, 103, 144, 149. Pat Robertson claims to have known people who have raised the dead (Harrell, *Robertson*, 313).

435. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 86, recounting a named but secondhand source reporting a man raised by a pastor at the wake. Pytches, *Come*, 245, cites an article by Peter Wagner recounting testimonies of three raisings there from persons Wagner deemed reliable, one of them a Nazarene pastor himself raised from death as a child.

436. Sheila Heneise (interview, April 5, 2009), though not a witness in this case, tells the 1998 account she heard from the eyewitness, a Baptist pastor and theological teacher in Santiago, Roberto Salgado. An interested but unconverted man died and was in a casket at a wake two days later. The pastor prayed for another chance to reach him, the man suddenly revived, and the pastor led him to Christ (the deceased man prayed with him), after which the man was again "gone." In another case, Sergia Retamal de Zamorano took the body of her five-year-old son Rodolfo from the hospital after the boy was pronounced dead and brought him to a Pentecostal church for prayer; he opened his eyes and started breathing, and he eventually became a pastor in Santiago (Hoff, "Planters").

437. Pytches, *Come*, 245, citing an article by Peter Wagner who spoke with a woman who claimed to have been raised. Cf. Silvos, *Perish*, 85–86 (a case Silvos recognizes as unusual).

438. E.g., Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 139–40, through a Mapuche evangelist, leading to the conversion of the family, whom the informant met.

439. Alamino, *Footsteps*, 63–65. Alamino notes that the son was supposed to be born deformed, but that the child was born normally, shocking the doctor (65).

440. Iris Lilia Fonseca Valdés, interview, Aug. 11, 2010. On Aug. 12, she brought the healthy child for me to see, and another person from whom I inquired independently attested that she had told the story widely at the time it occurred. Iris Lilia also reported that the daughter's birth had also been dramatic, due to an early, emergency C-section six months before this incident because the uterus now lacked amniotic fluid.

441. A Church of God report sent to me by Douglas LeRoy (Nov. 9, 2009). Caribbean Pentecostal testimonies sometimes emphasize cures of what neither doctors nor voodoo priests could cure (Hurbon, "Pentecostalism," 134).

is said to have been restored from death after prayer, and also healed of apparent brain damage at the same time.⁴⁴²

Such claims appear in the West as well and are far more numerous in print, including even in some secular media reports, than I can recount fully here.⁴⁴³ To offer just a few examples: in one case, a Presbyterian pastor's wife, personally known to the account's author, was killed in an automobile accident; the paramedics therefore focused their attention on the surviving passenger. But a church member began praying for the dead woman, and, much to the surprise of the paramedics, the pastor's wife "regained consciousness," after which she was taken to the hospital for her injuries and recovered quickly.⁴⁴⁴

Jim Sepulveda testified that he heard Jesus sending him back to life; he sat up after being clinically dead for eight minutes, as the surgeon was filling out paperwork.

442. DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 43.

443. Secular media have reported some of the claims (e.g., the brief quotation in *USNWR* [July 13, 1987]: 15, regarding an alleged raising by Oral Roberts); see also the reported return to life of a mother and baby in 2009 (in the Associated Press report in <http://news.yahoo.com/video/us-15749625/christmas-miracle-mom-and-baby-die-then-revive-17357728>; accessed Dec. 30, 2009; with additional details, in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, at <http://www.smh.com.au/world/mother-and-son-come-back-to-life-after-dying-during-labour-20091231-lkh0.html>; accessed Dec. 30, 2009), though medical means were apparently involved, the period of apparent death was brief, and the Christmas season may account for some of the media interest. Cf., e.g., brief mentions in DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 32, 98; further, the apparent raising of car racer Jan Opperman after his accident in 1976 (Bredesen, *Miracle*, 123–26), though his full recovery took longer than the account emphasizes (and Opperman later suffered new injuries in another crash); five more raising accounts in Bredesen, *Miracle*, 126–33. A student in the mortuary, dead for three hours, is said to have been raised through prayer (Pythes, *Come*, 239–40, citing a Church Army testimony); also a mother raised in answer to her daughter's prayers (*ibid.*, 242, citing Darnall, *Heaven*). Also police officer Buddy Farris, for whom rescue teams could not find vital signs for thirty minutes, returned to life while being wheeled through the morgue twenty-three minutes after they had pronounced him dead. He had experienced a vision of afterlife in the meantime, and though several months of recuperation were necessary, he sustained no brain damage, returned to work, and remains fully active (Kent and Waite, *Beyond*, ch. 15). Among many other cases, David Verdegaaal was said to be dead half an hour (Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 55–58, esp. 55); note also Dr. Ron McCatty (Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 83–85). I cannot evaluate many of these stories, such as the apparently incredible story of Dr. Petti Wagner (she herself calls it "utter impossibility," 149; though much of it would not seem implausible in many countries even today, and identity theft is much more common even here), but her death certificate appears in Wagner, *Heiress*, 61 (see also the court document on 196); Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 66 (see 65–67). One doctor, Richard Eby, claims to have been dead for eighteen hours (though cf. Eby, *Paradise*, 208) before being raised through others' prayers (Eby, *Paradise*, 202, 208–15; Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 41–49, esp. 41–42, 45; Huyssen, *Saw*, 59–65). Without denying that any genuine experience was involved, a number of individual features of the account strike me as in tension with biblical data he claims to represent (e.g., in Eby, *Paradise*, 203–7 *passim*; Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 45; perhaps increasingly in later retellings). Alnor, *Heaven*, 47–50, notes expansions and contradictions in Eby's various accounts; although one does not tell every detail in a given account, readers should note Alnor's important concerns. Dr. George Ritchie, then an army private, was pronounced dead Dec. 20, 1943, but nine minutes later returned to life, after experiencing a vision of Jesus (Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 131–36, citing affidavits from "the Army doctor and attending nurse" [136]); others, however, have seriously challenged some of Ritchie's key claims (Alnor, *Heaven*, 84–85).

444. Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 45. On 46 Dunkerley recounts that a Presbyterian minister in Montgomery, New York, died and that the hospital staff gave up on him because he lacked vital signs; his spirit, still conscious, prayed, and he returned quickly to life.

His severely damaged heart was healed at the same time.⁴⁴⁵ A girl revived sixteen minutes after being pronounced dead, approximately one minute after being prayed for.⁴⁴⁶ In 1982, after forty or more minutes with no vital signs, twelve-month-old John Eric Cadenhead revived; after hours of prayer, he was restored with no brain damage, and both staff at Huntington Hospital and the local *Pasadena Star News* called the recovery miraculous.⁴⁴⁷ The full recovery of Connie Davis took a month, but the doctor and nurse who witnessed her return to life after prayer testify that this recovery was beyond natural medical explanations.⁴⁴⁸ A doctor claimed that a baby was raised fifty minutes after its death in the hospital; far from being brain damaged, the child later excelled in school.⁴⁴⁹

In one particularly well-known account, Baptist pastor Don Piper died instantly in a car accident; paramedics declared him dead and called for him to be taken to a morgue as soon as an official arrived,⁴⁵⁰ but at least ninety minutes after being pronounced dead, he was raised through another Baptist minister's prayer.⁴⁵¹ He required extensive convalescence afterward⁴⁵² but miraculously sustained no brain damage.⁴⁵³

I already noted how the baby sister of one of my colleagues appeared to have crushed the back of her skull and died, yet after desperate prayer was immediately better.⁴⁵⁴ In another case, a baby emerged stillborn, apparently having had her

445. Kent and Fotherby, *Frontier*, 13–19, esp. 18–19. Similarly, Otto Hunt, treasurer of Pacific Garden Mission, died in the hospital and was sent to the mortuary. There Jesus sent him back and he revived; a nurse found him moving beneath the sheet (Koch, *Zulus*, 169–70).

446. Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 56–57.

447. Pytches, *Come*, 244–45, citing Doris Wagner (who checked the medical records and the witnesses and wrote the story for *Christian Life*).

448. Robertson, *Miracles*, 110–13, recounts the full story, with the witnesses' names and quotations. Because Connie had been brain-dead, her ribs broken in a futile attempt to resuscitate, and the kidneys had been shutting down, need for recovery time is not surprising, but there was no brain damage.

449. DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 43 (citing R. Eby). DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 44, also cites Father John Hampsch's knowledge of several "resuscitation miracles."

450. Piper, *Minutes*, 13–20, 37 (noting no pulse for ninety minutes). Piper describes his time glimpsing heaven on 21–36 (though not shared with others immediately, 78; he began sharing it nearly two years later, 125–29, 200), and how torn his body was on 39.

451. *Ibid.*, 44–45. Praying for someone dead contradicted the theology of Dick Onerecker, the second minister, but he felt compelled to do so for several minutes (42–43). His prayer for lack of brain or other internal injuries was answered, despite some of his limbs being nearly severed (55–56). Yet Piper's own prayer to be released from pain after this and return to heaven was not granted (60, 72, 79; cf. 76–78).

452. Well over a year (*ibid.*, 64, 70–73), with some effects much longer (89, 110); the pain (76) and some ailments (154–55) continue. After being raised, he was initially not expected to survive (48–50, 103, 155) and nearly died again from surgical complications but recovered through prayer (57–61, 73). He nearly turned septic from his initial inability to have a bowel movement (80), but particularly painful was his continual lack of natural sleep (85). With medical help and considerable effort, he learned to walk again, though this was not supposed to happen (88–89).

453. *Ibid.*, *passim*, e.g., 205. Note also resuscitation in the morgue of the accident victim in Marszalek, *Miracles*, 191 (requiring subsequent convalescence); and raising after an accident death in *ibid.*, 202 (requiring medical attention and several weeks for recovery).

454. James Watson, correspondence, Nov. 27, 2009; Debbie Watson, personal correspondence, Nov. 30, 2009.

oxygen cut off in the womb and not breathing for the first four minutes after her birth. The midwife gave up trying to resuscitate her, but the father, believing that in this case a spiritual issue was involved, prayed with authority, and the child's life returned. She experienced no brain damage or other side effects. Now a healthy adult, the child tells people that she was stillborn but that God did a miracle for her.⁴⁵⁵ Two days after becoming a believer in Jesus, Maria, a recent refugee from Iran in Sweden, found another refugee wailing because her baby had died. Though knowing barely anything about Christian faith, Maria laid hands on the baby and spoke the name of Jesus; the baby began breathing again.⁴⁵⁶

Some accounts even in the West are particularly dramatic,⁴⁵⁷ but I take one closer at hand because the persons involved are better known to someone close to me. Dick and Debbie Riffle, influential members of my younger brother's former church, shared with me how at a home birth, their third daughter emerged stillborn, gray and with the umbilical cord wrapped too tightly to release it; Debbie hemorrhaged internally and lost so much blood that she stopped breathing and lost a pulse. Both resuscitated when Dick prayed, though Debbie remained weak, and when they reached the hospital "the doctors were shocked that she was alive after losing that much blood."⁴⁵⁸ The mother and child remain healthy many years later. As with many cases in the book, however, I should note that most of those who report healings do not claim that they occur on every occasion. The Riffles openly shared this other, less pleasant side of the story. After four healthy daughters, they had a son, John. John began having seizures at ten months of age, incapacitating him by age three and killing him at age fourteen. They had not prayed or trusted God any less in his case than in the case recounted above.

Sometimes people who have stopped breathing start breathing again, with or without prayer, though usually this is within a minute or two (as I have noted, a few more minutes without oxygen can yield irreparable brain damage). Occasionally, someone may appear dead and not be, with faint vital signs, though one should not normally need modern equipment to discern lack of breathing and pulse.⁴⁵⁹ In some very rare instances, people have recovered spontaneously after more

455. The story of Vita Michelle, daughter of Don Krow (focusing esp. on interviews with the parents), aired Nov. 16, 2001, at <http://www.awmi.net/tv/2001/week46c> (brought to my attention by Jim Baker, personal correspondence, April 3, 2008). On the same program Andrew Wommack, the host, affirms this account and claims to have seen three persons raised from the dead and to know thirty-eight others who have "raised the dead."

456. Jan Nylund (interview, Nov. 23, 2009), sharing the testimony of his wife, also known as Shiva.

457. Johnson, *Mind*, 122 (the cited witness claiming that a woman's eye, torn out in an accident, also "was back in its socket"; also a testimony on his church website, posted June 22, 2007).

458. Shared with me in writing, Dec. 13, 2007. Cf. Yeomans, *Healing*, 120–21 (a woman without a pulse healed after childbirth). In the West, most children are born in hospitals to seek to protect against complications (esp. when C-sections are necessary, not the case in the examples above), but in many parts of the world people still lack adequate access to safe hospitalization, raising the mortality rate considerably.

459. Mayhue, *Healing*, 89, complains about a raising testimony where the child "had been dead only about half an hour," hence was not really totally dead. He does not explain why the recovery corresponded to prayer or how long one must be dead to be "totally dead" (half an hour being well beyond the normal limit).

than an hour with flat EEG readings, reporting “near death experiences,” in cases where the documentation does not show whether prayer was involved or not.⁴⁶⁰ Nevertheless, prayer is too common a feature in nonmedical resuscitations to be coincidental; in virtually all the sample cases noted above, the common factor in the resuscitations is prayer, and in a number of cases the effect was immediate. These resuscitations were rare and distinctive enough that they often led to many people abandoning ancestral beliefs for their new faith, indicating that they believed they had experienced something radically different from their norm.

Some cases also cluster too frequently in particular circles to be explained most easily as coincidence; it would seem an extraordinary coincidence that someone my family knows has seen not one but three raisings, all in the context of prayer.⁴⁶¹ Nor do these people pray for every person to be raised; I do not know if, for example, Mama Jeanne has prayed unsuccessfully for anyone to be raised, but I feel safe in predicting that the proportion of raisings is extraordinarily higher than the number of spontaneous recoveries from near death experiences (in cases externally viewed as death) in the general population. Moreover, a number of the cases above go beyond mere cessation of breathing for a few minutes, or even for an hour.⁴⁶² At the very least, the examples should challenge skepticism that some observers in the first century could believe that they had witnessed resuscitations. Some of them might also serve to challenge our Western skepticism that the observers’ evaluations are correct.

Reports from Physicians

Some examples are offered by Christian physicians (e.g., one who had just pronounced the person dead before the persistent wife prayed,⁴⁶³ and some others I will not take space to elaborate here).⁴⁶⁴ Some of these accounts may seem less dramatic than above accounts because they combine faith in Jesus’s power to raise

460. Habermas and Moreland, *Immortality*, 77 (see 248nn16, 18, citing published reports of researchers). For some cross-cultural features of near-death and out-of-body experiences, see McClenon, *Events*, 49–51, 168–84 (including medieval reports); briefly, Greyson, “Experiences,” 345; for some culturally and religiously shaped features, see O’Connell, “Hallucinations,” 90n71.

461. Were we talking about random occurrences, one might counter that the clustering of such testimonies strains credibility (Fogelin, *Defense*, 11), but Mama Jeanne’s credibility and sacrificial life are well known, and from within a theistic perspective her intimate life with God accounts better for the clustering.

462. Swinburne, *Miracles*, 32, places among miracle claims not currently explicable by appeal to natural processes those involving someone lacking vital signs for more than twenty-four hours.

463. A surprised physician’s claim in Stegeman, “Faith,” although in this case the deceased had just been pronounced dead. Stegeman was the attending physician, a university lecturer in clinical pharmacology.

464. E.g., Woodard, *Faith*, 97 (though noting that the case was hard to verify; cf. possibly 94–95). Pytches, *Come*, 239, cites two examples in which Dr. James Van Zyl, of South Africa, recognized a person as dead and they returned to life through prayer (Pytches got these examples from Eileen Vincent, who got the details from Van Zyl). Bredesen, *Miracle*, 126–28, reports two cases in which surgeon William Standish Reed, finding a child apparently hopelessly dead (in one case his own), revived them through prayer. Robertson, *Miracles*, 152–55, reports that a Muslim doctor prayed while using medical means to try to resuscitate his dead Christian wife; he later attributed her resuscitation to her God and eventually became a Christian himself.

the dead with whatever medical resources available. Naturally, however, a physician would and should use all medical means available to resuscitate a person whom she or he is seeking to resuscitate, so one cannot complain about the combination of medical resources with prayer and still expect a physician's testimony.

In one recent case, around noon on January 7, 2009, Dr. Mervin Ascabano, then the municipal health officer for the municipality of Dumalinao in the Philippines, was summoned back urgently to his primary care clinic because a woman was dying. When he arrived, she was already stiff, motionless, and gray, covered with saliva. Her male companion was crying to her, "Don't leave me!" Lacking emergency facilities, they began looking for a driver to take her to the hospital. As Dr. Ascabano examined her, however, he lost hope: she was already "cold and clammy," with neither pulse nor heartbeat, and his primary care clinic lacked the emergency supplies needed to resuscitate patients in this state.⁴⁶⁵ She had already been unresponsive for three or four minutes by the time she was laid on the bed, and there was nothing he could do except attempt CPR. Unfortunately, this attempt was proving fruitless, and, noticing "that the patient's pants were already wet with urine," the midwife observed that there was no hope.

Now desperate, Dr. Ascabano began shouting, "In Jesus's name!" while still trying to administer CPR. The third time that he shouted this, the patient began coughing "out fluids" and moving, "and her skin turned pink." At this point she "tried to get up," and he had to stop her; she had, after all, just been dead. When her male companion, who had left in dismay that she was dead, returned, he was dumbfounded. Dr. Ascabano recounts that his nurse and midwife, who accompanied her to the hospital, noted that she was moving around freely en route to the hospital "as if nothing had happened! And when they arrived at the hospital, the patient was almost not admitted because her vital signs" (pulse, blood pressure, heart, and respiration) "were all normal." She had been "gray, pulseless," and cold for four or five minutes. Admittedly the dead who were raised in the Gospels had been deemed dead for beyond five minutes, and there is no thought of Jesus having performed CPR before commanding anyone to rise. Nevertheless, this is not a usual occurrence, and Dr. Ascabano is convinced that this patient returned to life especially through God's power.⁴⁶⁶ Could it not be more than coincidence that the distinctive factor in this resuscitation was Dr. Ascabano's invocation of

465. He had "no epinephrine to jumpstart the heartbeat, no intubation set to facilitate artificial respiration, no ambubag to pump air for the patient and no oxygen" (circular email to his friends, Jan. 9, 2009).

466. Circular email (Jan. 9, 2009); Dr. Ascabano confirmed this report for me in personal correspondence (Feb. 6, 2009). This report was initially brought to my attention by my friend John Matanguihan, who knows the doctor personally (personal correspondence, Feb. 5, 2009). Shortly after this incident, Dr. Ascabano and coworkers began a church plant that in the next eleven months grew in attendance to roughly nine hundred in the main services in addition to one thousand cell groups (circular email, March 10, 2010). Cf. also the case in Speed, *Incurables*, 118–20, where Speed reports an unexpectedly positive outcome for CPR; the person revived with no brain damage, despite not breathing so long (though the cold water may have been an additional factor).

Jesus's name, and that the woman recovered so rapidly? Although this resuscitation came soon after the patient's death, many other resuscitations I am noting took place long past the threshold for any possible unaided natural resuscitation.

One well-known account today is from Dr. Chauncey Crandall,⁴⁶⁷ and some local and national television news outlets reported on this particular raising claim.⁴⁶⁸ A renowned cardiologist with world-class credentials, Crandall certainly fits Hume's profile of an ideal witness with much to lose by lying; indeed, in today's milieu, he is risking his reputation even to claim such matters truthfully.⁴⁶⁹ Crandall told me that he did not seek the notoriety; why risk his established reputation for something so controversial? Yet he could not deny where the evidence led him.⁴⁷⁰ On Friday October 20, 2006, fifty-three-year-old auto mechanic Jeff Markin checked himself into the hospital in West Palm Beach, Florida, and died of a heart attack there. Emergency room personnel labored for nearly forty minutes to revive him, unsuccessfully shocking the flatlined man seven times. Crandall was called in to certify the obvious: there was no point in continuing attempts to revive the man.

Crandall recounts that Markin was not merely dead but unusually *obviously* dead: his face, toes, and fingers had already turned black.⁴⁷¹ Crandall concurred with the obvious conclusion; the patient was declared dead at 8:05 a.m. and after writing up his assessment, Crandall left to return to his scheduled patients. Very quickly, however, he felt an extraordinary compulsion from God's Spirit to return. He initially, but only briefly, resisted this compulsion, and then returned. The nurse was disconnecting the IVs and preparing the body for the morgue by sponging it down, yet Crandall suddenly found himself praying over the corpse, "Father, God, I cry out for the soul of this man. If he does not know you as his Lord and Savior, please raise him from the dead right now in Jesus's name."⁴⁷² The nurse glared at

467. I take the story here from several sources, including both secular sources noted below and (in this note) expressly Christian reports in Leclaire, "Cardiologist"; Dan Wooding, "Famed Heart Doctor Tells the Dramatic Story of How a Patient of His Was 'Raised from the Dead' after Prayer," Assist News Service (<http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2007/s07070094.htm>); idem, "Raising the Dead: A Doctor Encounters the Supernatural" (<http://opentheword.org/miracles/1595-raising-the-dead>); and CBN (http://www.cbn.com/media/index.aspx?s=vod/SUT35_DrChaunceyCrandall_080508&title=The%20700). I have revised these in light of Crandall, *Raising*, 1–5. Others also recount Crandall's experience (e.g., Llewellyn, "Events," 254–55).

468. For one local television report from Miami, see <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2334132798216105638&q=Raise+from+the+Dead&total=1772&start=0&num=10&so=0&type=search&plindex=4>; accessed May 9, 10, 2009; on national television, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUjiD_UFNCE; accessed May 9, 2009. Dr. Crandall noted (phone interview, May 30, 2010) that the reporters did their own careful investigations and reviewed records before running their story.

469. He began his explorations as an evangelical Presbyterian cardiologist in one of the wealthiest centers in the United States, also "a former university professor" who had finished his medical training at Yale (*Raising*, 31, 55).

470. Chauncey Crandall (phone interview, May 30, 2010).

471. When cyanosis sets in, little hope exists of reviving a patient (Crandall, *Raising*, 3, noting also his fixed, dilated pupils).

472. I take the wording from the earlier media interviews; it differs slightly in *ibid.*, 4, without any change in meaning.

him in astonishment, but Crandall instructed the emergency room doctor, who had just walked in, to shock him with the paddle one more time. (For Crandall, prayer and medicine work ideally together; they are not mutually exclusive options.) The other doctor protested; they had all recognized that Markin was beyond resuscitation. Nevertheless, out of respect for his colleague, this doctor complied and shocked Markin's corpse.

Suddenly the monitor, which they were all watching, moved from a flat line to a normal heartbeat, which would have been extraordinary even if the heart had stopped only briefly. "In my more than twenty years as a cardiologist," he reported, "I have never seen a heartbeat restored so completely and suddenly."⁴⁷³ Markin immediately began breathing unaided, and within minutes Markin's fingers and toes began moving, and he began speaking. Perhaps recalling Frankenstein's monster, the panicked nurse started screaming, "Doctor Crandall, what have you done to this patient?" She did not know what they would do with him now. She could have had cause for concern; as already noted, someone dead even for six minutes would have irreparable brain damage. Markin had no brain damage, however, and even his numb, once-blackened extremities were ultimately restored. Crandall met with Markin Monday morning; sitting up, Markin talked with him, contemplating his second chance on life.⁴⁷⁴ Since then Crandall has grown still bolder in praying for miracles, and some of his patients have testified to the media about these extraordinary cures.⁴⁷⁵

An OB/GYN, a medical consultant for the national news program, respectfully suggested that possibly the heart had not stopped completely but just gone into a very subtle rhythm for those thirty to forty minutes.⁴⁷⁶ When I asked Dr. Crandall his response, he replied that this complaint was merely grasping at straws. The team had "tried to revive him for forty minutes using standard American Heart Association protocols," and this resuscitation could not have happened naturally.⁴⁷⁷ Even the information in the media reports support Crandall's verdict: the darkening of the extremities and the unanimous verdict of those actually present in the emergency room, including renowned cardiologist Crandall, makes the more skeptical alternative seem forced compared with the more obvious interpretation. While Markin's heart may not have restarted without the electrical shock, an electrical shock administered at that point would normally accomplish nothing, and it was administered only because of a special confidence that on this extremely unusual occasion it would make a difference. Nor was this the only occasion on which

473. Ibid., 4. "The remaining ECG leads registered . . . a perfect heartbeat" of about seventy-five beats per minute, in a normal rhythm.

474. Crandall, *Raising*, 6, 188.

475. For a television report from Miami, see [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYNNXsSr9s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYNNXsSr9s; accessed May 9, 2009); accessed May 9, 2009. Healings reported include a girl's "severe blood infection," a missionary's "multiple parasitic infections," and lesions that would have otherwise led to the amputation of a leg (an operation that had already been scheduled; Leclaire, "Cardiologist").

476. At [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUjID_UFNCE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUjID_UFNCE; accessed May 9 and 10, 2009); accessed May 9 and 10, 2009.

477. Chauncey Crandall (phone interview, May 28, 2010).

Crandall prayed and someone revived unharmed.⁴⁷⁸ There are always options for interpreting the data if one is committed to an antisupernaturalist position, but if one does not rule out the possibility of a supernatural explanation, supernatural causation offers a better explanation in some cases, including, I believe, quite a number of cases above.

It is disingenuous for someone who does *a priori* rule out all supernatural explanations to ask for evidence, since any evidence, no matter how compelling, will be *a priori* dismissed. Will critics be able to offer other explanations for raising claims? Undoubtedly; there is very little for which one could not offer a potential alternative explanation, and in some cases, especially those who had stopped breathing only moments before or where the witnesses are not credible, the alternative could be correct. But in a number of cases above, I believe that the critics are the ones straining the bounds of plausibility to retain their thesis intact. Even if they remain the dominant voice in much of Western academia, I believe that their position should be open to question and do not think that their position is as plausible as a supernatural alternative for a significant number of these cases.⁴⁷⁹

Nature Miracles

Some scholars today dismiss the Gospels' nature miracles as legends (with or without historical bases).⁴⁸⁰ Often even scholars open to more information in the tradition about healings are more skeptical about nature miracles.⁴⁸¹ Thus, for example, one scholar who allows that Jesus and Apollonius may have been "faith healers" contends that Jesus as a true human being could not have performed nature miracles.⁴⁸² The view about whether or not it is possible that Jesus performed nature miracles, however, returns to questions of theism and/or Jesus's identity.⁴⁸³

478. Chauncey Crandall (phone interview, May 28, 2010); idem, *Raising*, 184–86; also the CBN interview noted above (http://www.cbn.com/media/index.aspx?s=vod/SUT35_DrChaunceyCrandall_080508&title=The%20700). In this case, the patient had flatlined for five minutes, apparently (due to unusual circumstances) without direct medical intervention during that time.

479. Stating this dissent openly, particularly in a public (academic) work, did not come easily for me. Yet at some point one must decide whether evidence or majority opinion counts for more, and I believe that the former is the approach more in harmony with the epistemology normally claimed by the academy, when presuppositions about the possibility of supernatural activity are not involved.

480. E.g., Taylor, *Mark*, 141; Davies, *Healer*, 67; cf. Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 404; see summary in Aune, "Magic," 1524; Robinson, "Challenge," 329 (suspecting the majority of critics). Even Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:874–1038 is skeptical of the nature miracles, although this may in part be because, having parceled them into four other categories (877–78), he has too few remaining to defend them on grounds of multiple attestation (contrast Habermas, "Miracles," 129, listing a broader range of sources, though necessarily with correspondingly less substantial evidence).

481. Carlston, "Question," 102 (they "have somewhat less claim to reliability or early attestation than the miracles of healing").

482. Hedrick, "Miracles," 312.

483. Cf., e.g., Robinson, "Challenge," 329, contending that those who affirm NT Christology and the creeds have no reason to doubt this portrait; also Hunter, *Work*, 88–89.

Theological questions aside, if eyewitnesses today report the stilling of storms and the like, why should we doubt that some of Jesus's earliest followers may have offered the same kind of reports?

Limits of Naturalistic Explanations

Some mainstream scholars do suggest that some "nature miracle" stories, like the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:41–42), stem from genuine, albeit embellished tradition.⁴⁸⁴ That Matthew and Luke agree in some details against Mark might imply more than one early tradition, multiply attesting the account of the feeding.⁴⁸⁵ Some have argued that John's version of the feeding is based on a tradition that is independent from the Synoptics,⁴⁸⁶ which includes genuine historical material missing in the Synoptics,⁴⁸⁷ and which some view as even more accurate than the Synoptics on this point.⁴⁸⁸ If John's feeding account is genuinely independent, this independence implies the account's multiple attestation.⁴⁸⁹ If nothing extraordinary happened at the meal, there seems little reason for tradition to have preserved this meal as extraordinary above many others, even if this was one of the largest crowds Jesus drew.

Some scholars seek to provide other naturalistic explanations, though some sorts of once-popular naturalistic explanations for biblical miracles would carry little credibility today. For example, one could deny any miraculous element in the earlier biblical narrative of Elijah calling down fire from heaven by observing that lightning does sometimes fall; but the odds of lightning coincidentally falling on command at a particularly vital moment and spot are not very good, especially if one is not already in the midst of a thunderstorm and the altar is made of stones and not metal. To offer a naturalistic explanation in such extraordinary cases, one must also argue that a narrative has been embellished to heighten a miracle (for example, by claiming that a prophet merely explained some random lightning

484. On the feeding, see, e.g., Koenig, *Hospitality*, 28; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:950–66 (from multiple attestation and coherence). For one nineteenth-century discussion of the feeding narrative, cf. Lumby, "Feeding" (in Metzger, *Index*, 18).

485. Witherington, *Christology*, 98–99. It is possible, however, that Mark simply redacted this same earlier tradition.

486. E.g., Higgins, *Historicity*, 30; Johnston, "Version"; Barnett, "Feeding," 289; Painter, "Tradition"; Manus, "Parallels"; Smith, *John* (1999), 146.

487. E.g., Higgins, *Historicity*, 38; Johnston, "Version," 154; Barnett, "Feeding."

488. Johnston, "Version," 154.

489. Some argue that John more generally used the Synoptics (e.g., Lincoln, *John*; Davies, *Rhetoric*, 255–59); probably a greater number of scholars, however, regard them as independent (e.g., Gardner-Smith, *Gospels*; Brown, *John*, 1:xliv–xlvii; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:42; Dodd, "Herrnworte," 86; Robinson, *Studies*, 96; Smalley, *John*, 38; Hunter, *John*, 5; Ladd, *Theology*, 219–20; Morris, *Studies*, 15–63; Marsh, *John*, 44–46; Yee, *Feasts*, 11–12; Smith, *John* [1999], 14). Consensus is, however, elusive (see the discussion of scholarly views in Smith, *John among Gospels*, 139–76). John may have known other Gospels without choosing to follow them (e.g., Smith, "John and Synoptics," 425–44; also Sanders, *John*, 10; Conzelmann, *Theology*, 324; Goppelt, *Jesus, Paul, and Judaism*, 40–41; Beasley-Murray, *John*, xxxv–xxxvii; Borchert, *John*, 37–41; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 5–9; Brown, *Essays*, 194–96; Dvorak, "Relationship"; Blomberg, *Reliability*, 48–49; Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 37; cf. Bauckham, "John," 148).

strike in terms of judgment after the fact). With regard to the Elijah narrative, most scholars today would probably not go to such lengths; most of those skeptical of miracles, as well as those skeptical of the sources, would simply deny any historical core to the account.⁴⁹⁰

The Gospels report Jesus walking on water or stilling a storm at sea. Although a few scholars today still advance the naturalistic explanation that Jesus was merely walking in shallow water,⁴⁹¹ most would find this explanation unconvincing. The setting of the story is a much deeper part of the lake, and even allowing for some exaggeration, fishermen who knew the lake would surely not have reported a miracle of one walking in shallow water.

Although older naturalistic explanations have long fallen from vogue, some newer approaches still opt for naturalistic ways to explain the tradition. Some scholars have sought to preserve a workable event behind the narratives by explaining their reports of nature miracles as genuine but subjective experiences of the disciples, as opposed to objective events. While they note parallels in other ancient sources, they interpret the Gospel records theologically and assign them to “alternate state of consciousness” experiences.⁴⁹² But while we have abundant anthropological evidence that such states of consciousness can occur in cultic settings, ancient audiences probably did not so construe the analogous stories of other characters, whatever their genres.⁴⁹³ Why then would we apply this approach to the Gospel accounts, especially given their genre and the recent events they depict? Nor do the reported settings of these accounts in the Gospels—the only settings we really have for them—readily support this interpretation.

Limits of Ancient Analogies

More commonly scholars attribute Jesus’s nature miracles to legends that grew up around him because of his more widely accepted healings. Ancient literary

490. Commentators who address the issue often dismiss older naturalistic explanations such as use of flammable naphtha from the area or a coincidental lightning strike (e.g., Montgomery, *Kings*, 307–8; Jones, *Kings*, 323). Eshleman, *Jesus*, 114–15, reports that a bhaghat in India placed a picture of Jesus alongside his other gods, and prayed that the greatest god would ignite the cow dung fuel he had placed beneath it; in this narrative, only the dung beneath Jesus’s picture burned, and it burned completely. In the narrative in Tari, *Wind*, 97, fire from heaven like lightning destroyed images after the evangelistic team, specifically evoking the Elijah story, challenged them; cf. relatively strategic lightning in the anecdote in Koch, *Zulus*, 158.

491. Cf. Derrett, “Walked.”

492. Craffert and Botha, “Walk,” 9–11, following Malina, “Assessing Historicity,” 356 (cf. Montefiore, *Miracles*, 90–91, who appeals to psychic “bilocation,” a natural, telepathic appearance; some mention this experience in connection with Francis Xavier, Hebert, *Raised*, 177). See the critique of such approaches in Licona, “Historicity of Resurrection,” 398; idem, *Resurrection*, 562, 570–73. Their category of “alternate state of consciousness” is an important one, however, as I note in appendix 2. Eve, *Healer*, 155–56, rejects the alternate state of consciousness interpretation of Jesus’s water walking as speculative, preferring (in my view no less speculatively) “an origin in a displaced resurrection appearance.”

493. Craffert elsewhere (“Origins,” e.g., 341–43) insists on treating NT texts the way we treat other ancient texts; hence, for example, he would not read Jesus’s resurrection as an eschatological event. In that case, however, the larger Jewish category of resurrection and Jesus’s soon disappearance afterward may actually support theologians’ eschatological interpretation (cf. Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15:20, 23).

accounts could provide analogies of sea miracles. Thus, in ancient stories, Pythagoras and Empedocles reportedly calmed storms.⁴⁹⁴ Various ancient figures also reportedly walked on water: Orion, a son of Poseidon;⁴⁹⁵ Xerxes, who thereby displayed a divine power;⁴⁹⁶ Pythagoras;⁴⁹⁷ and a Hyperborean magician.⁴⁹⁸

These analogies, however, all are tales either about mythical characters or written centuries after the lives of the individuals about whom they are told, not within four decades (as in the case of Mark). In fact, most of these claims do not appear in actual miracle *stories* as in the Gospels.⁴⁹⁹ Stories of sages at sea who stilled storms⁵⁰⁰ usually date from long after the period of the sage,⁵⁰¹ in noticeable contrast to another category of stories about sages at sea, stories dealing with the sages' calmness during a storm. This other category addresses not only sages much earlier than the sources that report them but also sources contemporary with these sages.⁵⁰² The contrast in the nature of the sources about these two kinds of sage stories seems instructive.

Walking on water is not only not a uniquely Christian idea, it is not even a uniquely Mediterranean one. In the early twentieth century, a professor of Sanskrit at the University of Pennsylvania pointed to numerous and ancient Indian stories of walking on water.⁵⁰³ This is one of the accounts about Jesus that most critical

494. Smith, *Magician*, 119. Blackburn, "ANAPEΣ," 190, cites traditions in which Orpheus, Abaris, Epimenides, and Apollonius as well as Pythagoras and Empedocles controlled the elements; cf. also the ancient (deceased) hero Protesilaos (Philostratus *Hrk.* 13.2–3; but see Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*, lxxix [n124]).

495. Eratosthenes *frg.* 182 in Hesiod *Astronomy* 4 (Boring et al., *Commentary*, 99).

496. Boring et al., *Commentary*, 99–100, cites Isocrates *Paneg.* 88–89; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 3.30.

497. Iamblichus *V.P.* 91 (Boring et al., *Commentary*, 100).

498. Smith, *Magician*, 120, cites Lucian *Lover of Lies* 13; note also the promise of water-walking ability in PGM 1.121. See the citations in Bultmann, *Tradition*, 236–37; more extensively, Loos, *Miracles*, 655.

499. Blackburn, "ANAPEΣ," 192. For an exception, see the Egyptian "scribe" who rescued the imperial army with a rainstorm (Dio Cassius 71.8.4; Rives, *Religion*, 160–61), perhaps analogous to some accounts elsewhere in this book.

500. For Pythagoras calming waters so his friends could cross, Cotter, "Miracle," 103, notes Porphyry *Vit. Pyth.* 29; Iamblichus *V.P.* 135.

501. Blackburn, "ANAPEΣ," 192, further contends that in such traditions the presence of sages like Pythagoras or Apollonius could guarantee a voyage's safety, but such traditions did not describe the sage saving the ship from storm (*ibid.*; cf. also Bultmann, *Tradition*, 237–38, citing as closest Porphyry *Vit. Pyth.* 29; Iamb. *V.P.* 135). Also they were not epiphany stories (Blackburn, "ANAPEΣ," 193). By contrast, Greeks often presented deliverance from death at sea as divine epiphanies (Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 101). The sea deity Poseidon could calm the seas with a word (Virgil *Aen.* 1.142; Valerius Flaccus 1.651–52). For a list of various kinds of nature miracles that early Jewish sources attribute to much earlier biblical figures, see Koskeniemi, *Miracle-Workers*, 291–92.

502. Cf. Aulus Gellius 1.2.11; Bias in Diogenes Laertius 1.86; Pyrrho in Diogenes Laertius 9.11.68; Paul in "we" material in Acts 27:22–25. Contrast failures to meet this conventional standard in Aristippus in Diogenes Laertius 2.71; Peregrinus in Lucian *Peregr.* 42–44; the Stoic in Aulus Gellius 19.1.4–6; hypothetical philosophers in Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.19.19.

503. See Brown, *Walking on Water*; cf. briefly Dibelius, *Tradition*, 116; Bultmann, *Tradition*, 237; Loos, *Miracles*, 657 (following Saintyves, *Essais*, 338, 340). Brown argues that the Christian legends depend on Indian sources (*Walking on Water*, 53–65, esp. 61–65; he offers a genealogical table on 71). He admits that he cannot trace how the Buddhist stories reached Syria (62) but notes that Buddhist missionaries

scholars most frequently assign to the category of legend. Nevertheless, other details of the water-walking story in these sources are not particularly close, and the mere idea of supernaturally walking (as opposed to sailing) on water could arise independently in different cultures that dealt with the sea. (Scholars often rightly echo Samuel Sandmel's warning against "parallelomania."⁵⁰⁴) Very ancient Jewish stories already speak of people walking through the midst of parted water (Exod 14:21–22; Josh 3:15–17), which is not a very distant concept. Creative ancient minds naturally also had people and other land creatures flying on air, turning invisible, and displaying other paranormal behaviors, often in entertaining stories; it is difficult to think of any paranormal behaviors that could have occurred to ancient minds that did not occur to some of them and hence did not show up somewhere in their literature. It would thus be difficult to find many miracle stories about Jesus that do not have parallels *somewhere*, but these random analogies do not prove the genetic source (any more than modern analogies do).⁵⁰⁵ As I have noted, the focus of Jesus's miracles—benevolent healings and the like—also differs from the focus of most contemporary stories.

In some cases, of course, early Christians or Jesus himself might have chosen to provide a counterexample to contemporary stories, whether by creating a fictitious tale or, as a believer in the miraculous can allow, by doing what the stories claim to do. In this case, though, it is difficult to see where the earliest, Jewish Jesus movement would have been exposed to such stories, whether in Greek or Indian versions, especially as distinct from other stories. The earliest extant *interpretation*

traveled abroad (63; cf. Finegan, *Records*, 67). His argument is also somewhat tendentious, arguing against pre-Christian Greek parallels. Geographically closer and more dominant parallels require greater attention. J. Edgar Bruns proposed Buddhist background for the Fourth Gospel (Bruns, *Art*, 88; idem, *Buddhism*, 14–15; idem, "Ananda"), with virtually no followers; some even suggest (also questionably) that the influence went the other direction (Derrett, "Woman"; cf. idem, *Law*, 255). Neglecting Greek and Jewish sources, some think that stories of Jesus's supernatural birth and temptation depend indirectly on Buddhist antecedents (Thapar, *India*, 119; Montefiore, *Gospels*, 2:19, acknowledges the possibility but also recognizes the more commonly noted allusion to Israel's wilderness experience). Apparently only the Greeks who traveled to the East knew much about Indian religion (Delaygue, "Grecs"), but northwest Indian Buddhist philosophy apparently interacted with Hellenistic thought after Alexander (Scott, "Attitudes"). Some Greek thinkers knew something about some Indian thought (Diogenes Laertius 9.11.61; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* bks. 2–3), and educated Mediterranean peoples had clearly heard information (not all of it accurate) about India (Cicero *Tusc.* 5.27.78; Strabo 15.1.11–13ff.; Xenophon *Cyr.* 2.4.1–8; Valerius Maximus 2.6.14; 3.3.ext. 6; Achilles Tatius 4.5.1; cf. Avi-Yonah, *Hellenism*, 164–66; Nock, *Conversion*, 46–47). For more common mercantile ties, see Petronius *Sat.* 38; Poem 18; Martial *Epig.* 4.28.4; Pausanias 3.12.4; Xenophon *Eph.* 4.1; cf. Wheeler, *Beyond Frontiers*, 115–71; Casson, *Travel*, 124. But it is not the *primary* sphere of cultural influence for Greeks, and still less for Syrian Jews. The fairly rare proposed connections with Jewish texts (e.g., Stehly, "Upanishads"; cf. Gispert-Sauch, "Upanisad") seem coincidental.

504. E.g., Rummel, "Parallels," 3; McNamara, *Judaism*, 40–41.

505. Cf. Licona, *Resurrection*, 148, who notes that fourteen years before the *Titanic* sank, Morgan Robertson's novel *Futility* (1898) depicted an "unsinkable" ship striking an Atlantic iceberg on an April night, and that "more than half of its passengers perished due to an insufficient number of lifeboats." The novel's ship was called the *Titan* (not quite the *Titanic*). Yet "no causal connection exists between" the accounts.

of Jesus walking on water, which should not chronologically precede the story of him doing so, is distinctly Jewish: within the first generation, the Gospels echo biblical theophany passages depicting YHWH treading on the waves.⁵⁰⁶

Peoples who dealt with the seas naturally prayed to deities to protect them. Sailors who survived many voyages naturally had experiences of unexpected deliverances and even visual phenomena. Voyagers invoked divine help before sailing.⁵⁰⁷ Often they invoked deities like Isis, considered a protectress from storms and dangers.⁵⁰⁸ But the Dioscuri, also known as the Twins, were more prominent,⁵⁰⁹ and sailors viewed them as providing protection at sea.⁵¹⁰ From an early period they were thought to subdue the sea's raging, which threatened to wreck ships.⁵¹¹ They were "saviors" at sea;⁵¹² someone who denied their help during a storm at sea would frighten his hearers.⁵¹³ Thus sailors invoked them in storms or other troubles at sea.⁵¹⁴ Poets claimed that both brothers (as "stars") helped ships facing storms.⁵¹⁵

Some claimed to have seen them as stars during a storm;⁵¹⁶ some scholars suggest that this conception may have originated in "the sudden appearance of the stars when the clouds and storm have cleared."⁵¹⁷ Sailors believed that the Dioscuri came to their aid during storms also when lights settled on the sails,⁵¹⁸ the phenomenon of corona discharge (a luminous discharge caused by increased electrical activity from the storm) that later European sailors called

506. See Job 9:8 LXX and Job 9:11 ("passing by") with Mark 6:48 (in the context of "I am" in Mark 6:50); cf. Ps 77:16–19. See further discussion in Keener, *John*, 671–75; idem, *Matthew*, 406–8; Argyle, *Matthew*, 115; Lane, *Mark*, 236–37; Hurtado, *Mark*, 91; Quast, *Reading*, 52–53; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 89; Rollins, "Miracles," 48. For a possible Jewish Christian origin for the story, see also Smith, *Magician*, 119; Blomberg, "Miracles as Parables," 344. Even D. Strauss appealed to the OT background, but Loos, *Miracles*, 658–59, points out that this background, while accounting for the interpretation, does not account for the narrative's entire composition.

507. E.g., Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.21.12; Fronto *Ad M. Caes.* 3.9.2; for superstition and sailing, see Casson, *Travel*, 155; for specifically astrological superstition and sailing, see Manilius *Astrology* (ca. 14 C.E.) in Friedländer, *Life*, 1:189.

508. Apuleius *Metam.* 11.25. Thus a ship could be consecrated in her name (Apuleius *Metam.* 11.5) or even be named for her, with a figure of her on either side of the prow (Lucian *Ship* 5).

509. For discussion of them, see comment at Acts 28:11 in Keener, *Acts* (forthcoming).

510. E.g., Johnson, *Acts*, 463 (citing Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.18.29; Lucian *Ship* 9; Aelius Aristides *Or.* 4.35–37); Bruce, *Acts: Greek*, 474.

511. Euripides *El.* 1240–42.

512. E.g., Diodorus Siculus 4.43.1–2; Artemidorus *Onir.* 2.37; Lucian *Dial. G.* 287 (25/26, *Apollo and Hermes*); *Alex.* 4 (cf. Casson, *Travel*, 178). Helen joins them as a "savior" of sailors in Euripides *Orest.* 1636–37 (she was their sister even in the earliest sources; Homer *Il.* 3.237–38; she secured immortality for them in Ps.-Lucian *Charid.* 6).

513. Plutarch *Pleas. L.* 23, *Mor.* 1103C. Alexander scorning the Dioscuri (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 64.20) is an example of his hubris (*Or.* 64.21).

514. E.g., Silius Italicus 15.82–83; Catullus 68A.65; Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.18.29; cf. *Hom. Hymns* 33.12.

515. E.g., Ovid *Fast.* 5.720. They are depicted with stars on their heads in Lucian *Dial. G.* 282 (25/26, *Apollo and Hermes*).

516. Maximus of Tyre 9.7 (Trapp p. 83n23 compares Alcaeus frg. 34; *Hom. Hymn* 33; Theoc. 22.8–22).

517. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 101.

518. Seneca *Nat.* 1.1.13.

Saint Elmo's fire.⁵¹⁹ Sometimes in antiquity seafarers might claim that this appearance of a star on the masthead during a storm guided their ship safely to port.⁵²⁰ One might claim that the Dioscuri, appearing on the sails to bring deliverance, commanded one to compose an encomium about them.⁵²¹ They also allegedly appeared as stars on both sides of a Spartan ship destined for victory in battle.⁵²² What we lack are accounts of not-yet-deified human figures doing what the Gospels report Jesus doing, from reporters roughly contemporary with the reports.⁵²³

Early Jewish sources claimed that storms could be stilled through acts of repentance (Jon 1:12–15) or through prayer.⁵²⁴ Moses also parted the sea (Exod 14:21–22), and those who stepped into it in Joshua's day found it parted as well (Josh 3:13–16).⁵²⁵ Both in the Gospels and today we lack large-scale claims of parting the sea, though, as I shall note in the next section, claims of stilling storms or calling for rain do exist. What all these ancient "parallels" have in common is the belief that divine beings can control the sea, but (apart from the more distinctive behavior of water walking) these stories may seem like parallels to modern Western readers simply because we do not share that belief. Yet, as I have noted before, it is our belief rather than theirs that is historically idiosyncratic, and the fact that various cultures claim sea miracles is no reason to discount without examination any particular claim about one.

Even accounts of angelic appearances are reported today, though some are more persuasive than others;⁵²⁶ believers in some parts of the world claim many

519. Corcoran in Seneca *Nat. vol.*, LCL 1:21n2. "Saint Elmo" is an Italian corruption of Saint Erasmus of Formia (d. ca. 303 C.E.), one of sailors' later patron saints.

520. Lucian *Ship* 9. Lucian regards many claims of them appearing on the masthead as fabricated (Lucian *Posts* 1).

521. Ps.-Lucian *Charid.* 3.

522. Plutarch *Lys.* 12.1 (the stars disappeared before another battle the Spartans lost, *Lys.* 18.1). They also reportedly appeared to symbolize in the forum a victory (Plutarch *Cor.* 3.4) and allegedly appeared at the lake of Juturna (Valerius Maximus 1.8.1). For their association with Sparta, see also, e.g., Robbins, "Kastoreion."

523. I cannot think of exceptions to this observation, but if there are some, they are surely quite rare.

524. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 65, cites here Jon 1:14; *b. B.M.* 59b; *p. Ber.* 9:1 (Bultmann, *Tradition*, 234–35, prefers the latter). In 4Q451 VII, 3 (in Wise, Abegg, and Cook, *Scrolls*, 259) apparently the Mediterranean Sea would be still because of the eschatological revealer, but his role (like Moses?) and the character of the peace (nature's or humanity's?) is not yet fully clear.

525. Some early rabbinic traditions attributed this event to the merits of the ancestors; e.g., Mek. *Pisha* 16.165–68; *Besh.* 4.52ff.; *Sipre Deut.* 8.1.1; in later texts, *p. Taan.* 1:1, §8; *Gen. Rab.* 23:6; 55:8; 74:12; 76:5; 84:5; 87:8; *Exod. Rab.* 2:4; 15:4, 10; 31:2; *Lev. Rab.* 34:8, bar.; *Num. Rab.* 3:6, bar.; 13:20; *Deut. Rab.* 2:23; *Song Rab.* 4:4, §4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 10:9.

526. In modern popular Christian accounts, the angel appearance genre often involves sudden rescues by those who appear to be human and then are no longer to be found. See, e.g., Bryson, "Angels," 46; missionary reports in Boehr, *Medicine*, 140–41; Bray, "Angel"; Johnson, "Alone"; Stewart, "Guardian Angel"; Malek, "Stranger"; Harris, *Acts Today*, 132–40; for angels obvious as angels, see Tari, *Wind*, 52; idem, *Breeze*, 169–70 (an unexpected revelation to an unbeliever, after which the angel disappeared), 170–71 (angels visible in the sky, heard even by the Christians' enemies); Khai, "Pentecostalism," 269; Numbere, *Vision*, 202; Eshleman, *Jesus*, 112–13 (visibly deterring robbers);

direct encounters with them.⁵²⁷ For example, a figure in white that an as yet unconverted African man first saw in a dream later guarded him from a lion after his injury, allowing for his subsequent conversion.⁵²⁸ Stories are often told, sometimes on strong authority, of angelic defenders visible only to would-be attackers, whom their presence intimidates. For example, a former director of World Missions for a Lutheran body reports that only one town in a particular region of China never fell to a particular army; the officers asked their U.S. hostage, later released, why the defenders had built a new wall around the town and now guarded it in shining clothes. Those inside the town saw no new wall or defenders, but the Christians there had been praying for protection.⁵²⁹ Even the common version of the vanishing hitchhiker story appears in what purport to be firsthand accounts, though these appear in many cultures and are not limited

in a symbolic vision, Rumph, *Signs*, 90–93. On reported angel encounters, see further Anderson, *Miracles*, 30–31, 72–73, 97–98, 102–3, 174–75, 214–16 (cf. 36, 65–69, 79, 81–83, 223–25; idem, *Angels*); Pugh, “Miracle,” 79; particularly extensively, Moolenburgh, *Meetings*, provides more than a hundred testimonies of angelic encounters (often with evaluations), including e.g., a rescuing angel described like a Chinese mandarin who then vanished (168–69); the rescue of a Polish girl (204) and other children’s experiences with angels (96–117); and how the witnesses’ lives had changed (191–204). Sadhu Sundar Singh viewed one providential rescue as by angels; a Western friend interpreted them more naturalistically as people (Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 64, 140–41). Whereas John Wesley believed he survived a mob’s abuse because of angelic protection, his brother Charles suggested that his abusers’ blows often missed him because of his diminutive stature (Wigger, *Saint*, 25). Two less ambiguous reports, both involving children, are Caldwell, “Prayers”; Jones, “Rumors,” 22 (for children, see also Hickson, *Heal*, 115 [cf. 116], from 1922 South Africa; Malarkey, *Boy*, 14, 112, 183–84; cf. 93); a number of claims also appear in Schlink, *World*, 127–38; Baker, *Enough*, 18, 62, 64–65 (most visionary); Sundar Singh in Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 68 (the angel disappeared afterward); beyond easy attribution to coincidence is the testimony in Moreland and Issler, *Faith*, 155–56; Ritchie, *Spirit*, 122 (to one who had not heard of this phenomenon), 206; probably Marszalek, *Miracles*, 171–73. For some claims from a wider range of religious perspectives, see Woodward, “Angels”; Wuthnow, *Heaven*, 114–41 (noting on 121–22 that roughly a third of Americans claimed to have had at least one angelic encounter); cf. Robertson, *Miracles*, 88–89 (his interpretation of a Jewish battle account); Huyssen, *Saw*, 30–32 (supernatural battlefield rescues from World War I, attributed by witnesses directly to appearances of Jesus; cf. Finlay, “Miracles”). Only in some of these reports are the figures obviously angels; merely a “sensed presence” can be a psychological coping mechanism (cf. Suedfeld and Geiger, “Presence”).

527. Noll, *Shape*, 33, also noting direct encounters with demons, which I have found far more frequently in my sources. For the high percentage of beliefs of angels in Africa, see “Islam and Christianity,” 175.

528. Hodgson, “Sorcerer,” 13. Although I am abbreviating, this account coheres well and involves a clearly supernatural figure. The person so protected was a witch doctor at that time resisting conversion, and the figure in white had already instructed him to heed the Christian who had settled there.

529. Recounted by Rolf Syrdal (“Transcript,” 35–36), who had been a Lutheran missionary in China at the time of the incident; he had the account directly from the released captive. Syrdal was director of World Missions (then called executive secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, originally for the Evangelical Lutheran Church) from 1946 until 1963 (the ELC became the American Lutheran Church in 1960, which was joined by the Lutheran Free Church in 1963). Cf. 2 Kgs 6:17. Koch, *Zulus*, 270, probably thinks of the same incident; he reports a similar account of attackers confessing angelic protection in Germany on 269; one in South Africa on 270. Moolenburgh, *Meetings*, provides similar reports involving Christians in Vietnam, Indonesia, and southern Africa (188–89), and some of his accounts of angels during war (135–90). Of the latter accounts, some apparently rest on eyewitnesses from both sides (143–44), but others apparently originated as propaganda (see the example below).

to Christian circles,⁵³⁰ and there are some reasons to question them.⁵³¹ For the sake of space, I will not address in this chapter these claims more fully, or specific analogies with miracles appearing in Acts but not the Gospels, such as harmless bites from poisonous snakes⁵³² (Acts 28:3–5), miraculous escapes from prison⁵³³ (Acts 5:19; 12:7–10), or timely earthquakes⁵³⁴ (Acts 16:26). For comment, I refer the interested reader to the appropriate passages in my forthcoming commentary on Acts.

Subsequent Analogies

I have neither found nor expect to find any solid modern reports of ascensions, which pure invention might create perhaps to evoke very exceptional biblical narratives. We lack many claims today of people walking on water, but there are a few, especially from Indonesia.⁵³⁵ The strongest analogies for a large-scale mi-

530. McClenon, *Events*, 153, cites “firsthand” accounts from “North Carolina, the Philippines, Okinawa, and Taiwan,” as well as a medieval Chinese story.

531. Moolenburgh, *Meetings*, 1–5, questions them, and whether they are genuinely firsthand. Meanwhile, Moolenburgh himself, while not uncritical, credits the story of Washington’s vision (*ibid.*, 138–42), which unfortunately probably originated in a propagandistic genre (see, e.g., the debunking in <http://www.snopes.com/history/american/vision.asp>).

532. In ancient sources, cf. Num 21:6–9; *tos. Ber.* 3:20; *b. Ber.* 33a, bar.; Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.142; Mark 16:18; for modern sources, cf., e.g., protection from snakes in Thomas, *Walls*, 33–34, 42–43; Koch, *Zulus*, 123; Eshleman, *Jesus*, 113; healing from poisonous snakebite in Lindholm, “Healings” (from scorpion stings in Tari, *Wind*, 41); Koch, *Zulus*, 123–24 (though details are not all clear); escape from a black cobra in Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 40 (from a panther, 55; from leopards in Andrews, *Singh*, 126–27); authority over snakes (Tari, *Wind*, 41; also over crocodiles, *ibid.*; rats, *idem*, *Breeze*, 28); a traditional belief that sorcerers might send snakes, in Stoller and Olkes, *Shadow*, 183 (as well as anecdotal reports from some of my African sources). Snake handling of course appears in various traditions (in Africa, see McNaughton, *Blacksmiths*, 52–53). Cf. also God’s sovereignty over driver ants in Anderson, *Pelendo*, 22–25.

533. In ancient sources, see, e.g., Euripides *Bacch.* 443–45; Apollodorus *Bib.* 3.5.1; Apollonius Rhodius 4.41–42; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 8.30; Artapanus in Euseb. *Praep. ev.* 9.27.23; cf. also *Hist. Rech.* 10:5 (probably a Christian work); cf. Augustine *Ep.* 111.7 (Herum, “Theology,” 75); medieval reports, where it can appear alongside or instead of ransom (Friedman, “Miracle”). Cf. also later escapes from captivity, deemed miraculous (e.g., Sundar Singh in Gallagher, “Hope,” 163; Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 63, 79–80; others in Fape, *Powers*, 98; Young, “Miracles in History,” 118; Yun, *Heavenly Man*, 64, 251–62) or providential (e.g., Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 142; Young, “Miracles in History,” 116, multiple times; Olson, *Bruchko*, 86–89; Yun, *Heavenly Man*, 44; Seibert, *Church*, 195–205; and an account of my brother-in-law Aimé Moussounga, ca. 1994).

534. Ancient Greeks often attributed earthquakes to Poseidon: e.g., Homer *Il.* 7.445; 8.201, 208, 440; 12.27; 13.10, 34, 43, 59, 65, 89, 215, 231, 554, 677; 14.135, 150, 355, 384; 15.41, 173, 184, 205, 218, 222; 20.13, 20, 34, 57–63, 132, 291, 310, 318, 330, 405; 21.287, 435, 462; *Od.* 1.74; 5.282, 339, 366, 375, 423; 6.326; 7.35, 56, 271; 8.354; 9.283, 518, 525; 11.102, 241, 252; 12.107; 13.125, 140, 146, 159, 162; Aristophanes *Ach.* 510–11; Euripides *Erechtheus* frg. 370.48–49; Pindar *Pyth.* 4.32–33; 6.50; *Isthm.* 1.52; Philostratus *Hrk.* 25.9. For more naturalistic options, see, e.g., Seneca *Nat. Bk.* 6 (esp. 6.5.1–6.31.3); cf. Williams, “Seismology”; Pliny *Nat.* 2.81.191–92.

535. See, e.g., Crawford, *Miracles*, 26; Tari, *Wind*, 43–47 (citing as witnesses who experienced this event his sister, brother-in-law, and cousin); *idem*, *Breeze*, 41 (the same event; in one interview on the internet, Tari sounds as if he may have been present himself). The story that Sardar Birsa walked on water without wetting his feet, like the story of lightning infusing his body (Singh, “Prophet,” 112), is

raculous feeding (noted above as multiply attested in the Gospel tradition) appear in antecedent biblical tradition (accounts about Moses and Elisha), but some subsequent analogies do exist. Although much rarer than healing claims, stories of multiplied food also appear for earlier⁵³⁶ and more recent times.⁵³⁷ (They are rarer in the Gospels and Acts as well.) Some have even reported witnessing water turned to wine (John 2:7–9)⁵³⁸ and fish jumping into nets (cf. Luke 5:5–7; John 21:5–11).⁵³⁹ Beyond the rare specific analogy of multiplied food, claims of divinely

older and may reflect rumor more easily than some sources do (no specific eyewitness source is evident; cf. Singh, “Prophet,” 112: “it was said”). I omit here some other kinds of nature miracle claims, such as a “friendly” tiger keeping a South Korean evangelist warm in the Taebaek Mountains one night, then leaving him in the morning (Stetz, “Blanket”).

536. Duffin, *Miracles*, 28; Nichols, “Supernatural,” 32–33 (citing esp. witnesses for an event involving St. John Bosco in 1860; Nichols notes [39] that this is not creation *ex nihilo*, since God works through already created forms); Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 13 (in the early nineteenth century; following Monnin, *Curé d’Ars*; Ghéon, *The Secret*), 71 (Martin of Tours); various saints in Thurston, *Phenomena*, as followed by Laurentin, *Miracles*, 100–102; Montefiore, *Miracles*, 81–84 (who provides analogies in psychic research on 85–86 that he himself acknowledges are quite weak [“trivial”]). The claim also appears for a prophetic figure with mixed religious influences named Sardar Birsā (multiplication of rice in Singh, “Prophet,” 111).

537. See Young, “Miracles in History,” 118–19; Wiyono, “Timor Revival,” 286 (citing here Koch, *Revival*, 134); Tari, *Breeze*, 117–18 (for days, as in 1 Kgs 17:14–16), 42–43 (feeding only on visionary food for days; cf. Exod 34:28; Deut 9:9, 18); idem, *Wind*, 47–49 (with food left over, 49); Ten Boom, *Hiding Place*, 202–3; and idem, *Tramp*, 42 (vitamins in a Nazi concentration camp); Laurentin, *Miracles*, 4–5, 49 (350 cans of milk being given out to 500 people, one apiece, with fifty-two cans remaining), 95–97 (six different occasions, with dates and witnesses, sometimes multiple ones), 110–12; Wilson, “Miracle Events,” 276–77 (acknowledging Laurentin but having verified the story directly with witnesses); Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 38 (following Laurentin), 71 (following Ten Boom); Sanford, *Gifts*, 221 (following Ten Boom); less clearly, Koch, *Zulus*, 311–12; Baker, *Enough*, 52 (a clear, credible, eyewitness case, also noted in idem, *Miracles*, 198; Clark, *Impartation*, 121; additional occasions in their ministry to the needy in Chevreau, *Turnings*, 214–15); Bredesen, *Miracle*, 120; Robertson, *Miracles*, 126; multiple cases (including following Laurentin) in DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 101–2; Anderson, *Miracles*, 202–8; Johnson, *Mind*, 40; possibly Numbere, *Vision*, 127; cf. Best, *Supernatural*, 75.

538. E.g., Koch, *Revival*, 208–17 (esp. seeing it himself, 212–17); idem, *Gifts*, 107 (citing himself for the incident on July 18, 1969, and naming eight witnesses of that incident, including foreign educators and a local governor); Wiyono, “Timor Revival,” 285–86 (citing interviews with eyewitnesses); Young, “Miracles in History,” 119 (following Koch); Crawford, *Miracles*, 26; Yusuf Herman, July 10, 2011 (naming witnesses he knows); on a popular level, see Tari, *Wind*, 78–84 (more than sixty times in Tari’s church since Oct. 1967, 79; Tari says that he checked carefully on one occasion, although the water changed color before it tasted like wine, 79–84); idem, *Breeze*, 16–17; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 79–80. In Tari, *Breeze*, 97–98, though water had turned to wine twenty times when Sister Johanis had prayed over wine (in three-day fasts each time), she was unhappy when she felt led to do this with dirty, stagnant water; nevertheless, Tari reports, it happened and provided wine for eight hundred participants. By contrast, for wine spoiling overnight in accordance with a divine audition, see Anderson, *Pelendo*, 34–36. Neil, “Nature Miracles,” 371, doubts that Jesus, being wise, would have provided wine to those who had already drunk freely; whatever the merits of this verdict (ancient Christians did not teach complete abstinence), the wine in most Indonesian reports was unfermented.

539. Cagle, “Church,” noting that the coinciding of this event with the dedication of the church led the leaders of the community to welcome the church (on Mangaia, in the Cook Islands). *Jesus Film* workers also report that in one nation in Asia, after watching the scene in Luke 5, some men cast nets into the river in faith and brought them up full of fish (*Jesus Film* Project mailing, Oct. 30, 2009, 3–4).

arranged provision in other forms appear fairly commonly.⁵⁴⁰ Judgment miracles have also been reported.⁵⁴¹

I know of no accounts of massive pillars of fire such as in the exodus narrative, but there are a number of accounts of ministry teams or fugitives in jungles or other dark places being led through the night with shining, supernatural lights.⁵⁴² (Anomalous lights are not limited to Christian sources, though the function normally appears to be different elsewhere.⁵⁴³) Like subsequent Lukan reports of outpourings of

540. E.g., McGee, "Regions Beyond," 87; Green, *Asian Tigers*, 97; Menzies, *Young*, 118–20; Crump, *Knocking*, 11–12; Koch, *Zulus*, 298–316 (including potatoes on 308); Taylor, *Secret*, e.g., 42; Marszałek, *Miracles*, 54–55 (in India), 233–36 (in Kenya), 247–48 (in Germany); Alamino, *Footsteps*, 27–28, 53–54, 101 (in Cuba); Yohannan, *Revolution*, 68, 74–76 (a believer from India); Tari, *Wind*, 14–16; idem, *Breeze*, 32–34 (Indonesia); Wazara, "Ministry," 158–60, 167–68 (Africa); Ten Boom, *Tramp*, 33–36, 83–86; Pytches, *Come*, 108 (George Müller); Schaeffer, *Tapestry*, 191; Bredesen, *Miracle*, 79–88 (including L'Abri, 82–84); Robertson, *Miracles*, 24–25, 58–59, 122–23; Anderson, *Miracles*, 108–10; Bruce, *Care*, 73, 85; Anna Gulick, June 9, 2011; Craig Keener (personal journal, May 17; June 2, 17, 1987; July 8–9, 1991; Feb. 5, 2001); Horace Russell (interview, Oct. 26, 2009, connecting it with his mother's faith when he was a child; Jamaica); Kinghorn, *Story*, 131; a testimony sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, Nov. 9, 2009 (precisely \$115,000 needed for a situation in Macedonia, and precisely that much donated without prior knowledge of the need); and so forth: one could readily devote entire volumes to such reports.

541. E.g., Koch, *Revival*, 155–58 (Indonesia); idem, *Zulus*, 151, 158, 243, 278, 288–96; Tari, *Wind*, 32–33 (Indonesia); Anderson, *Pelendo*, 44–47 (central Africa); Jones, *Wonders*, 99–100 (China); by sickness, in Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 25, 57; cf. the possible implication in Danyun, *Lilies*, 191; even early Protestant cessationists allowed for judgment miracles, perhaps for their didactic value (Walsham, "Miracles," 291 [cf. 289]; natural disasters might function as warnings to other nations [Deconinck-Brossard, "Acts of God," 366]). Cf. also the reported shaking of a prison, mitigating the captors' hostility (cf. Acts 16:25–35), in Jones, *Wonders*, 105. Some have questioned whether judgment miracles in the Gospels, which they believe are uncharacteristic of Jesus, should be taken literally (e.g., Neil, "Nature Miracles," 371; Best, "Miracles," 540); others might regard this concern as reflecting a cultural bias, but in any case, such reports in the Gospels are at best very few (possibly Mark 5:13; 11:21, but both these incidents may be explained in other ways; in Acts, see 5:5, 10).

542. E.g., Koch, *Revival* 143–44 (also noting inside a darkened church, 144); idem, *Zulus*, 238; Tari, *Wind*, 100–101 (on 101 also adding a cloud to protect them from the sun); idem, *Breeze*, 85 (the author as an eyewitness; on 86 he compares the pillar of fire, Exod 13:21–22; Num 14:14; Neh 9:12, 19), 91; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 80–81 (on West Timor); Yun, *Heavenly Man*, 32, 323; note also the report of supernatural light during the 1939 Presbyterian revival in Hebrides (Peckham, *Sounds*, 107, noting also sounds of heavenly singing in Hebrides revivals on 106, 225; cf. the claim of heavenly music at a baby's death in 1897, in Anderson, *Miracles*, 134–35); the experience of light as a divine sign in Chinese Lutheran settings in 1934 (Hellestad, "Prayer," 16) and 1937 (Guldseth, "Power," 4); light publicly seen emanating from one Chinese believer who had just been healed (Danyun, *Lilies*, 322); light during an unexpected revelation in India in Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 18; light during a divine audition in central Africa in Anderson, *Pelendo*, 34; apparently protective lights in Anderson, *Miracles*, 48–49; a light seen by outsiders over a charismatic Lutheran and Anglican gathering in McGee, *Miracles*, 201–2; a room filled with visible light and an audible voice at Anna Gulick's calling (interview, March 10, 2011).

543. Anthropologists report anomalous light appearances "associated with death or spirits" in various independent cultures (McClenon and Nooney, "Experiences," 52); one anthropologist saw two such lights also seen by others present, who attributed them to witchcraft (McClenon and Nooney, "Experiences," 52, quoting here Bowen, *Return*, 40), and one of the most noted anthropologists saw a light passing toward a location where someone then died, noting that "this event fully explained the light I had seen" (Evans-Pritchard, "Séance," 13, as cited in McClenon and Nooney, "Experiences," 52). Victor Turner as a boy saw a large light at the time that (initially unknown to him) the local Anglican priest, his mentor, died (Turner, "Advances," 36).

the Spirit, most modern popular revival reports that include tongues and other Pentecost-type phenomena omit the tongues of fire at Pentecost (Acts 2:3), but such reports do appear.⁵⁴⁴ Houses shaking after prayer (Acts 4:31) may not be common, but there are eyewitness reports of this experience in some twentieth-century revival settings.⁵⁴⁵

Far more common are rain and analogous large-scale nature miracle claims, similar to the Gospel accounts of Jesus stilling the storm (Mark 4:39; Matt 8:26; Luke 8:24). I earlier noted Jewish sages, such as Honi the Circle-Drawer, associated with prayers for rain, following Elijah's model. These sorts of events also appear more recently. For example, during a severe drought in seventeenth-century Sri Lanka, when all else failed, a Roman Catholic priest, Father Joseph Vaz, was invited to pray. It is said that "before he rose from his prayer, abundance of rain began to fall." Because this incident was universally acknowledged, Vaz was released from prison and allowed to evangelize openly.⁵⁴⁶ Similar older claims appear elsewhere in Asia. Thus, for example, in a power encounter reported by eyewitnesses, rain fell in a long-dry city at the extremely rare but prophesied time in early twentieth-century China.⁵⁴⁷

As sailors may pray for help on the sea, farmers are inclined to pray for help on the land. In the summer of 1934, Chinese farmer Mr. Tsai wept in prayer as he saw that his crops were dying from lack of rain. Suddenly, however, he saw "a bright, beautiful light, and from that light came a voice that said, 'Fear not. On

544. See, e.g., Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 93 (citing W. W. Hall's claim in 1924); Sung, *Diaries*, 109 (while others were seeing or hearing angels; March 27, 1937), 140–41 (secondhand, but leading to many conversions; Jan. 1935); Synan, *Voices*, 137–38 (June 20, 1905, in the Indian revival at Pandita Ramabai's home for orphan brides, also noted in Ma, "Mission," 24; cf. also McGee, *Peoples of Spirit*, 74; idem, "Regions Beyond," 84; Bartleman, *Azusa Street*, 35); Liardon, *Generals*, 400. Cf. also the globe of fire above the head of St. Martin of Tours (Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 72; cf. luminosity reported around saints in Montefiore, *Miracles*, 71–75, though as noted earlier this phenomenon also appears in pre-Christian paganism). One may consider also the visible cloud of glory in Clark, *Impartation*, 213. Cf. particularly "an audible wind" in the 1930s Shandong revival (Bays, "Revival," 173); another on Aug. 27, 1970, in the Solomon Islands revival (Koch, *Gifts*, 22; idem, *Zulus*, 50); on Sept. 26, 1965, a rushing, intense wind and visible fire at the beginning of the Timor revival in Indonesia (Tari, *Wind*, 24–25; idem, *Breeze*, 6). Cf. also people on Timor gathered for the coming ministry team by the public sound of trumpets, though no one had such instruments, in Koch, *Zulus*, 238.

545. E.g., Woodworth-Etter, *Diary*, 107, reports a house being shaken by divine power like a dramatic storm, and even those outside witnessing it. Peckham, *Sounds*, 106, 113, reports particular houses shaking after prayer and even people falling down (on the Presbyterian Hebrides revivals in 1939 and 1949); in one such case dozing persons awoke and were converted (Peckham, *Sounds*, 113); a photo of one of the houses mentioned appears between 160 and 161. I treat ancient parallels to Acts 4:31 (e.g., Ovid *Metam.* 9.782–85; Exod 19:18; Isa 6:1–4) in Keener, *Acts*, as well as the narrative parallel in Acts 16:26. For references to supernatural protection, see pp. 274–75 of the present book.

546. Daniel, "Labour," 157.

547. See Kinnear, *Tide*, 92–96. John Sung also reports a "healed" bus engine (*Diaries*, 142) and the holding back of rain (143, 158, 161); Danyun, *Lilies*, 328, also reports the stopping of rain in answer to prayer. Earlier, the *Life of Mar Aba* (composed before 579) reports what Young, "Miracles in History," 111, construes as a nature miracle in the conversion of Mar Aba (who served as patriarch in the East from 539 to 552). In the West, Bede reports some credible accounts from mostly seventh-century England that could be nature miracles (Young, "Miracles in History," 114).

the fourth of the seventh month you shall have rain.” He was so certain that God had spoken to him that he announced this information to all his neighbors. Sure enough, rain fell on the appointed day, flooding the fields; he discovered that the roots were not dead.⁵⁴⁸ The rice harvest thus came late that year, “but it was the most bounteous harvest that this district has seen for many years.”⁵⁴⁹

Claims appear in earlier Africa. Thus some called Methodist missionary W. J. Davis the “Missionary Elijah”; in the 1840s, his “prayers brought rain in the midst of severe drought,” leading to the beginning of “the first [known] Bantu church.”⁵⁵⁰ In the early twentieth century, Garrick Braide was known for success in praying down rain,⁵⁵¹ and many other reports of water miracles appear.⁵⁵² To elaborate another example, when some early twentieth-century villagers in southern Africa complained that the God whom the preacher Elias Letwaba proclaimed could not bring rain to their parched village, Letwaba declared that it would fall the next day. His momentary confidence quickly yielded to fear, however, and he prayed throughout the night. Nevertheless, the next day, rain poured down.⁵⁵³ Those who live in or have spent time in locations with extensive dry seasons will recognize that such an occurrence is improbable as a coincidence.⁵⁵⁴ Some stories about dramatic provisions of water are told even about the nineteenth-century United States.⁵⁵⁵ On some occasions, storms calmed when Francis Asbury prayed.⁵⁵⁶ (One may also note continued gratitude for deliverances at sea.⁵⁵⁷)

548. Hellestad, “Prayer,” 16 (a contemporary report by the Lutheran mission).

549. *Ibid.*, 17. Cf. also the South African farmer in Buchan and Waldeck, *Faith*; the child in DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 93–94.

550. Yung, “Integrity,” 174; McGee, “Regions Beyond,” 70; *idem*, “Miracles,” 253 (citing a local report from 1867); *idem*, *Miracles*, 51, 242 (citing Taylor, *Adventures*, 275–76, though noting Taylor’s disappointment in the failure of the chief to convert immediately). My sources differ regarding whether his name is spelled “Davis” or “Davies.”

551. Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, *History*, 223–24; Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 181–83.

552. In Nigeria, cf. perhaps Protus, “Latunde.” More recently, in Cape Verde, see Dayhoff, “Barros.” Elsewhere, cf. the effective nineteenth-century prayer for rain reported about St. Arsenios on the island of Paros in the Aegean Sea (Zervakos, “Miracles,” 81–83).

553. Lindsay, *Lake*, 48–49. On Letwaba’s ministry, cf. further Clark, “Apostolic Faith Mission,” 45; McGee, “Regions Beyond,” 89–90.

554. Cf. 1 Sam 12:17–18.

555. E.g., during the U.S. Civil War, see Harris, *Acts Today*, 66–67. Note also the story of Methodist circuit rider Robert S. Sheffey (1820–1902), who is said to have prayed for an oak to fall on a whiskey still, though the nearest tree was nearly one hundred feet distant; later, during a thunderstorm, it is said that a massive oak tree fell down the hill and smashed the still (Carr, *Saint*, 204, 209). Nevertheless, without further documentation, it is impossible for me to evaluate much about this story. Carr’s “biographic novel” about Sheffey weaves together various oral sources, but they are undoubtedly not all of equal weight, and from Carr’s more academic work it is clear that not all moonshiner tales (a moonshiner was Sheffey’s source of information for this account in *Saint*) ought to be believed (see, e.g., Carr, *Profession*, 58).

556. When he was ill and prayed for protection, little rain fell on him as he rode though it rained heavily ahead; also a storm calmed when he prayed, allowing him to cross a river (Wigger, *Saint*, 193, citing Asbury’s own account). Nevertheless, at some other times in his life he rode through storms (e.g., 128, 288).

557. In a war context, see Flanders, “Deliverances at Sea.”

The majority of reports of nature miracles (such as parting the sea) need not imply activity *impossible* in nature, but the collocation of events can prove extraordinary.⁵⁵⁸ I offer two such examples from nineteenth-century German parishes. A witness confessed his irritation when Blumhardt momentarily interrupted the liturgy to pray for God to withhold an impending hailstorm; yet “in an instant it grew light and in a few minutes we had blue skies and bright sunshine.”⁵⁵⁹

Moreover, one writer who argues that God always works through nature reports a surprising collocation of events. In 1866, some villagers in Saxony were digging a well when on December 8 the sand strata on which they were working collapsed, burying them. The local pastor, O. Th. Auerswald, led his congregation in fervent prayer for their fellow church members. Others agreed to help dig out the corpses, but Pastor Auerswald felt an overwhelming sense that the buried workers were alive. A week and a half later, on December 19, all the men were found alive. When the sandbank had collapsed, they had fallen into a cavity, with the planks that had fallen around them arranged in such a way as to hold back more sand from infiltrating their shelter. Rainwater had seeped in through another (presumably rock) crevice, providing moisture to drink, until their rescue. Most collapses of the ground do not end so happily, even with prayer, but the theologian concluded that the collocation of factors in this case seemed more than fortuitous.⁵⁶⁰

Recent Analogies in Asia and the Pacific

Such events continue to be reported among our contemporaries, including in Asia.⁵⁶¹ It is reported that during the West Timor revival, Indonesian ministry teams going out on foot through jungles during tropical rains often found rain falling on either side of the path but not on them or the path.⁵⁶² After one Indonesian ministry team hired a boat to reach their destination, they confronted a dangerous storm. The Muslim boat owner promised to believe their message if their God could calm the storm, and he kept his word when, after their prayer, the sea grew calm.⁵⁶³

558. Offering the commanding of rain among other examples, Hume differentiated between mere accidental collocation of events and a causal relationship, in which case a genuine miracle must be involved (*Miracles*, 31–32). Frequency of collocation, contrasted with infrequency (for some claims, this is close to zero) in other circumstances, decreases the probability of coincidence.

559. Ising, *Blumhardt*, 215. Hail would have devastated the harvest, but Blumhardt focused on the immediate distraction to the congregation.

560. Heim, *Transformation*, 195–98 (on 195–97 quoting the pastor’s eyewitness account).

561. Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 192; 54–55 (an unusual harvest), 59 (standing on hot coals for ten minutes), 64 (unexpected rainfall following prayer after a drought). Cf. also rainfall after prayer, ending a long drought, in the Caribbean in a Church of God report by Luke Summers sent to me by Douglas LeRoy (Nov. 9, 2009); diverting of rain, in John Coulson (discussion, April 18, 2011; personal correspondence, April 26, 2011).

562. Koch, *Revival*, 144, noting that he has heard reports of analogous phenomena elsewhere.

563. *Ibid.*, 143. Tari, *Breeze*, 154–56, gives further but potentially complementary details. One genuine incompatibility between the two accounts is the gender of the team leader; Koch names her, so Tari’s information, in this case not (unlike many of his claims) firsthand, might be incorrect, or his ghost editor (cf. p. 2) may have added the detail. Peters, *Revival*, 63, complains that various of his informants accused one

When rain was starting to disperse people gathered for a conference, Indonesian evangelist Petrus Octavianus commanded it to stop in Jesus's name, and it did so.⁵⁶⁴ Conversely, when people hostile to Pastor Daniel's message set on fire the grass roof of his hut, an "unseasonal rain" put it out.⁵⁶⁵

On the scheduled day for the baptism of six new Christian converts in Japan, a typhoon struck. In faith, the candidates nevertheless traveled a few miles in the storm to the bridge. There they found the water stirred by the wind "into a white froth. Yet as they entered the water, the sun burst forth and the winds died down." The typhoon resumed as soon as they had finished. After this unusual event, these believers had strong faith for other miracles.⁵⁶⁶

Donna Arukua shared with me an experience from Papua New Guinea that occurred in 1997, during one of the worst droughts in her lifetime. Since her province was mostly savannah, fires were burning widely; the rivers were so dry that travelers could just walk across the riverbeds. Her team traveled to an inland village far from the nearest river in any case, where the water in the well was getting lower every day as the heat rose. When they arrived, there was only a little water in the bottom of the well, in the mud, and by evening the well was dry. At the villagers' request, the prophet Kindiwa, who was leading the team, prayed. The next morning a woman went shortly after sunrise to see if perhaps she could find a little water for her family, and she discovered that the water was now up to the top, and clear rather than muddy. Normally it was clear only during the rainy season, but there had been no rain in months.⁵⁶⁷

On one occasion in Myanmar, the gathering of three thousand persons for a conference threatened to strain a village's water resources. Believers prayed, and it is reported that "miraculously, a spring broke out in the middle of the village on the day the convention began. This spring supplied enough water for the crowds and still exists today."⁵⁶⁸ In another account, a team was preparing the foundation for a new church on one of the Galapagos Islands when it came to their attention that at the time no sand for concrete was available on the island (the grinders used to pulverize the island's igneous rock were not functioning at the time). In faith they kept digging for the foundations when they ran into a sand mine on their property; every time they removed a shovelful of sand, more sand filled the place.⁵⁶⁹

another of fictitious elaboration; but Koch and Tari concur on the main substance of the story summarized here (even the team number and location of the storm).

564. Crawford, *Miracles*, 75; Koch, *Gifts*, 106–7 (citing the eyewitnesses he interviewed).

565. *Ibid.*, 28.

566. McClenon, *Events*, 144, citing his interview with a Japanese Protestant minister.

567. This occurred in January; although rains had normally started by then, that year they did not come until March (Donna Arukua, interview, Jan. 29, 2009). For a drought ended in connection with gospel ministry, see Tari, *Breeze*, 20. Tari recounts (157–58) that when traditional locals accused a Christian (Tari's father) of causing a drought, he publicly began digging a well, calling on Jesus for vindication. At just three feet, water gushed out and eventually became a new stream that continued to flow thereafter.

568. Khai, "Pentecostalism," 268. Cf. also the guns that refused to fire at one evangelist (269).

569. Michael Mills's testimony, among Church of God reports sent to me by Douglas LeRoy (Nov. 9, 2009).

I even received an unexpected and unusual testimony from Dr. Kay Fountain of her experience in June 1975, with several other persons, of suddenly finding herself and her colleagues in a different location after she prayed (cf. John 6:21). She recounted that this experience brought about the conversion of the group's leader, a scientist who could come up with no other rational explanation for what happened.⁵⁷⁰ Similar accounts appear in Indonesia and elsewhere.⁵⁷¹

Recent Analogies in Africa

My colleague in Hebrew Bible at Palmer Seminary, Dr. Emmanuel Itapson, shared with me an unusual incident that he witnessed through the Nigerian ministry of his father, Anana Itap, around 1975.⁵⁷² When some residents of the village mocked Anana Itap's preaching, he declared, in the midst of rainy season, that the village would remain dry for four days. For the next four days, the village remained dry while rain fell all around it. After this event, Dr. Itapson recounts, only one person in the village remained non-Christian. He notes that people in the village recount the incident to this day.

Both publicly and in a follow-up phone conversation, Dr. Ayo Adewuya recounted a confrontation over nature that he witnessed in Nigeria.⁵⁷³ At the time of a crusade in his hometown in 1979, there had not been rain for some time, but the sky was now full of clouds and about to rain. At this point, a local Shango worshiper, who followed the god of thunder, began going around crediting his deity for the coming rain.⁵⁷⁴ One of Ayo's Christian colleagues declared that to show that the true God would bring rain, it would not rain that day but the next day at 4 p.m. As predicted, it did not rain until 4 p.m. the next day, when rain poured down even though the clouds were fewer.

570. Kay Fountain, interview, Jan. 29, 2009. For a report of a father transported twenty feet in one step, allowing him to rescue his child, see Llewellyn, "Events," 260.

571. After recounting reports of levitation and supernatural transport in non-Christian religions (Koch, *Revival*, 145; cf. Tedlock, "Dreams," 457), Koch reports that Indonesian ministry "Team 47" covered a forty-eight-hour journey in four hours (Koch, *Revival*, 145–46; also mentioned in Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 288). Stewart, "Firewagon," reports a case in India that saved his family's life; cf. also Yun, *Heavenly Man*, 39. For miraculous though not instant transport in ancient pagan sources, see, e.g., Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 37.2–3; Tacitus *Hist.* 4.84; for instant transport, see, e.g., Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 8.10–11; cf. Tacitus *Hist.* 4.82. Pythagoras was once said to teach in two locations simultaneously (Blackburn, "ANΔPEΣ," 190; Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.134). For rapid teleporting, Verman and Adler, "Path Jumping," cite *b. Sanh.* 95ab; *Yeb.* 116a; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.10.363–64; and medieval tradition.

572. Emmanuel Itapson, interview, April 29, 2008; reiterated in a phone interview, Dec. 15, 2009. Emmanuel and his father belonged to the noncharismatic Evangelical Church of West Africa.

573. Ayo noted this publicly in the Matthew section at SBL on Nov. 22, 2009, during discussion surrounding my paper (Keener, "Readings"), and in our phone interview (Dec. 14, 2009).

574. Practices in traditional religions can involve rain (e.g., Maddox, "Cigogo," 156). Among the Karanga, spirit mediums perform a ritual (Shoko, *Religion*, 37, 41), then "rain falls immediately," but "the spot at which the medium sits is not affected by rain," and "people disperse in a heavy downpour" (37). Koch, *Zulus*, 157, portrays some witch doctors as able to cause storms (cf. Rev 13:13), though here countered by Christ. To match such power, many African Christians believe that they must also exercise power.

Similarly, one of our seminary's doctor of ministry students from Cameroon, Paul Wose Mokake, shared with me more than one such account of nature miracles in power encounters with traditional religions.⁵⁷⁵ In one case, he noted how thirty minutes before an evangelism meeting was to begin in Nguti, a heavy storm dispersed the crowds; he and his colleagues came for the meeting anyway, confident that God would clear the rains. The rain receded before them as they approached, so no rain was falling on the grounds as they held the meeting, and people regathered.⁵⁷⁶ I first learned this aspect of his ministry when one of my other students (Yolanda McCain) who was visiting him reported to me her astonishment in witnessing a clearly blind man healed when Paul prayed.

When a torrential downpour began in the midst of Peterson Sozi's altar call in Uganda, he prayed, "Lord, stop the rain!" People applauded as it stopped immediately.⁵⁷⁷ When one southern African chief requested that missionaries pray for rain because of local drought, the missionaries asked that God would not only send it but also make it convincing to others. That night, "there was a great downpour, the roads becoming rivers of water." The chief was convinced.⁵⁷⁸ A Christian family was about to be burned to death in their home in Rwanda when a sudden, deadly thunderstorm dispersed the mob.⁵⁷⁹ In another African country, when some witches were cursing the Christians' God, lightning destroyed the sacred tree around which they had gathered; the source includes photographs and the claim of eyewitnesses.⁵⁸⁰ Elsewhere, it is reported that a Tanzanian pastor cursed a rampaging lioness, whereupon lightning suddenly killed it.⁵⁸¹ When a brushfire threatened to destroy a home in Swaziland, a mother and her sons cried out in prayer for a miracle; abruptly, rain came down, but only for the seven minutes needed to put out the fire, and not beyond a few miles surrounding them.⁵⁸² (Some similar accounts appear elsewhere.⁵⁸³) When raging wind and waters threatened to

575. On June 3, 2006.

576. Paul Mokake (interview, May 13, 2009). Cf. a ministry area exempted from a downpour in Koch, *Zulus*, 127, though the case for the occurrence being extraordinary appears weaker.

577. Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 112 (close friends with Sozi, and hearing the sound of the rain stopping on the tape of the service; many were converted). For similar testimonies, see Numbere, *Vision*, 130, 213, 266 (somewhat differently yet effectively, 279); Pytches, *Come*, 108; the Church of God testimony in Kenya, among reports sent to me by Douglas LeRoy (Nov. 9, 2009).

578. Richards, "Healings."

579. Wagner, "World," 93; cf. 1 Sam 7:10. Sadly, thousands of Christians perished in the Rwandan genocide; any miraculous protection was the exception. Still, I have heard dramatic accounts of protection from individual survivors and their families (e.g., Frederic Mulindahabi, Sept. 1, 2010, following up on previous conversation), who suggest that they would not have survived otherwise.

580. Chavda, *Miracle*, 9–10, 128–29. Photographs appear between 78 and 79.

581. Pytches, *Come*, 108–9 (citing a named missionary's account, but not specifying whether he was an eyewitness). Some others recount providential lightning strikes (e.g., Koch, *Zulus*, 289–90).

582. Johnston, "Rain."

583. Cf. two cases of protection from fires in Anderson, *Miracles*, 196–97; flames subsided during prayer in Laurentin, *Miracles*, 14; apparently similarly in Sanford, *Gifts*, 219–20; selective protection in DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 56; Bruce, *Care*, 68–69; in South Africa, see Buchan and Waldeck, *Faith*; in China, see Kinnear, *Tide*, 60–62 (Watchman Nee's parents); Osborn, *Christ*, 89 (a firsthand account from Franklin Wu).

swamp an evangelism team's boat in southern Nigeria, the leader followed Jesus's example of commanding the storm to stop, and the sea became "as placid as glass."⁵⁸⁴

Eugene and Sandy Thomas, noncharismatic missionaries with a noncharismatic interdenominational mission, pioneered significant ministry in northern Congo, based in Impfondo.⁵⁸⁵ Sandy Thomas tells of an occasion in the 1970s when they were baking thousands of bricks for a building project. The bricks had to be baked for three days yet protected from rain; when heated, they would explode if they got wet. Because it was the rainy season, they constructed a roof to protect the baking bricks. On this occasion, however, the roof burned, leaving them no option but to pray that the rains would not come as the vulnerable bricks were baking. In fact, the rains did come; it rained for more than an hour. While it rained on either side of the brick kiln, however, no water fell on the brick kiln. Their son was running in and out of the rain, and she reported that the workers could not believe what they saw.⁵⁸⁶

Sandy Thomas recounted another occasion, and although it does not involve nature in quite the same sense, this context seems the appropriate place to narrate it. As she and her husband were returning from Bangui, their forty-horsepower outboard motor burned up, perhaps 150 miles from their destination. Faced with overwhelmingly hot sun, Sandy insisted on praying. Her husband opened the motor and showed her the burned parts; he noted that he generally had a lot of faith, but that this time if she wanted to pray, she should lead the prayer. After she prayed, confident that God would help them, she insisted that they push out into the water and pull the rope on the motor. They had nothing to lose, so he pushed out and pulled the rope. As he did so, the motor sprang to life. Eugene observed that he could not explain how it was working but that he was happy that it was working. That motor took them the next 150 miles or so and then died about 50 feet from the shore of their destination, never to work again. When their Bible school students examined the motor, they pointed out that it was burned out

584. Numbere, *Vision*, 206–7 (quote from 207). On a different occasion in Numbere, *Vision*, 212–13, it appears that he may have been rebuking the sea for some time, but after other members of the team had also been worshipping, the sea calmed and they reached their destination safely.

585. Some of their stories appear in Thomas, *Walls*; through my wife's close relationship with them, I got to know them well once they retired in the United States.

586. I first heard this story from Dr. Joseph Harvey in Congo (interview, July 25, 2008), as best as he could recall it from having heard it from Eugene Thomas; I confirmed and corrected that account based on a phone interview with Sandy Thomas (Aug. 26, 2008), who notes that it is one of the stories she plans for a subsequent book. Tari, *Wind*, 44–45, reports Indonesian ministry teams traveling through jungles dry while rain would fall ten feet behind and in front of them; in *Breeze*, 91, the ground and trees were wet everywhere except in the square where Tari's team slept (cf. Judg 6:36–40). Alexander, *Signs*, 4, notes a Pentecostal story of some girls who made it home in a hailstorm with hail falling all around them except in the path of the car. This story reminds me that about 1979, in a car whose windshield wipers were not working, we found ourselves inadvertently driving the wrong way on a one-lane, one-way street blinded by a heavy storm. Annoyed, and being fairly young in the faith, I impulsively commanded the wipers to work "in the name of Jesus." They instantly began working and continued at least until we safely reached home. Other similar stories could be multiplied (e.g., the temporary filling of the blown-out bike tire in Campolo, *Pentecostal*, 26).

inside; hence, this could not have been how they returned. Nevertheless, the burned motor had worked.⁵⁸⁷

Similar cases are reported elsewhere.⁵⁸⁸ Scholar David Crump reports a case about a missionary family who ran out of gas en route to their destination and would be stranded in the central African wilderness far from any villages or means of survival. The only fluid he had was a large container of water, so he emptied it into the tank and offered a desperate prayer that God would make it work. He then started the car and drove it safely to the next village. Crump notes that the eyewitness source, a member of this family, is a highly reliable person not given

587. In Congo, their former coworker Dr. Joseph Harvey told me this story on July 25, 2008, and when I began talking with Sandy Thomas about miracles (Aug. 26, 2008), she brought up this story without my having mentioned it. Her account proved almost identical to Dr. Harvey's secondhand version of the story, but with more details. She was concerned that some people would not believe the story if she told it; it was one story they had told in only one church out of concern that people in the United States would not believe it. She told me of another occasion when, during a storm, a motor had fallen from the boat into the river, and when the motor was recovered the local people were so astonished that the church began to grow, from a few people to just under a thousand.

588. Surveying missionaries working in less technologically advanced locations would probably yield a number of cases. Closer to my immediate circle, on June 14, 1997, my Congolese brother-in-law was driving a car near a military battle when the car died; it restarted only after he prayed fervently, and once he reached safety, it died and never worked again (my wife recorded the story in her journal, June 23, 1997, when she heard it from her brother after he escaped war; he is now a university science professor). On July 9, 2008, the two of them showed me the place in Brazzaville where this incident occurred. Many Westerners would regard that instance as a fortuitous coincidence; if so, it was one that certainly preserved his life for today. I have numerous other anecdotal reports of answered prayers regarding stalled or broken cars, including one from Anna Gulick (personal correspondence, Feb. 4, 2010; June 21, 2011, a split carburetor working) and two cases that I witnessed, but this one seems particularly worthy of mention. Yohannan, *Revolution*, 70, reports supernatural warmth while trapped in a long snowstorm; Robertson, *Miracles*, 12–14, reports that a tornado suspended a van containing a praying mother and her child above telephone wires. It then set them down unharmed and in the same position three blocks away, despite having destroyed much on the ground. For other sorts of "car miracles," see, e.g., DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 31–32, 41; Bredesen, *Miracle*, 7–8, 53–54; Anderson, *Miracles*, 26–27, 55–61, 101–2, 189–90, 209–10, 220–22 (some of which remind me, albeit usually less dramatically, of my own close call around winter 1979; also the incidents in my journal, June 9, 1987; Jan. 24–30, 1999); Koch, *Zulus*, 87, 117–18, 245, 302–3, 305, 307; Sanford, *Gifts*, 217–18 (a key miracle); cf. roadside angel stories in Moolenburgh, *Meetings*, 5–42 (with evaluations); the account retold in Gaztambide, "Relocating," 41. Anderson, *Miracles*, 190–91, also reports claims of a telephone line working when it naturally could not (thereby preserving a life); on 226–29, miraculous protection during falls (including a fall from the sixth story, without injury, 226; and, most impossibly from a natural standpoint, a child's fall from a window in progress reversed, 226–27; and witnesses claiming that a baby, ejected from an out-of-control car, was suspended six or seven feet in the air, then set down gently, unharmed, 228–29); a "falling" miracle also appears in DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 51. Apparently DeLonn Rance's plane ran out of fuel in Honduras, but ran anyway until their landing (Rance, "Fulfilling," 32–33; idem, personal correspondence, Sept. 25, 27, 2010; known also to Byron Klaus, as evident in personal correspondence, Sept. 24, 2010; cf. a brief mention of flying on an empty fuel tank that Synan, "Foreword," 11, received from Demos Shakarian's pilot). What believers would count as miracles might stand behind even the report of a boy surviving a sixteen-story fall (http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100725/ap_on_re_as/as_new_zealand16_story_survival; accessed July 25, 2010) or the vast majority of passengers surviving a plane breaking apart (Vivian Sequera, "'Miracle' in Colombia Crash: Woman Dies, 130 Live," Associated Press, http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100816/ap_on_re_la_am_ca/lt_colombia_plane_crash), and the rescue of thirty-three miners in Chile (cf. testimony in the diary in <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-11475156>; accessed Oct. 15, 2010).

to exaggeration.⁵⁸⁹ Again, accounts like this could be multiplied. Clearly they do not always happen, but given what we know of nature, they should never happen.

Accounts in the Western Hemisphere

Reports of answered prayers regarding nature appear in the Western Hemisphere, including in the United States⁵⁹⁰ and in Latin America.⁵⁹¹ In 1965, a severe drought afflicted Santa Rosa, Guatemala, and many people were praying. In one small Pentecostal church, an interpretation of tongues instructed the church to dig in the pastor's backyard, and water would be found. Because his backyard was on a hill, people mocked the diggers as fanatics, but after six days of digging, they found sweet and plentiful water; the new well provided both water and witness to the entire town, and the church "grew from a few dozen to over 900" that year.⁵⁹²

My student Benjamin Ahanonu, from Nigeria, noted that when he was an undergraduate at Drexel University, InterVarsity had an outreach planned but rain was forecast and it was certainly raining that day. When he and his fellow students prayed, he said, the rain stopped, and they were able to conduct the outreach.⁵⁹³ I asked him if he knew how to reach any of the other students who were present; he gave me the name of his friend from that time, Simon Hauger, and noted that he is now a teacher in Philadelphia. When I tracked Simon down, he filled in further details.⁵⁹⁴ He noted that it apparently rained everywhere in Philadelphia that day except on the volleyball court where they were holding their outreach. He had told his father, who was not a Christian, that they were praying for no rain that day; that morning his father commented that it appeared that God had not answered his prayer. When it did not rain on the outreach, his father took notice, and still remembers that event to this day.

Given the abundance of eyewitness claims to what we consider nature miracles, there is no reason to doubt that eyewitnesses in Jesus's day could have made similar

589. Crump, *Knocking*, 13.

590. Briefly, see, e.g., Bennett, *Morning*, 100–103; Harris, *Acts Today*, 80; Sanford, *Gifts*, 216 (three layers of clouds opening just long enough for a plane to descend); Michael Licona, interviews, Nov. 20, 22, 2010. Some would also cite the publicly documented rebuke of Pat Robertson against Hurricane Gloria (Oct. 1985); though supposed to strike Virginia Beach, the hurricane quickly turned northeast instead (Woodward, *Miracles*, 372). Much of Long Island, which now bore the brunt of the hurricane, may have felt less sanguine about attributing the shift to divine causation (though even in that region the damage proved much less severe than anticipated; cf. "Storm," 12, citing "luck"). Robertson, *Miracles*, 46–48, cites a succession of hurricanes turned back, improving what was previously labeled "hurricane alley."

591. Cf. Castleberry, "Impact," 111–12, for rains being mostly suspended precisely during scheduled outdoor evangelistic meetings in a rainy season (Ecuador, 1982).

592. Enrique Zone, in Wagner, "World," 95–97. In Malawi, massive rains ended a drought within an hour of the first public prayer for rain (Marszalek, *Miracles*, 2–4). Less dramatically, Mansfield, *Pentecost*, 38, notes the restoration of water flow in a house after prayers for it but allows that perhaps a plumber had intervened without their knowledge.

593. Benjamin Ahanonu, interview, Sept. 29, 2009.

594. Simon Hauger, phone interview, Dec. 4, 2009. I witnessed a similar event, which I recount in ch. 15 (also described in Keener, *Gift*, 62).

claims in which they believed. The sorts of claims I have recounted in this chapter, however, often stretch the credibility of a nontheistic or nonsupernatural paradigm. I believe that the stronger examples cumulatively invite open-minded hearers to consider the hypothesis of supernatural causation. We will try to weigh some of the evidence for such a hypothesis in the next three chapters.

Conclusion

Many healing claims involve blindness, inability to walk, and even raisings from death; other claims involve sudden changes in nature after prayers. Despite some debatable instances, some other cases are fairly clearly extraordinary. It seems to me that to dispute that such phenomena have sometimes occurred is not really possible for open-minded people. What is more often disputed is what to make of such phenomena. How can investigators explain such phenomena? Different cases may require different sorts of explanations. We turn to this question in the following chapters.

Proposed Explanations

For a worldview that accepts both natural and supernatural factors (and attributes even nature's origin to supernatural causation), natural and supernatural explanations need not be incompatible. Nevertheless, uncommitted observers are generally more likely to acknowledge supernatural factors where natural factors prove insufficient to account for events. Often natural factors prove sufficient to account for recoveries, coincidences, and the like, even when some individual cases appear unusual. But is this always the case?

For most Western observers, the interpreter's assumptions determine *how* improbable natural explanations must be before supernatural explanations will be considered. Some rule out all evidence that they could explain by some other means, no matter how improbable the other explanations are, because they presuppose that supernatural explanations are always more improbable than even the weakest natural ones. In this case, they do not merely assign the burden of proof wholly to the supernaturalists, despite antisupernaturalism being the minority position historically and globally. They also demand a standard of evidence impossible for any position to meet, because evidence that contradicts one's position can virtually always be explained away. Those who reject this antisupernaturalistic bias, common though it may be, recognize that sometimes supernatural factors offer a more parsimonious explanation that skeptics dismiss too readily. In such cases, neutral observers should deem supernatural factors the best specific explanation available. That is the secondary, more controversial argument of the book, but I can address it more concisely than the arguments of previous sections because this argument builds on much of the information that I have already discussed in the previous chapters.

Nonsupernatural Causes

... magic, charms, spells and amulets. Cures, by these means, were recorded both in ecclesiastical and medical circles. The facts need not be questioned. It was the explanation of the facts which was wrong. They were mental and faith cures and not miracles. —George Gordon Dawson¹

As we noted earlier, if even a handful of miracle claims prove far more probable than not, Hume's argument fails, removing the initial setting of wholesale skepticism against miracles. Without a special burden of proof against miracle claims, they can be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by normal laws of evidence like any other claims. Even on this basis, however, not all unusual claims require special divine action to be true; some may reflect the ordinary (or even unusual) process of nature.

Many cures stem from natural causes, even if, as most theists affirm, divine purpose stands somewhere behind nature. Many cures lack sufficient clear indications of divine activity to offer by themselves clear evidence for the latter for those who do not already believe it. Affirming the reality of miracles also does not give us the right to ignore the fact that miracles very often do not happen. Tragically and disappointingly, large numbers of people who seek supernatural (or natural) healing are not healed.² This observation seems to hold empirically true even in

1. Dawson, *Healing*, 188.

2. For examples and theological discussion, see further Crump, *Knocking*, 10–14, 42–45 and *passim*. For some further specific examples, see Benson, *Not Healed*; Eareckson with Musser, *Joni*; Bergunder, "Miracle Healing," 302 (noting that the same faith nevertheless enabled the woman to face death bravely). Joni Eareckson believed that she would be healed (Eareckson with Musser, *Joni*, 59, 62, 65, 69, 79, 113, 187–88); but while she recognizes that God sometimes does heal (187, 189–90), she was not physically healed herself. Instead she came to terms with her disability; indeed, few would doubt that her disability has allowed her to touch more lives than most other people touch (cf. e.g., 219–22, 228, and her subsequent advocacy for the disabled). Black, *Homiletic*, 52–53, 181, rightly emphasizes sensitivity toward the many persons not physically cured in healing services. Hiebert, *Reflections*, 200–201, notes his deep disappointment when

ministries that claim much supernatural healing, as most proponents of supernatural healing acknowledge.³

Likewise, some remissions prove disappointingly temporary, despite the short-term benefit they do provide.⁴ Testimonies from too soon after the cure⁵ typically do not leave room to test the permanence of the cure; even cases that a doctor reasonably believed healed based on present evidence might prove temporary.⁶ (It should be noted, however, that even some early testimonies have been revisited decades or even a half century later and proved enduring.⁷) Whether temporary improvements can function as evidence of healing depends on the case and on

a child for whom he as a missionary prayed died, but that the funeral ended up glorifying God in the community. By contrast, although Lindsay, *Not Healed*, allows for it to be someone's time to die (15–16), he usually attributes a person's lack of healing to sin (8–12), unbelief (17–18), or the like, going beyond biblical evidence; one might as well blame the healing ministers for inadequate faith (cf. Jas 5:14–15).

3. E.g., Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 155–74, esp. 165–69; also 206; Neal, *Power*, x–xi, 1–8; Bennett, *Morning*, 151; Stewart, *Only Believe*, 145, 147 (also 76 and 165, on the healing evangelists; also *ibid.*, 152, on a school for the deaf in Liberia founded by Stewart's ministry); Alexander, *Signs*, 10–13; Woldu, *Gifts*, 158–59; Tari, "Preface," 11 (noting that they pray for healing only when led to do so; cf. Breeze, 55–57); Martin, *Healing*, 53; Ogilvie, *Healing*, 36–37; Lawrence, *Healing*, 43–44; Kirby, "Recovery," 119–20; Rogge, "Relationship," 384–90; Benson, *Not Healed*, *passim*; Lucas, "Foundations," 31–37; Reyes, "Framework," 114–43; Kraft, "Years," 120; Pytches, *Come*, 22, 162; cf. Winston, *Faith*, 47–49; Pytches, *Thundered*, 55, 82–83; Alamino, *Footsteps*, 51 (blind), 57–58 (deaf); Woodard, *Faith*, 48–58; Gee, *Trophimus* (in McGee, *Miracles*, 196); helpful historical discussion in Hardesty, *Faith Cure*, 129–37; for Latin American Pentecostalism, see Petersen, *Might*, 102–4 (noting trust in God's sovereignty, 102). This was clearly true even of noted healing evangelists; for example, many close to Wigglesworth were not healed (Warner, "Introduction," 19), and his own three-year agony with gallstones made his later ministry gentler than before (Gee, "Foreword," 13; Warner, "Introduction," 22–23); Oral Roberts's informal estimate of 10 percent healed (Stewart, *Only Believe*, 58); in the modern faith movement, see Barron, *Gospel*, 125–36. Van Brenk, "Wagner," 257, cites 29 percent completely healed for Wagner (which would be quite high).

4. E.g., Salmon, *Heals*, 113–16 (in ch. 16, "Disappointments"). Some also view even temporary recoveries as often helpful, extending life at least partly (a view noted in Ogilbee and Riess, *Pilgrimage*, 49; cf. the incidents in Stibbe, *Prophetic Evangelism*, 2–3; Cunningham, *Holiness*, 154–55). Harry Hock (*Miracles*) benefited greatly from his dramatic recovery in 1965, but he did pass away in late 1969 (when his wife, at least, was in her sixties; see <http://www.genealogybuff.com/pa/pa-mifflin-obits14.htm>; accessed Dec. 6, 2010); for another productive reprieve of three and a half years, see Hock, *Miracles*, 53–54, 69; in Maddocks, *Call*, 36–37, a clearly dying man recovered after anointing, yet died of the same disease two years later; in Ising, *Blumhardt*, 212, a man dying of lung disease returned to his work healthy but died two years later. Baxter, *Healing*, 260–61, notes that some, especially older persons, not unexpectedly pass away several years after healing; he emphasizes that present physical healings, in contrast to future resurrection, are not intended to cure human mortality. Cf. also the report that Kimbangu warned one man named Yankala not to sin again, and when Yankala did so his blindness returned (McClenon, "Miracles," 187).

5. Some testimonies come from soon after the cure (e.g., the cancer recovery testimony of J. W. Guthrie, Akron, Ohio, "Healed," comes from only two years after the diagnosis; the testimony in Lederer, "Healing," of Elyria, Ohio, comes only months after the remarkable tuberculosis recovery). Early Pentecostals recognized that some recoveries were temporary and sought to explain these theologically (e.g., Clifford, "Permanent"; reprinted as Clifford, "Healings").

6. May, "Miracles," 151, points out that two of Gardner's twenty-two healing examples (about 9 percent) died the year that Gardner's book (*Healing Miracles*) was published.

7. E.g., Warner, "Still Healed" (after fifty-two years); Warner, "Living by Faith" (after sixty-five to seventy-five years). Clara Shannon, mentioned earlier, temporarily succumbed again to the affliction from which she had been dying, but after more prayer, she remained healthy for at least forty more years (Hurst, "Healings").

the bar the observer requires as evidence, but many would not establish the case by themselves.⁸

Finally, that everyone dies shows that no one, regardless of one's theology, will always be healed.⁹ That is, whether remissions are permanent or not, death is inevitable for everyone. Not only are many not healed (as noted above), many have died without healing even in movements that emphasize healing, despite abundant prayer for them.¹⁰ In some movements, a number of persons have even died precisely because, waiting for miraculous intervention, they neglected medical intervention already available to them.¹¹

8. Bishop's dismissal of temporary cures as violating the definition of miracle (Bishop, *Healing*, 203) begs the question, since there is no agreed-on definition; moreover, even in medicine, when the original cause of an ailment is not removed, the ailment may return (e.g., one with a genetic predisposition to cancer may be genuinely cured and not merely in temporary remission but may succumb to cancer later). Even in some cases of relapses after a few years (such as rarely happen in connection with Lourdes), the original healing remains medically inexplicable (Cranston, *Miracle*, 185). But temporary cures, while beneficial, are often too ambiguous to function as evidence. Ancient conceptions of some kinds of miracles or magic allowed for reversal (see examples in Bertman, "Note"), but these were not normally eliminations of benefits conferred and therefore would not be relevant to this case.

9. So also Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 61; Choy, *Murray*, 158; Pink, *Healing*, 24; cf. Lim, "Evaluation," 189; Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 109 (citing Dr. Don Gross); Robertson, *Miracles*, 109 (acknowledging that it is sometimes God's will to "take" someone); Christians being ready for death in Neal, *Power*, 12–17; some early Church of God Pentecostals in Alexander, *Healing*, 112–13. Some even cite cases where they believe sickness (German, "Mysterious Ways"; Numbere, *Vision*, 337 [sickness preventing taking a fatal flight]; Alamino, *Footsteps*, 48 [sickness protecting from false accusation]; Ten Boom, *Tramp*, 176; Bredesen, *Miracle*, 69) or other problems (Smith, "Breakdowns") proved providential, restraining them from a situation that could have led instead to death. In Anderson, *Miracles*, 156, the lack of supernatural healing saved the patient's marriage (the surgery brought the family together, preventing the divorce); earlier, J. Hudson Taylor experienced his greatest advances through physical affliction (Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 66–67 [cf. also 87–89]; cf. Ps 119:67, 71), though he also experienced dramatic recoveries (ibid., 15–16, 87).

10. As a test case, during the 1918 flu epidemic, early Pentecostals claimed that many escaped death and were healed; their obituaries nevertheless show that many did die. At least some sources treated the deceased as having died in faith and overcome (Alexander, *Healing*, 222). For reports of both deaths and healings during that epidemic, see Olena, *Horton*, 43. The reality of death in spite of prayer clearly jarred a young and idealistic Aimee Semple MacPherson regarding her first husband (Blumhofer, *Sister*, 91–94); "faith" may have even encouraged the original deficiency in hygiene that helped precipitate the death (91). Charismatic leaders like David Watson have died from illness despite the prayers and faith of many (Storms, *Healing*, 34–35); note also, e.g., the godly Elberta Bennett (Bennett, *Morning*, 118–21). Though this present book emphasizes those who have been healed, many with whom I have talked during this period have shared about other loved ones who experienced tragic deaths despite fervent prayers; e.g., Genti Rexho (his mother; personal correspondence, May 25, 2009); Dick and Debbie Riffle (their son; personal correspondence, Dec. 13, 2007); cf. also Reed, *Surgery*, 16, 36. I am aware of a rare circle of teaching that has promised physical immortality (I have had particular concern regarding this version of "Manifested Sons" teaching), but such circles presumably die out over time with their most extreme advocates. Manifested Sons teachers like Bill Britton have died, though expecting elite Christians to be glorified on earth during the final tribulation (*Jesus the Pattern Son* [Springfield, Mo.: Bill Britton, 1967], 73–75; idem, *Sons of God—Awake!* [Springfield, Mo.: Bill Britton, 1966], 1–17, 64–83); the more radical Manifested Sons teacher Sam Fife died in 1979 ("Body Loses Head"; Taft, "Crash"; Scott, "Sect Leader"). Father Divine apparently taught that following him properly cured all sickness and could ideally prevent death (Fauset, *Gods*, 63).

11. E.g., Reed, *Surgery*, 41–42; Oursler, *Power*, 252; see esp. examples in May, "Miracles," 145; on Hobart Freeman, see, e.g., Barron, *Gospel*, 14–33; cf. Sweet, *Health*, 160; Wagner and Higdon, "Issues"; Alexander,

One cannot fairly count such observations against the testimony of the Gospels, however.¹² The Gospels nowhere imply continuous healing leading to immortality and have rarely been construed as implying this.¹³ Nor do they appear to envisage a situation in this age where all the disabled are healed (cf. Luke 14:13–14); many of those who pray for the sick affirm that, no matter how many blessings of the kingdom are at work in the present, some still await the future era.¹⁴ For early Christians, signs of the kingdom represented *samples* of the future age, not its fullness. Indeed, texts from the Pauline corpus indicate that even some persons in Paul's circle remained sick.¹⁵ Paul apparently saw no contradiction between such illnesses and his claim that God performed signs through his ministry (2 Cor 12:12; Rom 15:19). Granted such observations, how should we respond to more dramatic healing claims such as many of those that we have noted?

Epistemological Premises

I believe that the book's primary and less controversial thesis, that eyewitnesses report healings (even rather dramatic ones), is already safely established. But how should these claims be understood? If one starts with the assumption that miracles happen, one will construe many of these reports as miracles. If one starts with the assumption that miracles do not happen, one will interpret all these stories differently. If we leave both options open and look for the most

Fire, 302. (Many of these writers critique an excess, not all charismatic healing; Reed's sister, for example, is charismatic leader Rita Bennett; Bennett, *Morning*, 141.) For some African churches' failure to address AIDS prevention adequately, see, e.g., Togarasei, "HIV/AIDS," 13–15; cf. Wanyama et al., "Belief." News stories about religiously based criminal neglect in cases of children's health abound: e.g., Rose French, "Courts Face New Challenges in Faith Healing Cases," Associated Press, June 30, 2009, http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090630/ap_on_re/us_rel_faith_healing_law; accessed June 30, 2009; Robert Imrie, "Wis. Jury: Father Guilty in Prayer Death Case," Associated Press, Aug. 1, 2009, http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090802/ap_on_re/us/us_prayer_death; accessed Aug. 1, 2009; Mensah M. Dean, "Faith-healing Parents Charged in Death of Infant Son," *Philadelphia Daily News*, http://www.philly.com/philly/hp/news_update/20091008_Faith-healing_parents_charged_in_death_of_infant_son.html; accessed Oct. 8, 2009; already a case in 1915 noted in Wacker, "Living," 434.

12. Some cite evil in the world as justification for rejecting theism (the position hypothetically noted in Basinger, "Evidence," 57–58; contrast Larmer, "Explanations," 11), but it is an idealized theism distinct from any form of theism offered in Jewish, Christian, or Islamic Scriptures.

13. Cho, "Foundation," 86, cites Oswald J. Smith (*Physician*, 57, 64), warning against building doctrine against healing on those who are not healed, since even Jesus did not heal all.

14. What many call the "already/not yet" of the kingdom, or "inaugurated" vs. consummated eschatology. See, e.g., Blue, *Authority*, 107–16; Lucas, "Foundations," 32; Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 51–55; Nolivos, "Paradigm," 233; Hudson, "British Pentecostals," 298 (though noting on 299–300 that this was not widely accepted in early British Pentecostalism); Cho, "Foundation," 94.

15. Many rightly cite Gal 4:13–14; Phil 2:27; 1 Tim 5:23; 2 Tim 4:20 (e.g., Blue, *Authority*, 107–8; Lucas, "Foundations," 31–32; Storms, *Healing*, 95–100). The thorn in the flesh of 2 Cor 12:7 that many cite, however, is more debatable (see Num 33:55; Josh 23:13; Judg 2:3; e.g., Keener, *Corinthians*, 240; Kwon, "Foundations," 164–65; Bartow, *Adventures*, 103), and while Gal 4:13 probably refers to sickness, it does not indicate an eye disease (*pace* many; see Keener, "Notes," 47–49). See also 1 Kgs 1:1; 14:4; 2 Kgs 13:14.

plausible explanation in any given case, different cases may require different explanations.

Regardless of one's assumptions about the possibility of supernatural causation, however, virtually everyone will agree that some claims are not miraculous and that many others do not offer evidence compelling enough by themselves to surmount a very high bar of evidence (for some starting with mostly Humean assumptions yet willing to accept strong evidence). Nevertheless, I will argue, especially in chapters 14–15, that there is some sufficiently strong evidence today to meet an open-minded nonsupernaturalist's bar of proof, if never that of a closed-minded antisupernaturalist. This is the secondary and more controversial argument of this book.

Epistemic Agnosticism

Thoroughgoing epistemological skepticism becomes impractically cumbersome when applied to daily life and often fails to allow for degrees of probability. For example, at an extreme, some aver that one cannot claim to have met with someone else but only to have inferred that one met with someone else. Yet people in everyday life, as well as historians, do not and cannot function with such a narrow epistemological skepticism.¹⁶ Demanding absolute certainty of the sort available in mathematics before making any sort of claims ignores the degrees of probability that we judge sufficient for various activities; it prejudices the case a priori against any assertions.¹⁷ Many philosophers do not embrace such a limited epistemology, including regarding miracles.¹⁸

16. See Baxter, "Historical Judgment," 24–25. Baxter is critiquing those who so portray the disciples' resurrection experiences, noting that this epistemological skepticism so treats all encounters, transcendent or not. See also Maxwell, "Theories," 28–29, advocating a "structural realism" that accepts probable inferences, against an epistemological skepticism with which no one acts consistently. Descartes himself did not intend for skepticism to be applied with such rigor (Landesman, *Epistemology*, 78–81). Scientific theories involve both paradigms, which can be subjective, and data, on much of which observers usually agree (Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 127). Against extreme relativists, who treat scientific theories as more socially constructed than Kuhn, see Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 144–46; Baghramian, "Relativism"; against relativistic applications of Kuhn, cf. Musgrave, "Thoughts," 49; Stegmüller, "Theory Change," 86–87. Although social pragmatism is an inadequate epistemic foundation, it may also be worth noting that pure relativism would make it impossible to justify the Nuremberg trials (cf. Jaki, *Patterns*, 21) or to condemn the Nazi Holocaust and other atrocities except for social utility, itself ultimately difficult to justify without appeal to a higher principle. Between those who neglect social constructions and those who deny even the possibility of concrete data exist a range of "critical realist" positions (Templeton, "Introduction," 9; cf. Polkinghorne, *Physics*, 5–6, situating critical realism between modernism and postmodernism). On scientists' preference for critical realism, see Polkinghorne, *Reality*, 1–6, 15, 35; Devitt, "Realism."

17. Cf. Polanyi, *Knowledge*, 273–74, suggesting that Kant's demand for suspending judgment in pure mathematics in the absence of certain knowledge (though he accepted a *prioris* there) is itself a premise for which one cannot claim certain knowledge. Cf. also his argument about genuine patterns in nature, the degree of objectivity concerning which may be quantified by its order insofar as that differs from expectations of randomness (Polanyi, *Knowledge*, 33–40, esp. 36–37). On provisionality and probability in warrant, see also Templeton, "Introduction," 9–10.

18. Without embracing miracles, Levine, *Problem*, 186, concludes, "Contemporary epistemic theory, including reliabilism, is neutral with regard to the type of evaluative and normative question about the

According to one stringent modern approach to epistemology, we can describe human experiences, but we cannot know whether or what supernatural activity might stand behind them.¹⁹ This supposedly neutral approach provides a common ground for academic discourse on history (namely, human experience open to investigators regardless of presuppositions), so it is useful. It does not, however, provide for dialogue regarding legitimate questions of theology or philosophy and is limited in the sphere in which it can make pronouncements. Such an approach, if its agnosticism functions as a definitive presupposition rather than as an adaptable heuristic tool, forecloses a priori the possibility of some potential interpretations. Though science labels potential grids for interpreting its data as hypotheses, it does not rule out the usefulness of such grids. Employing a common language for history need not require us to rule out a priori the possibility of some metahistorical hypotheses proving more satisfactory than others in explaining the data. In chapters 5–6, I argued that supernatural explanations like theism should not be a priori ruled out as potential explanatory hypotheses.

Since science depends on observation and experimentation, and since a “miracle is by definition an irreproducible” experience,²⁰ even documented miracle cures by definition cannot fit precisely the expectations of science as it has been most narrowly defined.²¹ While affirming miracles, one scholar warns that “miracles cannot be investigated by the usual scientific methods since we cannot control the variables and perform experiments.”²² This does not mean that claims about such events are not falsifiable; it simply means that they must be investigated by means of the appropriate methodology, one suited for individual events.²³ Miracles are distinct acts in history (on theistic premises, actions of an intelligent agent) and thus no more subject to experimentation than other historical events like Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo.²⁴ As I noted earlier, science depends on predictions of the physical world; its method is not meant to provide mathematical predictions

possibility of justified belief in miracles that we have been examining.” Hume could not accept miracles due to “his peculiarly narrow philosophical empiricism” (186; cf. 52).

19. Haacker, *Theology*, 9. In fact, there is no single consensus approach to epistemology today (Landesman, *Epistemology*, 191–92).

20. Hirschberg and Barasch, *Recovery*, 144; cf. Laato, “Miracles,” 68. Hirschberg and Barasch note (*Recovery*, 277) that many scientists treat “miracles” as anomalies that need not be explained; they are statistically possible but not central for the practice of medicine. McClenon, *Events*, 7, notes that anomalous events “need not be experimentally validated” to have real sociological effects.

21. Definitions of science vary; see Okello, *Case*, 13. No one actually conducts his or her life along lines of the stricter definitions; virtually all knowledge on which we act in daily life involves probabilities of varying degrees. Between excessive caution and uncritical acceptance of all claims lie various critical approaches. Here I am simply specifying a methodological limitation of a particular approach to epistemology.

22. Wilson, “Miracle Events,” 266.

23. If evaluated in a larger class of events, it would be the class of other miraculous events, once one has established the likelihood of a miracle in a given case. The closest one comes to a control group is nonmiraculous events; the closest one comes to predictions is that they occur more often in faith contexts, but firm specific predictions are not possible here (or in history more generally, which deals with individual events).

24. Clark, “Miracles and Law,” 31.

of human (or divine) actions. Nevertheless, healing reports make claims about empirical reality that often can be tested,²⁵ and hypotheses may be formed about their most plausible explanations without necessarily unfairly prejudicing the case for or against faith. Their interpretation, however, is complicated by the evaluators' philosophic *a priori*s that often screen out possible explanations, as I suggested in chapters 5–6.

Genuine Anomalies

Although this chapter will explore natural explanations for many recoveries, some recoveries are anomalous. Whatever the reasons, extraordinary cures do occur and should not be minimized. Patrick McNamara, director of the Evolutionary Neurobehavior Laboratory at Boston University School of Medicine, and Reka Szent-Imrey, research associate at the Institute for the Biocultural Study of Religion, challenge the traditional intellectual goal of merely debunking miracle claims rather than learning from them. In this “scenario the hero-scientist” informs the recovering person that no real cure is occurring, “that instead he is gullible, stupid,” and should appreciate the heroic scientist for informing the patient of this truth. By contrast, these authors contend, extraordinary healings do occur, especially in religious contexts. While agnostic about supernatural causation, they insist that scholars should study and learn from these cures.²⁶

Statistically, extraordinary unexpected events sometimes happen; in ten million cases, one may expect to find about ten instances of any one-in-a-million unlikelihoods.²⁷ What makes such anomalies harder to accommodate as mere statistical deviations is when the quality or quantity of their occurrence in a given sort of setting is also statistically improbable to a high degree; this accumulation of irregularities becomes significant if there are patterns in their occurrence. Further, some events are too unexpected, contravening observed patterns of nature to such an extent that they exceed mere irregularities (e.g., perhaps the nonmedical raising of someone who has not breathed for hours). Critics might respond to such cases by citing apparently analogous cases of such anomalies. These proposed analogies, however, beg the question, since they might be further instances of the matter in

25. See Smedes, *Ministry*, 59: healing claims must be open “to objective, rigorous, and scientifically responsible testing . . . over an adequate period of time and . . . open to critical examination of skeptics.” Like believers, skeptics can explain away evidence to fit contrary paradigms; but science can pass judgment on whether the person was sick and whether the person is now cured (cf. John 9:25). Ideally (if sufficient studies are available), with regard to the recovery’s evidential value, science may also compare the probabilities of this happening in given cases where supernaturalist explanations are not invoked (esp. by chance). On NT epistemology treating miracles empirically, see Blessing, “Psychology,” esp. 90–92, 97. Physical recoveries are not simply the subjective psychological experiences characterized as “mysticism” (cf. James, *Varieties*, 379–429; James himself allows supernatural reality but rejects miracles [520–21], concurring with dominant philosophic dispositions of his era).

26. McNamara and Szent-Imrey, “Learn,” 208–9. The observation about religious contexts begins on 210.

27. One cannot calculate these with any mathematical precision, however; events that are too rare offer insufficient data for statistical predictions.

question (i.e., a possibly supernatural event), or at least much rarer outside the observed pattern of occurrence.

Likewise, the sort of event typically expected one in a million times may appear far more often (say, thirty cases in a million) under specified conditions (e.g., when prayer is offered), suggesting a pattern. When anomalies repeatedly surround particular persons, for example, multiple raising accounts in one circle (whether Mama Jeanne, Albert and Julienne Bissouessoue, or Jesus of Nazareth), the pattern of occurrence is itself statistically improbable unless one takes into account some relationship with the pattern (e.g., here, one explanatory hypothesis would be supernatural causation).

Explanations may vary depending on how anomalous events are. The disappearance of a headache or even an unexpected deathbed recovery are more easily explained as random statistical irregularities than, say, the full restoration of a person whose systems have already shut down or (still more unexpectedly) the raising of a person dead for forty minutes. A person recovering unexpectedly or living longer than the doctor predicted could be attributed to chance, since predictions are fallible estimates based on limited knowledge.²⁸ Anomalies are rarer than these, however, and the compounding of anomalies is itself anomalous. To simply dismiss such patterns as random irregularities is to evade the possibility of a supernatural explanation by fiat of definition (“anomalies” that do not require explanation rather than a possible miracle). The less common naturalistic alternative, to dismiss accounts as fabrications because they are too anomalous on naturalistic grounds, is simply to presuppose what one hopes to prove.

The Demand for Analogies

Before turning to natural causes, I must address a reason often given for accepting only natural causes and also address my reasons for questioning that approach. Some scholars will accept those extranormal claims in early Christian sources for which we have analogies today (such as healings and exorcisms), yet reject those that they regard as unparalleled and that cannot be explained naturalistically.²⁹ That is, only naturalistic explanations are acceptable from the start. One of the most obvious test cases for claims that cannot be explained without supernatural causation is walking on water. Marcus Borg accepts reports of Jesus’s healings and exorcisms because we have such reports for others conducting these types of activities but rejects reports of raising someone long dead, walking on water, or multiplying food. “As a historian,” he insists, “I cannot accept that Jesus’s ability to ‘do the spectacular’ was unique and without parallel.”³⁰ Likewise, Bart Ehrman

28. See, e.g., the case Joseph F. O’Donnell, an oncologist, cites in Lenzer, “Citizen” (the fifth page of my online version). The same page in Lenzer also correctly notes the “bias called the survivor effect”: survivors offer testimonies, but even if they prayed beforehand, the dead tell no tales.

29. For a fuller discussion of Troeltsch and the principle of analogy in historiography, see ch. 6.

30. Borg, “Disagreement,” 232; cf. similarly Price, *Son of Man*, 19–21, 131; Theissen and Merz, *Guide*, 310; particularly explicitly Montefiore, *Miracles*, 18: “it is difficult to believe that God intervened so often

points out that we know thousands of people, and they do not walk on water.³¹ And it cannot be denied that water-walking claims remain quite rare (though not unheard of)³² compared with healings and exorcisms.

Yet even here the inquiry starts from a premise that is not necessarily neutral. Evaluating Jesus by the standards of widespread practice may fail to account for the fact that what we *do* know about him even based on purely secular historiographic grounds³³ pushes him far beyond the category of “most people,” even in terms of how he viewed himself.³⁴ As noted in chapters 2–3, we cannot even compare him in this respect with typical sign prophets of his era, who failed to perform the promised signs.³⁵ There are similarities and differences with other charismatic sages of his era (not least the historical attestation surrounding the latter),³⁶ but they were rare, none of them clearly offered the sort of self-claims that Jesus almost certainly offered for himself,³⁷ and for that matter, a supernaturalist might not a priori rule out the possibility that some of them experienced some supernatural agency as well. More important, most people with Jesus’s self-claims do not offer healings, exorcisms, and the like, and if we compare Jesus with those who do, rather than people in general, this category includes few enough members that we cannot easily extrapolate from the others to Jesus. What if Jesus really was sent by God and attested by special supernatural signs? Is there more bias in raising the question or in dismissing it without examination?

in the ministry of Jesus if intervention only very rarely occurs elsewhere” (a position assuming both that Jesus was not extraordinary and that intervention everywhere else is rare). We do have some parallel claims for each of these categories, especially for resuscitating dead persons (as noted in the previous chapter), but all these categories of claims are admittedly rare. For feeding miracles, see Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 38, and other sources discussed earlier. I also argued earlier that historians do not need to presuppose atheism or deism (i.e., to rule out an active God) to talk about history.

31. Ehrman, *Prophet*, 196.

32. See, e.g., Dermawan, “Study,” 256; on a popular level, see Crawford, *Miracles*, 26; Tari, *Wind*, 43–47 (citing multiple eyewitnesses he knew), regarding West Timor.

33. For studies at this level particularly well informed about Jesus’s Jewish environment, to name only a few, see, e.g., Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*; idem, *Jesus and Judaism*; idem, *Religion*; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*; idem, *Figure*; Meier, *Marginal Jew*; Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*; Theissen and Merz, *Guide*; Flusser, *Sage*; I offered my own contribution in Keener, *Historical Jesus*, chs. 17–19, 22. Not all of these scholars would agree with the degree of uniqueness I would attribute to Jesus in this respect, but I think that all would agree (as would, I think, even Borg and Ehrman, noted above) at least that Jesus’s activities differed considerably from average.

34. Cf. Eve, *Miracles*, 378, 384–86; from a different angle, Bartholomew, *Belief*, 112, as cited in Licona, *Resurrection*, 145n31. On the importance of the context of Jesus’s life and claims for evaluating his miracle claims, cf. Swinburne, “Evidence,” 205–6 (on the resurrection claim).

35. See further Eve, *Miracles*; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 242–43, and the discussion in chs. 2–3 of the present book. The one ultimate promised sign in dispute is his resurrection (the most significant, and in my opinion the only viable, historical objection to considering which stems from antinaturalist assumptions); whether he expected the kingdom’s consummation in tandem with judgment on Jerusalem chronologically or (as I think) only theologically is also a matter of dispute. But Jesus, unlike what we know of the sign prophets, performed many signs.

36. Again, see Eve, *Miracles*; our chs. 2–3.

37. See Keener, *Historical Jesus*, chs. 18–19, and sources cited there (notably Flusser, *Judaism*, 620).

If one does not start with the premise that Jesus *could* not be unique (or at least highly extraordinary),³⁸ the evidence does suggest that Jesus was sufficiently beyond the normal person for us to investigate unusual questions about him.³⁹ To start with the premise that Jesus could not be sufficiently extraordinary as to invite extraordinary explanations (such as those that his earliest followers affirmed) is merely to state an assumption, not to offer an argument. That assumption might be more readily entertained if it did not simply rule out by fiat the very position that it purports to refute.

Having noted this point, however, I will maintain my focus here on the less controversial and more clearly documented cases of healings and exorcisms, rather than arguing Borg's and Ehrman's point here. Neither walking on water nor multiplying food are common or typical in the Gospels. I have noted some modern claims to nature miracles (ch. 12), but the majority of miracle claims today, as in the Gospels and Acts, involve unusual recoveries. And as noted in the previous chapter, there are a number of claims of raising the dead today, though the majority of those, like most in the Bible, do not address those who have been dead for extended periods of time.⁴⁰

Introducing Nonsupernatural Causes

Although experiences reported as miracle cures are significant to those who experience them, not all are genuinely anomalous medically. Moreover, whereas many observers will view some unusual recovery claims as quite plausible, virtually everyone will regard some miracle claims as fallacious, whether the error arises through deception or misunderstanding. Most of us have experienced either breaches of trust by some faulty witnesses (sometimes even deliberate con artists) or some witnesses' unsatisfactory interpretive assumptions about what must constitute supernatural activity. One cult leader,⁴¹ Sam Fife, built much of his claim

38. Borg, "Disagreement," 232, is explicit about his premise: "if I became convinced that at least a few people have been able to walk on water, then I would be willing to take seriously that Jesus may have done so. But as a historian, I find myself unable to say that the life of Jesus involved spectacular happenings of a magnitude without parallel anywhere else."

39. Cf. Polkinghorne, *Reality*, 68. Certainly for Christians who affirm the Creator's special activity in Jesus of Nazareth, "it would not be surprising if some quite remarkable things happened around him" (Placher, *Mark*, 79, citing also Archbishop Rowan Williams, *Tokens*, 44–45). A priori accepting or rejecting this premise constitutes working from assumptions; to explore the *possibility* of the premise requires only an open mind.

40. Those resuscitated are not normally long dead (Price, *Son of Man*, 21: "the rotting dead"), but there is only one case of that even in biblical narrative (John 11:39, 43–44; cf. the urgency in 2 Kgs 4:29).

41. I define "cult" here in sociological rather than theological terms, though most theologians would consider both categories applicable in this case. Though resembling a radical charismatic group in some respects (and undoubtedly with much variation at the local level, and perhaps differing at different points in the movement's history), Sam Fife's "Body of Christ" went far beyond this, moving many people to wilderness farms (see, e.g., Taft, "Followers," 1; Watson, "Leader"; Buffington, "Leader"; "Body Loses Head"; Rudin and Rudin, *Prison*, 72–74, esp. 73; Scott, "Sect Leader," A5), allegedly breaking up families (e.g.,

for supernatural attestation of his ministry on an exorcism that he performed, supposedly delivering a woman from epilepsy, on account of which he was allegedly able to lecture the psychiatrists at Tulane University.⁴² When I inquired at Tulane several years later, psychologist David Reed, then in private practice, responded that “no EEG readings satisfactorily established epilepsy” and noted significant exaggeration on the leader’s part (for example, they dialogued with Fife; he did not teach them).⁴³

Some accounts of miracles raise suspicions even for those who accept some other kinds of miracles. Thus, for example, in one report blood mysteriously spattered onto a woman’s white dress during a church service, but the stains equally mysteriously disappeared soon afterward.⁴⁴ In another, people claimed to see “bloodstained crosses floating across the night sky.”⁴⁵ Those prone to accept supernatural explanations can be tempted to explain more details than necessary in such terms. While one cannot a priori rule such unusual claims to be impossible, at the least they diverge from the pattern of the bulk of the analogies for more documented extranormal claims, and thus our first instinct, even on the premise that miracles do occur, will be to seek other explanatory categories.

Dunphy, “Marriage”; Taft, “Followers,” 16) and on at least some farms beating, restraining, or otherwise abusing children (Dunphy, “Marriage,” C1; Dettling, “Witness”) and others (Watson, “Leader”; Buffington, “Leader”; idem, “Routine”) who were supposedly possessed. Other materials are also in my file (mostly numerous newspaper clippings and copies of interviews with ex-members shared with me by some local anticult activists several years after the reported events).

42. Sam Fife, *Studies in Demonology* (North Miami, Fla.: North Bible Center, n.d.), 35, 40; see her own more nuanced testimony in a mainstream setting in Miller, “Story” (noting on 177 that she had remained delivered for nearly twenty-seven years). Fife also circulated a tape of the woman’s deliverance (“The Jane Story: Deliverance from Demons”).

43. Personal correspondence, May 27, 1980, noting that the staff there accurately predicted Fife’s own breakdown, which followed soon after. Reed’s clinical evaluation appears in Smucker and Hostetler, “Case,” 182 and passim; he asked Fife to share at Tulane what happened (187), believed that psychotherapy helped prepare her (189), and argued that her belief system helped make her susceptible to this method of cure (190). Although with less direct information, what information Dr. Henry H. W. Miles at Tulane had available when I wrote them offered a quite different impression from Fife’s exaggerated claims (personal correspondence, April 21, 1980). One might also note that most of Fife’s specific prophecies (e.g., in his speech from Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, 1972, excerpts of which were provided me) did not come to pass. With regard to healing beliefs, “Tapes Prove,” 1, quotes tapes in which sect leaders insist that one should believe the “truth” that one is already healed rather than the “facts” of one’s sickness.

44. Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 93 (citing Robert A. Brown, in *Latter Rain Evangel* [July 1929]: 6). The “mysterious” character might reflect the incompleteness of the source and a misunderstanding at the source (e.g., she began menstruating unexpectedly, something ruptured, or communion wine was spilled; the garment was cleaned; and someone who did not check interpreted this outcome as miraculous); but of course I am supplying a rationalist explanation for the report.

45. Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 93; cf. the reportedly widely seen vision of a cross in the sky, interrupting nighttime firing of weapons on both sides, in Boddy, “Cross” (citing his eyewitness sources). These might evoke the tradition of the appearance of Constantine’s celestial cross (Eusebius *Life of Constantine* 1.27–32; Smith, *Comparative Miracles*, 100–102). I have dealt elsewhere with the phenomenon of celestial apparitions, which seem most often susceptible to other explanations (above, 80–82; also Keener, *John*, 1187; cf. one modern discussion of classical examples in Strothers, “Objects”).

The abundance of magical charms attested in both Christian and non-Christian medical literature from the late fourth century suggests to some interpreters that many of the healings of that era were “mental and faith cures.” This does not mean that people in antiquity did not experience these cures as genuine events,⁴⁶ but a cure may be genuine without requiring direct supernatural causation. Many cure claims today can also reflect mental cures or fraud. I already noted (ch. 7) that a large proportion of on-the-spot healing testimonies in public meetings, at least in the West, involve matters that are not immediately visible to onlookers, and that some deceptive or self-deceived attention seekers may claim healings publicly that do not persist. In some cases, however, the healers themselves deceptively exploit their audiences.

Fraud

Josephus thought that the sign prophets in his day (who did not focus on healing) were fraudulent, arguing that they failed to deliver the signs and wonders they promised.⁴⁷ Such accusations continue to surface with regard to healers of various religious traditions.⁴⁸ While many examples are debatable, clearly many faith healers are neither sincere nor effective, and this has probably been true as long as faith healing has been practiced.⁴⁹ In extensive accounts of miracle stories,

46. Dawson, *Healing*, 188, citing evidence in Oribasius's *Medical Collection* in the late 300s; cf. Woolley, *Exorcism*, 25–26. Church leaders sometimes complained about superstition among many Christians on a popular level (Woolley, *Exorcism*, 66–67). As noted above, others have tried to explain NT miracles by analogy to “paranormal” telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition (Montefiore, *Miracles*; Thoulless, “Miracles,” 255–56; cf. Perry, “Believing,” 341, cautiously); while the differences are significant (NT accounts suggest divine dependence rather than innate abilities), the analogy at least represents another attempt to get beyond typical Western assumptions.

47. Josephus *Ant.* 20.167–68. In antiquity, cf. doctors in Toner, *Culture*, 40.

48. E.g., Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism*, 147, report the “gossip” about some *qigong* practitioners faking healings; for traditional healers faking phenomena, see Edwards, “Medicine,” 21; Frank, *Persuasion*, 44; for both fraudulent shamans and authentic “supernormal” phenomena in other cases, see Oesterreich, *Possession*, 381; for charges of fraud in parapsychology, see, e.g., Charpak and Broch, *Debunked*, 127–28; in alternative medicine, Quackwatch (as cited in Lenzer, “Citizen”); in Theosophy, cf. Scott, “Publics.” Allison and Malony, “Surgery,” 56–57, note that James Randi and others have shown how Filipino psychic surgery could be faked and note (on 60) that businessmen hired fakes to exploit tourists, leaving it difficult to ascertain how authentic the original version would have been. McClenon, who has “observed over 1,000 psychic surgeries in the Philippines,” also suspects fraud, though not citing concrete evidence (“Healing,” 44). By contrast, Licauco, “Psychic Healing,” 96, argues that despite some fraud the genuine phenomenon occurs (with too many patients simultaneously for Randi's techniques to work). For one study on psychic surgery (regarding Brazil), see Greenfield, *Spirits*.

49. Cf. Robertson, “Epidaurus to Lourdes,” 188; for King Edward the Confessor (ca. 1051), see Schwarz, *Healing*, 108–10. Also cf. the comparison of faith healing quacks and medical quacks in Frye, “Faith Healing,” 16–17; but faith healing quacks are presumably more common, because, unlike their medical analogues, they are unregulated. For a particularly egregious example, Jim Jones faked miracles (Kerns, *People's Temple*, 47–50). For a fraudulent magnetism doctor, see Buskirk, *Healing*, 49–50. Some doubt that any faith healers cured (e.g., Boggs, *Faith Healing*, 35); others differentiate respectable versions such as Episcopalian Agnes Sanford from “extremes” like Father Divine and (on his view) Aimee Semple McPherson (Gross, *Spiritual Healing*, 23–33). Some distinguish those with genuine cures from those with more abuses (e.g., Dr. Hoyt in Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 64; Spraggett himself in 16–34).

it is therefore not unlikely that some will prove fraudulent even if others are not.⁵⁰ One critical investigator, though his hostility openly betrays his own biases,⁵¹ has rightly identified some fraudulent faith healers in the United States.⁵² Others, who unlike Randi allow for genuinely supernatural and continuing gifts of healings, also acknowledge and challenge frauds and marketing gimmicks.⁵³ An honest investigator shared with me several accounts of healing testimonies and discovered two of these cases to be likely fraudulent during the editing process of my book.

Nevertheless, while frauds exist and are probably common, one cannot extrapolate from a number of fraudulent claims to the conclusion that all miracle claims are fraudulent,⁵⁴ since, as Philip Jenkins notes, “the great majority of churches work strenuously to suppress fraudulent claims.”⁵⁵ That is, many people are ready to expose and discipline fraud when they discover it. Healing researcher Candy Gunther Brown offers psychological reasons that people tend to extrapolate from isolated cases of fraud to generalize about cure claims in general, but warns that the evidence does not support this generalization.⁵⁶ Extrapolating from some claims being false to all claims being false involves a common logical fallacy: generalizing based on specific cases, hence illegitimate transference, that is, guilt by association.⁵⁷ The fallacy is all the more suspect when those extrapolating have inflexibly rigid antisupernaturalist assumptions to defend. The logic is actually

50. E.g., Bredesen, *Miracle*, 128–30, cited a story from Michael Esses, presumably in good faith, but serious questions were later raised about Esses’s veracity (esp. by DeBlase, *Survivor*).

51. While Randi accuses a physician of biases because he is charismatic (290; though the bias seems clear in this case), he ought to allow the charge of bias to cut the other way, since Randi himself is openly hostile. Pankratz, “Magician,” and especially Schmidt, “Possession,” place Randi’s criticism in the historic context of magicians’ conflict with charlatans. Schmidt, “Possession,” 275, notes that modern magicians (P. T. Barnum, Houdini, and James Randi) as expositors of “supernatural” claims reflect a trend since the late eighteenth century for magicians to function as Enlightenment “celebrities” rather than purveyors of the supernatural (though on the other side Houdini’s objectivity is questioned in a case in McClenon, *Events*, 196). For magicians’ rationalist exposés, see Schmidt, “Possession,” 297–300 (esp. 299, on Spiritualists); on Enlightenment use of ventriloquism as trickery, see 279–92 (for entertainment, 292–97).

52. Randi, *Faith Healers*; some he treats, like Leroy Jenkins (89–98; see also Bishop, *Healing*, 30–44, esp. 42–43) and most obviously W. V. Grant (Randi, *Faith Healers*, 78, 81–82, 99–137) and Peter Popoff (49, 76–78, 139–81; cf. Alnor, *Heaven*, 31; Carson, *Scandalous*, 150–51), are commonly regarded as fraudulent, although many would not go so far for some other evangelists that Randi lists, whatever their weaknesses. See also Pankratz, “Magician,” 122, for some clear evidence for fraud. On mixed results for historical investigations of Spiritualists, see McClenon, *Events*, 189–96, and on a mixture of clear fraud and unexplained elements, see 226–27. Randi rejects miracles a priori (Prather, *Miracles*, 44).

53. E.g., Schwarz, *Healing*, 17–21, 46–47, 50–51, 53–66, 77, 84, 117, 185, 193–94; Oursler, *Power*, 253–56; cf. Witty, *Healing*, 18–19; Naswem, “Healing,” 30–31; Frost, *Healing*, 183.

54. Probably implied in the argument of Hume, *Miracles*, 37; idem, “Miracles,” 35.

55. Jenkins, *New Faces*, 122–23; cf. also Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 205, on “healing services”; Newman, *Essays*, 171; Ising, *Blumhardt*, 331. Mayhue, *Healing*, 90, gladly reports a charismatic magazine having to retract a healing story; but perhaps the proper lessons to be drawn might be that they were honest enough to retract what they found to be false and that they did not have to do so on a regular basis.

56. Candy Gunther Brown, personal correspondence, Jan. 1, 2011, based on forthcoming research.

57. This approach lumps all supernatural claims together as a single group, then evaluates the entire group based on some claims (essentially what Hume does in *Miracles*, 37); what members of the set share is simply supernatural claims (that is what defines the set), not necessarily fraud. Cf. the observation of

more apt to problematize the other position: if a single claim proved true, the *possibility* of some other genuine healings would have to be granted regardless of the occurrence of false claims.⁵⁸ Moreover, some of the fraudulent practices may have developed in imitation of authentic versions, reinforcing the danger of a generalization against genuine healing based on fraudulent or failed attempts. (From my reading of many historical accounts, I suspect that many authentic extranormal events take place at times of great spiritual intensity, what modern church historians often call revival—and that some later successors try to manufacture events that look similar without the same spiritual reality behind them.) It is likewise precarious to link together all extranormal claims in history without respect to the differing genres of the works that include them.⁵⁹

In a different category from fraud, and more often relevant to self-descriptions of healings, are common reporting errors of anomalous experiences. Long-term memory usually preserves less detail than short-term memory;⁶⁰ memories may be “reconstructed” to conform them to ordinary or sometimes extraordinary experience;⁶¹ the limitations of language for communicating experiences may inhibit full communication;⁶² and the like. These problems are, however, much more relevant to reports of subjective internal states than to actual changes in physical condition on which most of this book focuses.

That observation is also relevant regarding hallucinations and other necessarily private experiences. Many reports of “alien abductions,” for example, emerged as “repressed memories” during hypnosis.⁶³ Reports vary according to cultural expectations,⁶⁴ but most significantly, there are “almost no instances in which an individual has been observed during” the alleged abduction experience.⁶⁵ This situation is quite different from experiences of healing that are often public and often include changes in health before and after the cure.

one speaker in Euripides *Thyestes* frg. 396: not only are persuasive falsehoods common, but so are truths that are typically not believed.

58. E.g., Smart, *Philosophers*, 33–34; Licona, “Historicity of Resurrection,” 100; Keener, *Gift*, 90; cf. Lawton, *Miracles*, 54; Frohock, *Healing Powers*, 135. Of course, those who inflexibly insist that such events cannot happen can claim that all evidence contrary to their position is false, just as such arguments can be offered to defend any strongly held assumptions against the possibility of contrary evidence.

59. An approach criticized in Licona, “Historicity of Resurrection,” 100 (who contrasts the genre of the Gospels with that of Aesop’s *Fables*; also in idem, *Resurrection*, 143).

60. Pekala and Cardena, “Issues,” 52. Studies of anomalous experiences often must depend on retrospective reporting (61). After noting such qualifications, however, Pekala and Cardena are willing to use data with such qualifications in view.

61. *Ibid.*, 52–53 (the character of “ordinary” sometimes being constructed according to culturally conditioned narratives, 52).

62. *Ibid.*, 53.

63. See Appelle, Lynn, and Newman, “Experiences,” 253–54 (for an example), 266 (for the observation that 70 percent of the stories involve hypnosis). The claims involve “subjectively real memories” (254). Cf. also Walsh, *Shamanism*, 169, noting the frequent unreliability of hypnotically shaped memories.

64. Appelle, Lynn, and Newman, “Experiences,” 259–60 (noting also the biasing influence of investigators’ cues, 259).

65. *Ibid.*, 257.

Emotional Arousal

Here, however, we must look at some of the other natural explanations, which have varying degrees of explanatory power for various kinds of cases. Everyone is aware, for example, that some conditions heal on their own. Thus, for example, Dr. Peter May observes that one kind of birthmark that was supposedly healed miraculously was the sort of birthmark known to disappear naturally over time.⁶⁶ Likewise, while most theists affirm that God works through medical intervention,⁶⁷ we would not likely classify most such events as miraculous in a more specific sense.⁶⁸ May contends that a significant minority of those who develop epilepsy stop having seizures at some point in their lives.⁶⁹

Inviting more discussion here, some apparent recoveries may stem from momentary excitement.⁷⁰ Thus one scholar points to a woman he met who claimed that she had been “‘healed’ at a meeting with a famous guru, when she stood up unaided and took a few paces for the only time since the accident.” The scholar notes that “she reverted immediately to her paralyzed state,” although she remained convinced that her temporary cure had benefited her.⁷¹ Some examples suggest that such temporary cures may have a psychological benefit at times.⁷²

Such incidents are reported among Christians as well. One scholar has warned against the phenomenon of designated wonder workers in some Indian Pentecostal circles, comparing analogous tactics of Hindu gurus.⁷³ He offers his eyewitness

66. May, “Miracles,” 151. Assuming that he refers to this same case, he notes that the birthmark in question remained visible though the child was twelve, which is unusual (154).

67. Note, e.g., the phone survey of 1,052 households in eastern North Carolina, where 87 percent affirmed belief in miracles and 80 percent affirmed that God works through physicians (Mansfield, Mitchell, and King, “Doctor”; cited in Kub, “Miracles,” 1275). Historically, see, e.g., Hickson in Mullin, *Miracles*, 241; Oral Roberts in Schwarz, *Healing*, 31–33; Kuhlman in *Miracles*, 15; others, e.g., Graham, *Spirit*, 160; Csordas, *Self*, 34–35 (Catholic charismatics); MacNutt, *Healing*, 14, 164–67; Martin, *Healing*, 34–35; Lawrence, *Healing*, 52–57; Baxter, *Healing*, 288; Witty, *Healing*, 17; Gorsuch, “Limits,” 286, 297; Pugh, “Medicine”; Pytches, *Come*, 163; White, *Adventure*, 44–50; Dearing, *Healing*, 159–71; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 126, 131; Neal, *Power*, 22–29; Althouse, *Healing*, 57; Sweet, *Health*, 160; Rasolondraibe, “Ministry,” 348; Godwin, *Strategy*, 19, 32, 46; Numbere, *Vision*, 293, 345; Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 360–61 (African Christianity generally); Ayegboyin, “Heal,” 237, 246 (on the Aladura); see the summary in Harrell, “Divine Healing,” 227.

68. May, “Miracles,” 151, notes one advertised healing of this nature.

69. *Ibid.*, 154. Others note that this is less likely for long-term, severe epilepsy.

70. *Ibid.*, 148; May warns about the hype of healing meetings, involving music and “zealous rantings,” though cultures and faith traditions that appreciate emotive preaching or worship may well take umbrage at the latter characterization.

71. Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism*, 147.

72. E.g., although Elena Modina’s husband died a week after the public cure (transcript of Elena Modina, Jan. 7, 2005), he died now happy, converted, and no longer an invalid.

73. Bergunder, “Healing,” 106–7, while acknowledging that the Pentecostal practice is not limited to India; he also notes on 103 that the formal parallels predominate in exorcism rather than healing proper; also *idem*, *Movement*, 126, 155, though some of his analogies, like Christians calling on Jesus’s name or the afflicted falling to the ground, noted on 156, are already in the NT; *idem*, “Miracle Healing,” 295. For rivalry between Hindu and Christian exorcists, see Bergunder, *Movement*, 157–58; Hinduism often expresses itself in different ways, however, e.g., a Hindu shaman having live coals poured over his head while in a state of possession trance (see Harper, “Pollution,” 189). Cf. Hiebert, *Reflections*, 191; Sri Lankan Catholic

account of a disabled elderly man who, in the emotional intensity of the Christian meeting, took several steps and testified of healing, yet afterward was carried out the back, exhausted.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the same researcher admits that such a case was exceptional⁷⁵ and contends that most reported recoveries appear to be authentic, with participants believing they have been cured through prayer.⁷⁶ (I have already noted people who were cured permanently at such meetings.) While Western scholars would attribute many of these to “psychosomatic diseases or spontaneous cures,” he notes, some cannot be readily explained in such terms.⁷⁷ He notes that “healings do occur which are difficult to explain by the scientific means at present available to us.”⁷⁸ Even the analogies sometimes most closely offered for the claim of emotional manipulation, then, should not be taken as representative.

Neither, however, is it purely anomalous or limited to any one culture. Thus researcher Allen Spraggett, who came to adore Kathryn Kuhlman, reported bluntly the sad story of one boy who walked boldly without crutches on stage at another evangelist’s request, only to be back on crutches by the end of the service.⁷⁹ Some other apparent healings hailed by onlookers or hearers turned out to be something other than what they supposed.⁸⁰ Terence Nichols warns that “everyone” has heard of disabled persons walking at healing crusades and afterward collapsing, though he argues that many genuine miracles do occur.⁸¹

demonology at Kudagama drawing on Hinduism and especially Sinhalese Buddhism (Stirrat, “Possession,” 137). One early Pentecostal Indian evangelist, unable to find other Western contacts, affiliated with William Branham (Bergunder, “Evangelist,” 363) and afterward eventually developed Branham’s questionable theological legacy beyond Christianity (365–74; cf. idem, “Miracle Healing,” 295).

74. Bergunder, “Healing,” 108; idem, “Miracle Healing,” 296. He notes that the rallies promise healing to all “but many go home unhealed.” The emphasis of my present interest, that some are dramatically healed, should not detract from recognizing this other element. A number of healing evangelists in India are said to promise healing to everyone, a promise not realized, though there seems to be a general understanding that everyone knows that despite the rhetoric only some persons are healed (Bergunder, *Movement*, 161–62; idem, “Miracle Healing,” 296). For other criticisms of inauthentic activity, see Thomas, “Issues,” 148–50.

75. Bergunder, *Movement*, 162.

76. Ibid., 161; cf. also idem, “Miracle Healing,” 296.

77. Bergunder, *Movement*, 161; idem, “Miracle Healing,” 296. With respect to Western Christians, cf. Stedman, *Life*, 65, noting that persons sometimes improve temporarily due to emotional stimulation, but noting that genuine, quick, and permanent divine healings are “too well attested and documented to challenge.”

78. Bergunder, “Healing,” 108; idem, *Miracles*, 161. He provides verbatim testimony of someone whose younger sister was cured at a rally (108–9).

79. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 18. For some other failed claims, see, e.g., Nolen, *Healing*, 99 (on Kuhlman herself); Randi, *Faith Healers*, 288; Jeffries, “Healing,” 72.

80. Many of those in wheelchairs in the front of some mid-twentieth-century healing meetings were persons simply with back problems who could not be left standing in the healing line, but this sometimes left onlookers with the impression of a healing that did not take place (Stewart, *Only Believe*, 115, 130, arguing that this impression was normally not deliberate). A man who claimed to be cured at Lourdes in 1875 was able to walk with crutches even before his healing, and postmortem examination showed that some evidence of the original injury remained (West, *Miracles*, 9–10), though remaining evidence of an original injury, such as scars, need not impair the functions for which healing is normally sought (cf. even John 20:20, 25).

81. Nichols, “Miracles,” 707.

Scientists could perhaps hire good actors to conduct a revival meeting in a setting where people were accustomed to this style of religion (perhaps university students in and from a heavily religious region). Emotional arousal and comfort, positive confidence, the placebo effect, and so forth might account for a number of cures. Such responses would not necessarily rule out supernatural activity in some cases—participants might encounter God where they expected to experience God regardless of the intention of the organizers. My point is merely that religious use of emotional stimulation can be employed with benevolent or exploitive intentions and does not by itself demonstrate supernatural activity.

The Power of Faith

In some cases of purported healing, another nonsupernatural factor is at work. Some convinced persons exercise what they believe is faith, but what some psychologists would consider denial. They act as though their symptoms do not exist, when in fact no medical change has taken place.⁸² While hope and the power of suggestion can exert a positive curative influence in many sorts of cases, as doctors also observe, this influence does not prove supernatural intervention.⁸³ Suggestion can be effective even when the healing practitioner uses deception.⁸⁴

More positively, science has clearly documented the power of faith, and most religious persons believe that God often works through faith, though God is not limited to it.⁸⁵ A secular observer, however, might reasonably protest that faith's effectiveness need not guarantee the reality of faith's object. Thus I survey here some of the studies involving health and religious practice, including the positive confidence that often comes from it, typically without clear indication of direct divine causation.⁸⁶ These helpful studies are not meant to address the question of supernatural miracles pro or con (their authors themselves hold a range of

82. Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 183. Some forms of teaching in the tradition of faith healing, going beyond more sober biblical examples of "acting on faith," contribute to this problem. Already this belief was causing problems in the late nineteenth century (Curtis, *Faith*, 113, 204). When sickness remained, early Pentecostal leader E. N. Bell advised one to continue claiming healing, yet not to "lie in their testimonies" (Reyes, "Framework," 85–86). Likewise, challenging the high cure rates some suppose for psychic healing, McClenon, "Healing," 44–45, warns that many healers practice denial. As we have noted, even some Christian healers believed to be effective on other occasions have on some other occasions practiced denial (Buckingham, *Daughter*, 129–32, 141, 149, 233–35).

83. Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 183. Ludwig himself emphasizes the value of psychological and emotional factors aiding the body's immune system and healing processes (141–59).

84. McClenon, "Healing," 46.

85. E.g., Benson, *Healing*, 204–6, attributes a remarkable cancer recovery to both faith and radiation therapy, though he notes (206) that neither place this in the category of miracle. For a psychological phenomenology of faith, see Brownell, "Faith," 219–26 (including developmental stages on 222; its relevance to belief in miracle on 231).

86. I should emphasize that the purpose of the medical studies is not to supplant faith in God with faith in faith (see, e.g., the caution of Benson, *Healing*, 190). I simply observe that demonstrating the healing effects of "faith" does not, by itself, prove supernatural or divine activity.

perspectives), but we may take them into account in cases where recoveries are simply somewhat faster or more complete than usual.

Because in Scripture God often works through natural means, a biblical theist would find nothing incompatible with her views in emphasizing the power of faith or other factors in nature understood as the created order.⁸⁷ Indeed, while God working through natural means would not fit Hume's definition of a miracle, it could certainly fit Augustine's. Yet insofar as miracles are defined as extraordinary, these natural factors by themselves do not demonstrate such extraordinary activity (unless they are carried out in an extraordinary way, say, e.g., a recovery that would naturally take ten months taking half an hour). They normally provide instead a more "ordinary" context for religious elements in some recoveries (e.g., social support or reduced anxiety).

Religious Practice and Health

When a religious person merely recovers faster than usual but not extraordinarily faster, sometimes this recovery may simply constitute a variation from the average. When this positive variation happens particularly frequently with religious people, it may reflect factors characteristic of the lifestyle or support systems of religious traditions. Thus studies suggest that some general health improvements may simply reflect the medically documented beneficial effects (on average) of religious conviction and practice;⁸⁸ this observation differs from arguing for specifically and demonstrably supernatural causation.⁸⁹ These general benefits do not of course explain cases of instantaneous or almost instantaneous bone regeneration or cataracts disappearing, but at least in the West these general benefits are probably more common than such striking miracles.

As Harold Koenig, Dale Matthews, David Larson, and many other medical scientists have publicized, a vast range of recent studies on religion and health

87. One would be hard-pressed to cite a biblical or modern miracle claim as dramatic as "DNA, a miraculous three-foot-long string curled up in its entirety in a cell no more than fifteen micrometers across" (Frankenberry, *Faith*, xiv, with reference to Stephen Jay Gould, undoubtedly rightly).

88. See, e.g., Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor* (e.g., 15–23); for one brief popular account, Wallis, "Healing" (esp. 60); for a brief history, see Eames, "History." I have borrowed the vast majority of sources for this discussion from abstracts provided at <http://www.dukespiritualityandhealth.org> (accessed March 14, 2008), from the interdisciplinary Duke Center for Spirituality, Theology, and Health, brought to my attention by my student Barbara McCall, a nurse, and again later noted to me by Margie Shealy of the Christian Medical and Dental Associations. I have categorized them loosely here for readers who may wish the information without reading hundreds of abstracts. I cite only a fraction of the studies (about twelve hundred by the year 2000; see Koenig, McCullough, and Larson, *Handbook*, 514–89). In addition, see vast numbers of older resources not included here but abstracted at Duke Center's website; Matthews, Larson, and Barry, *Bibliography*; Benn, "Correlation," and sources cited there (including Levin and Schiller, "Factor," which uses more than "200 epidemiological studies"); and the bibliographies of the works cited. Many researchers pursuing integration of religion and health probably have a faith tradition (Plante, "Spirituality," 212–14), but this should not be assumed in all cases, especially given the vast number of them (so also Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 37).

89. Some scholars, however, do suggest links between the two; see Breggen, "Miracle Reports," 382, as well as sources cited there.

have frequently emphasized the positive benefits of religious activity. It has been increasingly recognized that religious issues cannot be avoided in medical treatment. Whereas less than 3 percent of North American medical schools had courses related to religion and spirituality in 1992, roughly 70 percent of them had such courses by 2006, and of these, 70 percent were mandatory courses.⁹⁰ Religious issues appear important to many patients in treatment,⁹¹ and religion's social influence also often proves helpful for health education and intervention, especially in particular communities.⁹²

In these studies, religion appears positively associated with psychological health⁹³ (particularly emphasized in studies of depression⁹⁴ and related sorts of

90. Koenig, *Medicine*, 24, 35–36. For some health curricula that now include a component on religion and health, see, e.g., Barnes, “Curriculum”; Glennon, “Religion.”

91. Patients tended to value religious and spiritual concerns and dimensions of their illness or recovery (Steinhauser et al., “Factors”; Balboni et al., “Religiousness”; Miller et al., “Needs”; Hamilton and Levine, “Preferences” [regarding neopagans]; cf. Holmes, Rabow, and Dibble, “Screening”) more than most of their physicians suspected or could easily accommodate (cf. Clark, Drain, and Malone, “Needs”; Curlin et al., “Association”; Huguélet et al., “Spirituality”; Monroe et al., “Preferences”; Silvestri et al., “Importance”; Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 271–72; though cf. McCauley et al., “Beliefs”). Frequently this disparity creates tension (Kub, “Miracles,” 1273, on 1275–76 referring more specifically to Rushton and Russell, “Language”; Silvestri et al., “Importance”; Sulmasy, “Issues”). Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 4, cites studies that two-thirds of patients want to discuss spiritual matters with their physicians (nationally, in *USA Today Weekend and Time*), and 48 percent want doctors to pray with them (in North Carolina, in King and Bushwick, “Beliefs”). Doctors remain divided on such issues, though more are open than opposed (Koenig, *Medicine*, 26–27).

92. E.g., Daniels et al., “Effectiveness”; Young and Stewart, “Intervention”; cf. Catanzaro et al., “Health Ministries”; Falcone et al., “Development”; Koenig, *Medicine*, 34–35. Chaplain visitation was also associated with patients’ lower anxiety and higher satisfaction (Iler, Obenshain, and Camac, “Impact”) and reduced depression (Baker, “Investigation”); on the value of chaplains, see also Koenig, *Medicine*, 25.

93. E.g., Park, “Relations”; Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 83–104; Kendler and Liu et al., “Dimensions”; Saxena, “Study”; Krause, “Facets”; idem, “Meaning”; Dull and Skokan, “Model” (by providing meaning); Ciarrocchi and Deneke, “Hope”; Benjamins, “Religion”; Francis et al., “Correlation”; Francis and Kaldor, “Relationship”; Krupski et al., “Spirituality”; Rummans et al., “Quality”; Lechner et al., “Associations”; McIlmurray et al., “Needs”; Khouzam, Smith, and Bissett, “Therapy”; Willemsen et al., “Upbringing” (religious upbringing vs. neuroticism); Koenig, George, and Titus, “Ill Patients”; De Orio, “Phenomenology”; Jonas and Fischer, “Management” (decreased fear of death); Wink and Scott, “Religiousness” (decreased fear of death among the very religious, though increased among the more casually religious); Reyes-Ortiz et al., “Attendance” (decreased fear of falling); Bowen et al., “Religion” (reducing perceived stress and panic disorder); Ai et al., “Pathways” (optimism and prayer as a coping strategy); Galea et al., “Abuse” (the benefit of spirituality for those who had experienced child abuse); Hill et al., “Attendance” (cognitive functioning among older adults); Wollin et al., “Predictors” (a factor in children’s preoperative anxiety); Schwartz et al., “Behaviors”; Geary, Ciarrocchi, and Scheers, “Spirituality” (though not large); Fisch et al., “Assessment”; Hamrick and Diefenbach, “Religion.” Cf. weakened faith and increased need for mental health services (Fontana and Rosenheck, “Trauma”); religious involvement’s inverse relationship with dementia (Koenig, *Medicine*, 120–22).

94. E.g., Koenig, *Medicine*, 68–73 (and sources cited there), 147 (noting it as one of the leading disabilities); Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 24–26 (and sources cited there), 86–95; Koenig, “Remission”; idem, “Inpatients”; Mofidi et al., “Spirituality”; Ai et al., “Depression”; Yi et al., “Religion”; Kristeller et al., “Study”; Tarakeshwar, Pearce, and Sikkema, “Development”; Pearce et al., “Symptoms”; Wink, Larsen, and Dillon, “Religion”; Smith et al., “Religiousness”; Gillum, Sullivan, and Bybee, “Importance”; Baetz et al., “Commitment”; Murray-Swank et al., “Religiosity”; Alderete et al., “Symptoms”; Olphen et al.,

issues),⁹⁵ and is often correlated with other healthy dispositions.⁹⁶ For example, in one 1990 study involving 451 African Americans, less religious men were nearly twice as prone to depression as their more religious peers.⁹⁷ Other studies show that religiously committed persons tended to adjust more healthily to the death of a child or spouse.⁹⁸ Religious commitment not only helps addiction prevention⁹⁹ but also strengthens addiction recovery.¹⁰⁰ For example, patients involved

"Involvement"; Miller and Gur, "Religiosity"; Patel et al., "Variables"; Drentea and Goldner, "Caregiving"; Watlington and Murphy, "Roles"; Lonczak et al., "Coping" (religious upbringing vs. depressive symptoms); Hebert, Dang, and Schulz, "Beliefs" (esp. consistently for religious attenders); McClain, Rosenfeld, and Breithart, "Effect" (on the terminally ill; cf. McNichols and Feldman, "Spirituality," 197–98); Murphy et al., "Relation" (mediated via hope); Carrico et al., "Model" (seeking to explain positive religious coping vs. depressive symptoms); Braam et al., "Climate" (trust in divine sovereignty among Calvinists vs. depressive symptoms). Cf. perhaps differently Borg et al., "System" (but the study curiously included only fifteen participants). Although I was not looking for such examples, I did receive a testimony of a spiritual experience that quickly liberated one woman from postpartum depression earlier than expected (Miyuki Yoshihara, interview, Jan. 30, 2009, regarding 2002; a testimony of instant deliverance from depression in 2007 appears on International House of Prayer's website); various psychological healings, including instant ones, have often been reported (e.g., Bosworth, *Healer*, 217–19); note also a progressive recovery from what was expected to be a lifelong, perhaps neurologically based, severe mental disorder in Lakshmi Devi, personal correspondence, Oct. 29, 2010 (referring to her young daughter).

95. For grief recovery, see Walsh et al., "Beliefs"; Murphy, Johnson, and Lohan, "Meaning"; for post-traumatic stress symptoms, Chen, "Expression"; Watlington and Murphy, "Roles"; Zehnder et al., "Study"; Schiff, "Shadow"; Key, Leppien, and Smith, "Model"; Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 153–56, 161–66.

96. Cf. the correlations of gratitude with emotional health and with religion or spirituality (McCullough et al., "Disposition"); religious commitment with optimism (Mattis et al., "Religiosity"; Koenig, *Medicine*, 79–80) and forgiveness (Mullet et al., "Involvement"); much earlier observations of regular attendance and health in Buskirk, *Healing*, 127–28.

97. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 25 (citing Brown, Ndubuisi, and Gary, "Religiosity"). On average, African-Americans proved more apt than whites to affirm miracles and other theistic beliefs (see Johnson, Elbert-Avila, and Tulskey, "Influence," summarized in Kub, "Miracles," 1276).

98. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 25–26 (citing Cook and Wimberley, "Commitment"; Rosik, "Impact"), 105–33.

99. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 27, noting a study in which 89 percent of alcoholics had lost faith during adolescence in contrast to 20 percent of the control group (Larson and Wilson, "Religious Life"); and another study in which relatively nonreligious high schoolers were four to five times likelier than highly religious peers to abuse illegal drugs (Hadaway, Elifson, and Peterson, "Involvement"). See also the wide-ranging study of Wallace and Forman, "Role," cited in Koenig, *Medicine*, 59; also numerous studies in Koenig, *Medicine*, 60–62.

100. Among many other sources, see, e.g., Flynn et al., "Dependence"; Mohr et al., "Integration"; Benda, "Factors"; Walsh et al., "Transcendence" (gambling addiction); Winkelman, "Spirituality" (altered states of consciousness induced by shamanic drumming); for some anecdotal examples from various religious traditions, see Wakefield, *Miracle*, 94–117. For whatever reasons, religious disinterest correlates significantly with substance abuse (see Schoeneberger et al., "Abuse"), and both religiosity (Wills, Yaeger, and Sandy, "Effect") and particular religious values (Kendler and Liu et al., "Dimensions") correlate with lower substance abuse (cf. also lower alcohol consumption among religious Israeli youth, Schiff, "Shadow"). Syrdal, "Transcript," 18–19, observed the unusually high rate of addiction deliverance (compared with purely secular models in the West) through Christian faith in early twentieth-century China. For Christian testimonies of addiction deliverance, see, e.g., Wacker, *Heaven*, 65; Ramirez, "Faiths," 371; Khai, "Pentecostalism," 269; Green, *Asian Tigers*, 99–100 (instantaneous release from heroin addiction); Wilson, "Miracle Events," 274–75; Koch, *Zulus*, 128–32; Jones, *Wonders*, 73; Marszalek, *Miracles*, 118–19 (through the Salvation Army); Gutierrez, *Mujer de Milagros*, 12–13 (translated for me by Mayra Picos-Lee);

in religious programs proved nearly ten times likelier to continue abstaining from heroin a year after treatment.¹⁰¹

Somewhat fewer studies have examined the relationship between religious faith and physical health, but those that have done so fairly consistently correlate the two.¹⁰² Examples of such studies reveal favorable health correlations in matters related to hypertension,¹⁰³ blood pressure,¹⁰⁴ and heart disease.¹⁰⁵ They also show correlations more generally to reduction in mortality,¹⁰⁶ now noted even in popular

Neal, *Power*, 56–57; Baxter, *Healing*, 103; Anderson, *Pelendo*, 34–36, 95; Bredesen, *Miracle*, 43–52, 100; DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 32; Robertson, *Miracles*, 67, 71–77, 92; for the therapeutic use of glossolalia in such deliverance, see Wilkerson, *Cross*, 154–68 (regarding Teen Challenge, the success rate of which has been supported by other studies; cf. Manuel, *Factor*; Wilson, “Miracle Events,” 274); DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 46; and, regarding Jackie Pullinger’s work in Hong Kong, Storms, *Guide*, 145–46; Pullinger, *Dragon*, 83, 149, 158–60, 166, 169, 173, and especially 174; external corroboration in sociologists Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 99–105 (esp. 104, 109; against any supposition of their starting with favorable bias, see 99, 147). On Alcoholics Anonymous, see, e.g., Oursler, *Power*, 302–10; B., “Challenge.”

101. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 26 (citing Desmond and Maddux, “Programs”).

102. E.g., Maselko et al., “Attendance” (religious attendance predicting lower allostatic load in older women); Pargament et al., “Methods” (through positive coping); Tully et al., “Factors” (90 percent reduction in probability of meningococcal disease); Sephton et al., “Expression”; Kinney et al., “Involvement”; McCullough and Laurenceau, “Religiousness”; Dedert et al., “Practice”; Contrada et al., “Factors” (regarding postsurgical recovery); Krupski et al., “Spirituality”; Koenig, *Religion*, 77–99; cf. Harrison et al., “Pain” (religious attendance vs. pain); Rew and Wong, “Review” (regarding health behaviors); Koenig, George, and Titus, “Ill Patients” (though with less connection than with mental health); Benjamins, “Religion and Health” (though only positively connected to attendance); Olphen et al., “Involvement” (esp. with attendance); Messina et al., “Study.” For slower disease progression, see Ironson et al., “Increase.” Cf. also the earlier observations regarding loving care and hope facilitating recovery (or at least comfort), even in some terminally ill patients, in Reed, *Surgery*, 111–16. Reed also offers the example of a coma patient previously deemed terminal recovering through prayer and faith (84).

103. Gillum and Ingram, “Frequency” (lower hypertension).

104. Al-Kandari, “Religiosity.” Matthews, Larson, and Barry, *Bibliography*, cite earlier studies, e.g., lowered blood pressure for regular church attenders in Graham et al., “Frequency”; Larson et al., “Impact” (with a small but significant decrease); Walsh, “Effect” (lower but not statistically significant).

105. King, Mainous, and Pearson, “Protein”; Benn, “Correlation,” 141–43 (citing esp. Comstock and Partridge, “Attendance,” with a 40 percent difference in mortality in a sample size of 91,000; Oxman, Freeman, and Manheimer, “Participation”); for the cardiovascular system generally, see Koenig, *Medicine*, 96–112, and the many sources cited there (including Koenig, George, Cohen et al., “Relationship”; Newlin et al., “Relationship”; Olphen et al., “Involvement”; Steffen and Hinderliter, “Coping”; Gillum and Ingram, “Frequency”). See the case study in Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 72–73, where prayer may have been a factor in the unexpectedly strong recovery.

106. Wong et al., “Factors”; Ellison et al., “Involvement”; Heuch, Jacobsen, and Fraser, “Study” (among Seventh-Day Adventists, not surprisingly); Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 158–61; Koenig, *Medicine*, 129–45; Lutgendorf et al., “Participation”; Musick, House, and Williams, “Attendance and Mortality”; Bagiella, Hong, and Sloan, “Attendance as Predictor”; Strawbridge et al., “Attendance”; Strawbridge et al., “Strength”; Cour, Avlund, and Schultz-Larsen, “Religion”; Hill et al., “Attendance and Mortality”; Helm et al., “Activity”; Krause, “Support”; Van Ness, Kasl, and Jones, “Religion”; Yeager et al., “Involvement”; Ironson et al., “Spirituality” (regarding AIDS); Eng et al., “Ties”; Oman et al., “Attendance”; Sears and Wallace, “Spirituality”; but cf. the more ambiguous results among Israelis in Kraut et al., “Association”; and negative results in Wrensch et al., “Factors” (though the sample size was fewer than 600 patients in one county). High attendance’s association is indirect through lower levels of Interleukin-6 (Thoresen, “Health,” 8). On will to live and “mature” religion, see Hedgspeth, “Power.” It might appear ironic that the mortality test was initially proposed in the 1870s by a skeptic

media.¹⁰⁷ One may take, for example, the combination of faith and healthy lifestyle advocated among Seventh-day Adventists; in a 1983 study in the Netherlands,¹⁰⁸ male Adventists lived on average nine years longer than non-Adventist men (with a general average of four years in another study).¹⁰⁹ The longevity difference is even higher in some other reports.¹¹⁰ One detailed statistical analysis concludes that the reduction in mortality associated with religious attendance in general is comparable to “regular physical exercise” and “statin-type therapy” (an average of two to five additional years of life).¹¹¹

The following chart, adapted from Matthews, Larson, and Barry’s *Annotated Bibliography of Clinical Research on Spiritual Subjects*, and Herbert Benson’s *Timeless Healing*,¹¹² illustrates visually the effects of studies already known by the early 1990s:

Area of improvement, as defined by reduction in the following:	Number of studies	Number of studies in which religion correlated positively with improvements	Proportion of these studies in which religion correlated positively with improvements
Alcohol	18	16	89%
Anxiety	11	8	73%
Anxiety about death	15	10	67%
Blood pressure	5	4	80%
Depression	17	12	71%
Drugs	12	12	100%
Smoking	6	6	100%
Health (general)	5	4	80%
Life satisfaction	13	12	92%
Quality of life (cancer patients)	8	7	88%
Quality of life (heart patients)	6	4	67%
Survival rates	9	8	89%

eager to discredit any effects of faith (Opp, *Lord for Body*, 15), though his focus was prayer rather than religion more generally. On the logical coherency of prayer on theistic premises, see Stump, “Prayer” (esp. the summary on 186); Young, “Petitioning”; Brümmer, *Pray* (esp. 33–55); cf. Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 94–95.

107. Kluger, “Biology,” 62.

108. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 22 (citing for a Danish cancer study Jensen, “Risk”; and esp., for the life expectancy difference in the Netherlands, Berkel and Waard, “Mortality Pattern”). For an anecdotal observation, I was impressed with the proportion of healthy, active older Adventists in my visit to Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, Feb. 7–10, 2008.

109. Koenig, *Medicine*, 109 (Frazer et al., “Effects”). Adventists experience lower rates of stroke (Koenig, *Medicine*, 119) and cancer (124–25) than in the average population.

110. An article from *U.S. News and World Report* summarizes Seventh-day Adventists in the United States as averaging eighty-nine years in longevity, roughly a decade beyond the national average (<http://health.yahoo.com/featured/7/10-health-habits-that-will-help-you-live-to-100>; accessed April 20, 2009).

111. Hall, “Attendance,” 106, 108.

112. Matthews, Larson, and Barry, *Bibliography*, ii–iii; also Benson, *Healing*, 174–75, who is adapting the identical material from Matthews, Larson, and Barry’s *Bibliography* in chart form (arranged differently here). Benson seems to be using a later published version (1994) differing from the bound version now available to me (1993).

Factors in Healthy Religious Practice

The studies often note that the positive correlation usually remains even when other related factors are screened out.¹¹³ Personality was often a larger factor when separated from religion,¹¹⁴ but positive religious approaches presumably may affect that factor over time as well.¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, not all associations between religion (or aspects of religion) and better health need be causal.¹¹⁶ Where they are,¹¹⁷ some such effects may stem from social support¹¹⁸ (which is positively correlated with religious involvement);¹¹⁹ positive religious coping mechanisms¹²⁰ (versus negative

113. E.g., in the United States, religious practice tends to be inversely proportional to cigarette smoking and some other unhealthy habits (Timberlake et al., "Effects"; Hill et al., "Behaviors"; Elizabeth et al., "Factors"; Roff et al., "Religiosity" [but not obesity]; Benn, "Correlation," 145; studies in Koenig, *Medicine*, 111), but controlled studies usually account for such factors (though in one study nonsmoking explained the effects of religious attendance; King et al., "Relationship"). Frequency of religious practice also correlates with higher math and reading scores (Regnerus, "Success").

114. E.g., Ciarrocchi and Deneke, "Happiness," though affirming the importance of both elements; cf. also Golden et al., "Spirituality."

115. E.g., altruism (often positively correlated with religion, e.g., in 60 percent of studies noted in Matthews, Larson, and Barry, *Bibliography*, iii; with spiritual practices, among scientists, in Ecklund, *Science*, 64–65; 70 percent of older adult volunteers in Koenig, *Medicine*, 65) is associated with greater well-being (see, e.g., Benson, *Healing*, 181–82 [citing Luks, *Power*]; Koenig, *Medicine*, 49–52 [citing Hunter and Linn, "Differences"; Schwartz et al., "Behaviors"; Morrow-Howell et al., "Effects"; Liang, Krause, and Bennett, "Exchange"; Yuen, "Impact"; Moll et al., "Networks"; and many others]). Scholars debate the ultimate cause of altruism (cf. Haught, *Atheism*, 69–71).

116. Correlations are clear, but assertions of causality require a higher bar of proof (cf. Benn, "Correlation," 141, 146–47; Thoresen, "Health," 6).

117. E.g., Koenig, *Medicine*, 149 (citing Idler and Kasl, "Religion"), argues that attendance tends to prevent disability more than the reverse.

118. E.g., Litwin, "Association"; cf. Jaffe et al., "Neighborhood" (on living in religiously affiliated neighborhoods); Patel et al., "Variables"; Benn, "Correlation," 145; Epperly, *Touch*, 229 (support groups and churches); Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 248–50 (but with greater benefits in specifically religious social networks, 251–53). Social isolation significantly increases mortality (Eng et al., "Ties"); in Hughes et al., "Support," religiosity appears related to lower anxiety to the same degree that social support is. The massive study of Canadian adults in Baetz et al., "Association," associates religious attendance with fewer depressive symptoms, but spirituality, which may include an introspective component, with more depressive symptoms. "Spirituality" has proved difficult to define and measure, however (Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 185).

119. Koenig, *Medicine*, 56–57 (citing Koenig, McCullough, and Larson, *Handbook*, 525–26, noting this is the case in roughly 95 percent of studies). Nevertheless, only church-based social involvement displayed such outcomes, even when other factors were taken into account (Koenig, *Medicine*, 57, citing Cutler, "Membership"; Krause, "Exploring"; Salsman et al., "Link"; Watlington and Murphy, "Roles"; cf. Koenig, Moberg, and Kvale, "Activities").

120. Positive religious coping is associated with life satisfaction (Mendonca et al., "Spirituality"; after AIDS diagnosis, Szaflarski et al., "Modeling"; Kremer and Ironson, "Spirituality"; Cotton et al., "Spirituality"; with advanced cancer, Tarakeshwar et al., "Coping"; with ovarian cancer, Canada et al., "Coping"; during caregiving, Pearce, Singer, and Prigerson, "Coping"; Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 142–44; positive coping in Koenig, *Medicine*, 72, 153–54, and satisfaction in 78–79; anecdotal examples of coping with terminal illness in Lesslie, *Angels*, 45–46, 222–23; for help with schizophrenia, Rogers and Risher, "Religion," 290–93); feeling better during and after treatment (Becker et al., "Belief"; cf. Thoresen, "Health," 8; Masters, "Prayer," 20); and appears inversely related to depression (Bosworth et al., "Impact") and pre- and postoperative distress (Ai et al., "Mediation"). Adding a partner's positive religious coping

ones,¹²¹ which appear to be much less common in the studies so far);¹²² likelier family cohesion;¹²³ on-average better health behaviors;¹²⁴ and perhaps reduction in anxiety because of greater emotional security and dependence on the transcendent.¹²⁵ Outcomes usually varied according to the religious variables studied, with concrete factors such as religious attendance frequently being more prominent.¹²⁶ Emotional and social causes of stress weaken the immune system and increase susceptibility to most diseases;¹²⁷ positive religious practice can reduce such stress factors, with obviously positive health benefits.¹²⁸ One cause of some cases of better average health could be some answers to prayer, but given

apparently increases the effect (Yoshimoto et al., "Coping"). Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 31–32, notes that religion significantly facilitated coping with incarceration (Koenig, "Prison": 32 percent ranked it highest) and reduced recidivism (by more than three times; Johnson, Larson, and Pitts, "Programs"; cf. Johnson, "Impact"; though some other studies appear inconclusive).

121. Negative religious coping appears associated with greater depression (Schanowitz and Nicassio, "Predictors"), anxiety, and mortality (Pargament et al., "Religious Struggle"; more broadly, McConnell et al., "Links"). Some of the studies addressing positive effects of positive religious coping also underscore the harmful effects of negative religious coping (e.g., Tarakeshwar et al., "Coping"; Pargament et al., "Methods"; Mendonca et al., "Spirituality"; Lonczak et al., "Coping"; cf. Koenig, *Medicine*, 80; Schottenbauer, Rodriguez, Glass, and Arnkoff, "Coping Research"). Koenig, *Religion*, 104–11, notes that negative use of religion reflects a neurotic approach to religion rather than characteristics intrinsic to religion itself (the same features are used positively by others); see also Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 52–56. Definitions of both religion and mental health do affect studies' outcomes (Lotufo and Lotufo-Neto, "Religiosity," 287; Alcorta, "Adolescence," 61).

122. See, e.g., Mohr et al., "Integration." In Uganda, 1.2 percent of patients withdrew from AIDS treatment due to spiritual beliefs (Wanyama et al., "Belief"), and in the United States, religious beliefs can affect adherence to treatment positively or negatively (Parsons et al., "Beliefs"); but stronger religious or spiritual commitments are usually associated instead with willingness to seek examination and treatment (e.g., Friedman et al., "Predictors"; Hill et al., "Behaviors"; for mental health care, see Harris, Edlund, and Larson, "Involvement"). Faith generally affects AIDS favorably (Kluger, "Biology," 62).

123. See, e.g., Regnerus and Burdette, "Change."

124. E.g., Koenig, *Medicine*, 127.

125. On reduced anxiety, see the studies in Koenig, *Medicine*, 76–78. Beliefs in afterlife were inversely associated with the severity of symptoms in a range of psychiatric problems in Flannelly et al., "Belief"; beliefs in a positive afterlife also reduced bereavement stress in Japan in Krause et al., "Death." Cf. end-of-life "peace" (Steinhauser et al., "Peace"). For various factors, many framed in religious terms, see, e.g., Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 42–52.

126. See, e.g., Koenig et al., "Religion and Use"; Dezutter, Soenens, and Hutsebaut, "Religiosity"; Ardelt and Koenig, "Role"; Lesniak et al., "Distress"; Kaufman et al., "Decline" (private religiosity inversely associated with cognitive decline); Masters et al., "Orientation" (extrinsic vs. intrinsic religiosity). This variation sometimes appeared more prominently among Protestants, perhaps suggesting the influence of Protestant distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity (Cohen et al., "Religiosity"). It also obtains "only if that attendance is not driven by anxiety" (Hill, Kopp, and Bollinger, "Measures," 35 [cf. 31–32]). Active compassion (minus the stress of continual caregiving) is also associated with health (Wachholtz and Pearce, "Compassion"), as is a sense of calling (i.e., purpose or motivation; Dreher and Plante, "Protocol").

127. Koenig, *Medicine*, 37–53; Alcorta, "Adolescence," 62–65. On psychosocial, apparently including religious, impact on healthy immune and endocrine function, see Koenig, *Medicine*, 82–95.

128. See Koenig, *Medicine*, 54–67. While not seeking cases of emotional healing (perhaps more common than dramatic physical healing) for this book, I encountered some, such as the significant testimony of Anglican deacon Anna Gulick (personal correspondence, May 4, 2009; interview, March 10, 2011).

other potential factors difficult to separate from positive religious faith, such as a spiritual sense of security, noted above, it seems difficult to demonstrate (or disprove) this claim by statistical means.

The general benefits of religious practice do not appear to be limited to Christian circles; those raised in or who find their home in many religious traditions find comfort and well-being there.¹²⁹ The beneficial effect of religion on health is attested in Jewish,¹³⁰ Islamic,¹³¹ and other faiths,¹³² as well as among Christians, although some studies so far are inconclusive¹³³ or indicate negative effects in some religious communities.¹³⁴ Meditation, emphasized more in some religious and cultural traditions than others (but usually valued, given an appropriate subject of meditation), generally offers significant health benefits.¹³⁵

129. See Koenig, *Medicine*, 56. Some emphasize the role of religious experiences in restoring self-esteem (Valla and Prince, "Experiences," esp. 164).

130. E.g., Billig, Kohn, and Levav, "Stress"; Jaffe et al., "Neighborhood"; Litwin, "Association"; Schiff, "Shadow" (for post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] but not depression). One study associates religiosity with lower mortality for younger workers and higher mortality for older ones (Kraut et al., "Association," in a study of 3,638 Jewish Israeli men). Very religious Jewish Israeli physicians were more apt to prolong patients' life longer (Wenger and Carmel, "Religiosity").

131. Al-Sabwah and Abdel-Khalek, "Religiosity" (regarding lower death depression and anxiety); Abdel-Khalek, "Happiness" (regarding both psychological and physical health); Koenig, *Medicine*, 56 (citing Kesselring et al., "Attitudes," noting Egyptian Muslim patients finding comfort in their faith); on benefits to Muslims of hearing the Qur'an recited, see the claims in Makarfi, "Bedrock," 68–69 (apparently dependent on work by Ahmad Elkadi; cf. also Ademola, "Attitude," 111).

132. Among Latter-day Saints, religious factors significantly reduced mortality in Ostbye et al., "Investigators." Contrary to some expectations, in one study Jehovah's Witnesses appear to lack significantly increased risk of trauma fatality (Varela et al., "Risk").

133. Krisanaprakornkit et al., "Therapy," conclude that most Transcendental Meditation studies so far prove inconclusive; but for a different perspective contrast studies below. Acupuncture and sham acupuncture had the same effect on depression (Allen et al., "Acupuncture"). Religious attitudes apparently did not affect obsessive-compulsive disorder in Iran (Assarian, Biqam, Asqarnejad, "Study"). Some emotional health studies may work from a bias that evaluates religious content (see Sica et al., "Religiousness"). Blumenthal et al., "Spirituality," found no correlation with physical health but noted that the data sample was too narrow to offer conclusions. The correlation between exercise and religious attendance in women over sixty (Gillum, "Frequency") might link activity or social support more generally; see studies on religion and exercise in Koenig, *Medicine*, 110–11 (so far apparently limited in number). The Israeli sample in Schiff, "Shadow," shows reduced PTSD but not depression.

134. Cf. Yeager et al., "Involvement," for Taiwanese religious attendance (esp. among Taoists and Buddhists), though private religious practices and convictions were associated with worse health (on 2240, the researchers hypothetically attributed this to the specific nature of the beliefs). Naem, "Culture," associates lack of control of diabetes partly with Islamic fatalism; less negatively, cf. Muslim submission to Allah's will in matters of health in Rozario, "Scientist." Results in Kraut et al., "Association," seem age-specific.

135. Buddhist meditation helped (Kabat-Zinn et al., "Influence"); use of mantras or prayers in any religion appear to have improved emotive states (Bormann et al., "Effects"; Bormann and Oman, "Repetition," 102–10; idem, "Mantram"); yoga and meditation also showed some possible positive effects in Harinath et al., "Effects"; Benson, *Healing*, 157, notes that Chinese *chi gong* helped relaxation in Huang, "Effects." For Transcendental Meditation, Paul-Labrador et al., "Effects," and earlier Castillo-Richmond et al., "Effects," cite positive effects; at Maharishi University, so also (in Koenig, *Medicine*, 105–6) Schneider et al., "Trial"; Wenneberg et al., "Study"; Schneider et al., "Year." For meditation more generally, cf. Shapiro and Walsh, "Meditation"; Flinders, Oman, and Flinders,

That the health benefit of religious practice is attested more in some ethnic communities¹³⁶ than others or more commonly with a particular gender (women)¹³⁷ may suggest cultural factors in how religion is appropriated.¹³⁸ Likewise, more people in highly religious countries will find comfort in religion than those in highly secularized societies.¹³⁹ For whatever reasons, religion in general could be a contributing factor in some gradual improvements in health, though it would not explain many of the sudden and dramatic changes I have noted, such as cases of instant healings of long-term blindness or deafness, the immediate repair of bones, or restoration to life after apparent death.

As I have noted, many religious observers would consider some positive benefits associated with religious involvement divinely designed; traditional Christian theology sees God as sovereign over and working through the course of nature as well as acting beyond it.¹⁴⁰ Most religious observers today would also believe that God provided humans the wisdom for medical science and that God works through it;¹⁴¹ even in miracle stories in the Gospels, miracles seem to be reserved for when they are needed (cf. Mark 6:43–44; 8:11–12; John 6:12–13; elsewhere, cf. 1 Tim 5:23). Thus I have often received testimonies of those who attribute the

“Program”; idem, “Meditation”; Oman and Thoresen, “Spiritual,” 47–48, 50. Benson, *Healing*, 163–64 (citing idem, “Temperature Changes”), reports direct observation and testing of Tibetan monks generating paranormal heat in cold settings and (*Healing*, 166) metabolism drops of as much as 64 percent, beyond previously documented human examples. For meditation and healing Portsmouth, *Prayer*, 56–61, draws on the contemplative Christian tradition. Particular forms of prayer, such as contemplation and thanksgiving, may correlate more with health benefits (Stanley, “Types,” though the sample size is small).

136. Cf. Steffen and Hinderliter, “Coping”; Cooper et al., “Spirituality”; Balboni et al., “Religiousness”; Roff et al., “Limitations”; Drentea and Goldner, “Caregiving”; Koenig et al., “Care Use”; Kinney et al., “Involvement”; Kelly and Floyd, “Impact.” Cf. the cultural variables in Franzini, Ribble, and Wingfield, “Religion.”

137. Saxena, “Study”; Chen, “Expression”; Contrada et al., “Factors”; Strawbridge et al., “Strength”; McCullough and Laurenceau, “Religiousness”; cf. Wink and Dillon, “Development”; among Kuwaiti Muslims, Abdel-Khalek, “Happiness.” This is not surprising, since women are on average more committed religiously than men (Matthews, Larson, and Barry, *Bibliography*, iii), though evangelical women scored lower in self-esteem than men (Aycok and Noaker, “Comparison,” in Matthews, Larson, and Barry, *Bibliography*, 12–13).

138. For example, cultural differences affect the processing of pain (Sternbach and Tusky, “Differences”; Bates, Edwards, and Anderson, “Influences”; both cited in Benson, *Healing*, 56–57).

139. Koenig, *Medicine*, 56 (citing Kesselring et al., “Attitudes,” in which 38 percent of Swiss patients found support in religion, compared with 92 percent of Egyptian Muslim patients); cf. Benn, “Correlation,” 146.

140. Hiebert, *Reflections*, 234, notes that all healing is God’s work, so to separate medical healing from prayer healing is to succumb to a dualistic worldview; see also Petersen, *Might*, 99–100 (on common Pentecostal perspectives in Latin America); and González, *Tribe*, 94 (also for a Latin American perspective; cf., e.g., Durand and Massey, *Miracles*, 164–65, 176–77). In biblical theology, God did miracles when necessary and to reveal God’s greatness and compassion, not to satisfy spiritual sensationalism. Empirical studies in the United States suggest that the healthiest approach combines medical and spiritual methods (Koenig, “Afterword,” 506).

141. Many argue persuasively for their compatibility, e.g., Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 53, 63, 67–68. Many conjoin prayer with medical procedures (e.g., Skinsnes, “Healed”).

success of their uncertain treatments to God as well as to their doctors,¹⁴² and complementary approaches to recovery are probably more common where medical means are available. The radical Enlightenment may have defined “natural” over against “supernatural” (or likelier the reverse), but a biblical perspective would approach “nature” as the sphere of God’s activity in creation. My point here is not to question such theological claims (with which I personally agree) but to note here that some religiously connected recoveries involve natural elements to the extent that distinctly extranatural causation is difficult to demonstrate apart from such general theological considerations.

We cannot rule out that the overall average better recovery rate for religious practitioners may also involve many individual answers to prayer, but proving causal links from this general data would be difficult, since one could not easily screen other factors out and prayer does not always lead to this outcome. A rapid recovery or average lower mortality rate is not the same as cataracts instantly disappearing or a dead person being raised. In biblical terms, gifts of healings are for believers and need not be dramatic to be effective; their purpose is restoration, not evidence. Might not God answer prayers regarding health through medical means in medical cultures? By contrast, signs and wonders in the context of evangelism are often more dramatic, inviting attention toward the kingdom they represent; biblically we could allow for both kinds of healings without insisting that both have the same evidential value for extraordinary supernatural activity.

For that matter, how does one quantify effective prayer, and when prayers are backed by a life of faith and integrity, and whose prayers (out of multiple participants) proved particularly effective? I have known nonreligious persons, when faced with illness, to pray, and even agnostics to request prayer from deeply committed religious persons whose prayers *might* help. And theologically, who is to say that a deity would not reach out to a sincere agnostic who desperately prays or has a loved one pray for him or her? My point then is not that God is not at work, indirectly or even directly, in many cases in these surveys. My point is merely that interpreters will not all find here evidence for special divine action, especially if the data are taken in isolation from other evidence. These studies focus only on averages (as such studies by their nature must); many causal links are difficult to verify; scientific analysis is equipped to quantify natural rather than supernatural factors; and supernatural factors are impossible to fully quantify in any case,

142. E.g., my student Tamika Johnson, who twice received desperately needed liver transplants, one within sixteen hours after she had been given twenty-four to forty-eight hours to live (personal correspondence, Dec. 2, 3, 4, 2010); Joo Young Kim, interview, Jan. 24, 2009, after a prophecy about his recovery and treatment for serious chronic hepatitis B, which is sometimes, but not always, cured by treatment; in Uganda, Onesimus Asiimwe prayed for Henry Mugsha, who was blind (Onesimus Asiimwe, interview, Oct. 13, 2008), and the latter was able to have an operation that successfully complemented the prayer (Henry Mugsha, phone interview, Oct. 23, 2008). Mr. Mugsha no longer even needs glasses and now runs a nongovernmental organization (Onesimus Asiimwe, interview, Oct. 13, 2008; corroborated by Archbishop Henry Orombi, interview, Oct. 13, 2008).

because we cannot know all the factors that a greater intelligence might take into account in limiting human mortality.

Psychosomatic Elements of Faith Cures

Some recoveries clearly stem from emotional or mental cures, whether by strengthening the body's immune responses or by addressing psychological roots of the initial illness. This factor is widely recognized, including by commentators who also allow for organic supernatural cures.¹⁴³ Thus when one doctor falsely informed three patients that a faith healer would pray for them at a particular time, all three improved dramatically, though only one permanently.¹⁴⁴ But how far should such observations be pressed? After an extraordinary "faith cure" in 1889, some doctors pointed out that patients could be cured by faith in physicians no less than by faith in God—that "faith" brought healing regardless of its object.¹⁴⁵ Their argument stemmed from the psychological theories of "magnetism" dominant in their era, attributing healings to religious hysteria and explaining them naturalistically as "mental influence on the nervous system."¹⁴⁶

Some writers have compared the effectiveness of shamans and other healers to hypnosis and altered states of consciousness.¹⁴⁷ Some early twentieth-century studies claimed that hypnotized patients could produce "blisters corresponding to imaginary burns" that could even bleed under suggestion, and that habitual bleeding could be cured by hypnosis.¹⁴⁸ More recent studies have suggested that

143. Pennington, "Relationship," 160–61; Frost, *Healing*, 183; Kelsey, *Healing*, 243–77; Hirschberg and Barasch, *Recovery*, 307; Rose, *Faith Healing*, 119–34, 176; Robertson, "Epidauros to Lourdes," 188 (though cf. also 189); McClenon, *Events*, 131 ("generally" psychosomatic); Bartow, *Adventures*, 43, 130–42; Robertson, *Miracles*, 144; Salmon, *Heals*, 33, 118; all those who pray for healing surveyed in Tilley, "Phenomenology," 565; on emotions' effects on the immune system and health, see Fountain, *Medicine*, 71–82; Siegel, *Medicine* (esp. 65–124, though he may overestimate cure rates); in a religious context, Koenig, *Medicine*, 82–95. Tournier, *Casebook*, 209–10, cites here principles in Prov 3:7–8; 4:20, 22; 17:22 (and on 213, Jas 5:16). The argument of Pattison, "Meaning," that many use belief in faith healing as a moral coping mechanism, interprets his data through the grid of his theory and works with a sample size representing only one social group, not necessarily representative.

144. Frank, *Persuasion*, 61, emphasizing that patients were helped by a false belief.

145. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 79. Cf. the relevance of physicians' confidence to the placebo effect, below. For the importance of the relationship between doctors and patients in healing, see Jonas and Crawford, "Presence."

146. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 80; cf. Duffin, *Miracles*, 132–34. The psychology of the era attributed many healings to mind over matter (Opp, *Lord for Body*, 165–66), many ministers so explained modern healings (Mullin, *Miracles*, 103), and many scholars so explained Jesus's healings (Tennant, *Miracle*, 31). Christian Science flourished in this context in the early twentieth century (Mullin, *Miracles*, 181–83), and a physician reading the founder's testimonials argued that the cures were largely psychosomatic (Buskirk, *Healing*, 60, though conceding some organic cures on 60–61, which he nevertheless attributes to psychological causes).

147. McClenon, *Healing*, 61, 67, though noting on 79 that it is not proved for all kinds of cases, but merely a reasonable hypothesis; Greenfield, *Spirits*, 88. The primary common factor seems to be that shamans and people who are easily hypnotized are predisposed to enter trance states (see here also clearly Pekala and Cardena, "Issues," 71). In the example that McClenon, *Healing*, offers on 79–81, an easily hypnotizable person can be led even in a different culture's ritual trance state through suggestion.

148. West, *Miracles*, 19, citing (as authoritative) Schindler, *Nervensystem*; see also Heim, *Transformation*, 178. Note the hypnotically induced stigmata in Krippner and Kirkwood, "Bleeding," 168–69 (following

hypnosis can help treat burns, especially within the first two hours, by limiting inflammation and reducing pain.¹⁴⁹ They also may help skin conditions, warts, and psychosomatic problems; they do not, however, help every kind of ailment for which we have healing descriptions, and cannot explain most current reports of miraculous healings, which do not include dissociative states.¹⁵⁰ (By contrast, some recent studies have argued that most observed effects of hypnosis involve the subjects' desire to present themselves as "good subjects" in anticipated hypnotic situations.¹⁵¹) In any case, the controlled clinical conditions of hypnotism differ starkly from Jesus's public ministry, as do the repetitive rituals of typical shamans. Meanwhile, some documented cases of visual acuity improvement in spiritual contexts more like those in which Jesus ministered reveal effects on average far exceeding those in the most optimistic of hypnosis studies.¹⁵²

More generally, however, some argue that culturally relevant images that communicate healing (by exorcism or the like) provide psychological codes that, converted biologically into neuropeptide signals, mobilize immune defenses and so forth.¹⁵³ Psychological factors may thus be helpful in cures. For example, a researcher notes that one woman in Puerto Rico who "had not walked for several years" found that she enjoyed the attention given to her state, yet in a prayer meeting she found strength to walk home.¹⁵⁴ While ability to walk with atrophied muscles is remarkable, a psychological factor might well also be at work in such a healing report. Similarly, a case of terminal, metastasized cancer remitted without surgery for eighteen years, the worst of it after a change in lifestyle;¹⁵⁵ another case of advanced terminal cancer gradually remitted (over the course of a year) after lifestyle changes and never returned.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, such remissions are quite

Lechler, *Ratsel*; Wilson, *Bleeding Mind*, esp. 97, 126); Heim, *Transformation*, 178 (who also cites abdominal swelling in imagined pregnancies).

149. McClenon, *Healing*, 75, citing Ewin, "Emergency Room Hypnosis"; idem, "Hypnosis in Surgery." Krippner and Achterberg, "Experiences," 378, note that shifting of blood flow can aid burn recovery and that it can be controlled to some extent through biofeedback (on 377 they note a 1931 study linking it to spontaneous disappearance of warts). Pekala and Cardeña, "Issues," 55, note pain reduction; a doctor in Mensah, "Basis," 176, cites the success of hypnotism in allowing a biopsy without anesthesia.

150. McNamara and Szent-Imrey, "Learn," 211 (citing for the areas of cure Bowers and LeBaron, "Hypnosis," and countering the relevance of McClenon's ritual healing theory to most modern reports).

151. Spanos, "Hypnosis," 97–102.

152. Brown, Mory, Williams, and McClymond, "Effects," 867: whereas improvements after hypnosis have averaged two to two and a half times' increase in the most optimistic studies (and none in others), "The average visual acuity improvement measured" for those receiving prayer through the earlier mentioned ministry in Mozambique "was over tenfold."

153. Greenfield, *Spirits*, 18, 180, 201; suggested to me also by John Pilch, personal correspondence, Nov. 13, 2009; cf. also Johnson, "Neurotheology," 223–24. On the belief that a factor may help communicating with the immune system, and altered states of consciousness (ASCs) functioning hypnotically, see Greenfield, *Spirits*, 189. Some allow for factors complementary to neurobiology (interpersonal psychology in Koss-Chioino, "Transformation," 64).

154. Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, 119, emphasizing the psychological component of her cure.

155. Ellens, "Miracles and Process," 11, and idem, "God and Science," 13 (following Lenzer, "Citizen," 56).

156. Ellens, "Miracles and Process," 12 (following Lenzer, "Citizen," 58). Lenzer notes some conflicting studies, however, regarding cancer and mind-body connections (the fifth page of my online version).

rare (usually estimated at around one case in sixty thousand to one case in one hundred thousand,¹⁵⁷ though actual numbers may be higher),¹⁵⁸ so that one would not expect them to occur repeatedly in a particular ministry circle purely by chance.

Psychosomatic Elements in Jesus's Ministry?

Such explanations have been used as analogies for Gospel miracles; some have even employed them to defend the historical claims of the Gospels, albeit at the expense of a supernatural explanation.¹⁵⁹ Thus many have attributed Jesus's healing miracles to psychic abilities¹⁶⁰ or the ailments cured to psychosomatic causes.¹⁶¹ As I have noted, this is a logical approach for those who explain all modern cures in these terms.¹⁶² Others argue, however, that such approaches prove inadequate to accommodate all the data.¹⁶³ While we cannot rule out the curing of some psy-

157. Ellens, "Miracles and Process," 11 (following Lenzer, "Citizen," 56).

158. McNamara and Szent-Imrey, "Learn," 209, argue that real remission rates may be ten to twenty times greater than these estimates. Because anomalies do not fit reigning paradigms, they are inadequately reported and tracked. By contrast, some sources in Lenzer, "Citizen" (the second through fourth pages of my online version) appear to suggest that remission rates may be *lower* than usual estimates; she suggests (my sixth page) that early remissions are fairly common, whereas late remissions "are as rare as hens' teeth."

159. Through at least the mid-twentieth century, many continued to cite psychic parallels in support of miracles (e.g., views noted in Lawton, *Miracles*, 57, 90, 169; earlier, in Johnson, "Miracles and History," 544–45), though this could be viewed as grasping an available naturalistic explanation to continue denying a supernatural one.

160. Cf., e.g., M. C. van Mourik Broekman (1938; in Loos, *Miracles*, 30, 565–66); Jesus's expression of mana and the power of the unconscious mind in Tenzler, "Tiefenpsychologie." More recently Montefiore, *Miracles*, has sought to explain NT miracles by analogy to "paranormal" telepathy (23–40), clairvoyance (41–49), and precognition (51–65); this allows "natural" explanations (24), i.e., one acceptable within a Humean worldview. (He recognizes that his thesis will fail to persuade many [115–16], a point reiterated by a reviewer [Garrow, "Acts"].) Perry, "Miracles," 66–67, allows some but warns that such appeals can be "overdone." While the differences are significant (NT accounts suggest divine dependence rather than innate abilities), the analogy represents an attempt to get beyond typical Western assumptions. Heim, *Transformation*, 184–85, believes that a powerful mind can affect distant bodies and matter (though he distinguishes this effect from more specifically divine activity; cf., e.g., 187, 193, 195). For a collection of more than one hundred anomaly reports, see Long, *Ecology*.

161. Many have long attributed Jesus's cures to psychosomatic causes (Matthew Arnold [in Boobyer, "Miracles," 33–34]; Fenner, *Krankheit* [as cited in Sabourin, *Miracles*, 246; Loos, *Miracles*, 109]; Capps, *Village Psychiatrist*, 5; Ellens, "Miracles and Process," 5–6; views cited but not necessarily endorsed in Wilson, "Miracles," 13; Loos, *Miracles*, 105, 107, 111; Burkill, "Miracle"; Remus, *Healer*, 114; cf. the question in Jaeger, "Suggestionstherapeut" [cited in Metzger, *Index*, 18]). Some earlier writers noted the likelihood of some "nervous" diseases without attributing all of them to this cause (Wright, "Miracles," 189; Wilson, "Miracles," 28). Some argued that Jesus merely accommodated the opinions of his day, using mere psychosomatic healing; others objected that this explanation cannot account for some of the miracles (Dakin, "Belief," 38–39) or objected for theological reasons (Everts, "Exorcist," 357–59).

162. As I noted in the case of nineteenth-century discussions, the alternative is usually inconsistency. Thus May, "Miracles," 147, denies the plausibility of mere spontaneous remission in the healing of someone deaf and mute in the Gospels yet claims it in a more concretely documented case today (150–51).

163. E.g., Davey, "Healing," 62, noting the cluster of miracles surrounding Jesus and his theological interpretation; earlier, Johnson, "Miracles and History," 545–56. Carlston, "Question," 102, suggests that Jesus's miracles can be so construed, once "one strips away legendary accretions" (the criterion for what is legendary in this case presumably involving what is not plausible naturalistically). Carlston does not

chosomatic ailments in Jesus's ministry, the Gospel reports bear little resemblance to psychotherapy (or modern medicine); and if Jesus merely discerned which illnesses were psychosomatic, his widespread reputation as an *extraordinary* healer becomes more difficult to explain.¹⁶⁴

Among the categories of disorders that multiple attestation suggests that Jesus cured are blindness, deafness, skin disorders ("leprosy"), and occasionally death.¹⁶⁵ Some summaries (e.g., in Q, Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22), not to mention specific cases, suggest that Jesus healed *multiple* cases of blindness, deafness, leprosy, inability to walk, and death. Would he have encountered so many psychosomatic cases, and primarily psychosomatic cases, of such dramatic ailments, in a one- to three-year ministry in Galilee? Some suggest that Jesus's cures of blindness, paralysis, and the like reflect his cure of a particular psychiatric disorder;¹⁶⁶ yet how many psychiatrists regularly cure cases of these afflictions (especially publicly and immediately)? If Jesus meanwhile would have regularly failed with irreversible organic cases of blindness and leprosy, yet could not distinguish which cases were organic beforehand, would we not find more defensive explanations (like the one in Nazareth, Mark 6:5–6)? Some detractors of the psychic powers line of interpretation also find it interesting that some observers are prepared to allow unproved psychic powers for humans that they reject as unacceptable violations of nature's uniformity if assigned to God.¹⁶⁷

himself deny that God acted in Jesus but notes that "there are always alternative explanations." While not settling on this limitation, in 1905 Wilson, "Miracles," 28, allowed that social conditions in first-century Palestine probably made nervous conditions common. He argued that whether one believes that Jesus did more than psychosomatic healings depends on one's Christology (Wilson, "Miracles," 14); I would add that it can also depend on one's view of supernatural causation more generally. Dod, "Healer," 174–76, believes that God could work through psychosomatic healing both in Jesus's day and subsequently but that miracles involving nature ceased after the apostolic period. Others highlight the psychiatric value of Jesus's ministry to those with anxiety-related ailments (Capps, *Village Psychiatrist*, passim, esp. xii–xiv; Ellens, "Miracles and Process," 3–4).

164. Eve, *Healer*, 51–52.

165. E.g., blindness is cured in Q (Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22), Mark (8:22–25), Matthew (21:14), and John (9:6–7). All of these categories are also claimed today. For an argument in an ophthalmological journal that the descriptions of Jesus's eye healings in the Gospels appear plausible, see Mansour, Mehio-Sibai, Walsh et al., "Jesus and Eye" (summarized in Kub, "Miracles," 1273–74).

166. See Davies, *Healer*, 70–72; Capps, *Village Psychiatrist*, 8; for paralysis, see 37–55 (esp. 43–46); for blindness, 57–80; he suggests (xiv) that Jesus understood and worked through natural law (presumably on a much higher level than people today). Ralph Waldo Emerson's temporary blindness may have remitted due to prayer, but Capps believes it was psychological (64–65). Of course, while emotional miracles (cf., e.g., in Johnson, "Psychotherapy") would not meet Hume's standard, they could nevertheless function biblically as signs to people open to them. Because the Gospels rarely specify causes, one could allow psychiatric causes in some cases (with Capps) without ruling out organic cases, which remain pervasive in traditional societies. Yet we should avoid double standards: no one wants doctors to view all cases as psychological. Hoffman and Kurzenberger, "Miraculous," 81, note that this explanation for miracles of healing was a common modernist approach.

167. Cf. comments in Légasse, "L'Historien," 144. Parapsychology proponents tend to view the abilities as natural, yet have so far failed to offer natural mechanisms to account for claimed phenomena (Krippner and Achterberg, "Experiences," 380).

The Gospels often do connect faith with healings (Matt 8:10, 13; 9:2, 6–7, 22, 28–29; 15:28; Mark 2:5, 11–12; 5:34, 36; 9:23–24; 10:52; Luke 5:20, 24–25; 7:9; 8:48, 50; 17:19; 18:42; John 4:50; 11:40; cf. Mark 16:17–18; Acts 3:16; 14:9) or other answers to prayer (Mark 11:23–24; Matt 14:28–31; 21:21–22; Luke 17:6; cf. Mark 16:17–18), and sometimes shortage of healings due to a culture of disbelief (Mark 6:5–6; Matt 13:58; Luke 9:41) or Jesus's agents' disbelief (Matt 17:20; cf. Mark 9:29; Luke 9:41). (John more typically emphasizes basic faith *following* signs; John 1:50; 2:11, 23; 4:39, 48, 53; 7:31; 11:15, 42, 45, 48; 12:11; 14:29; 16:30; 20:30–31; cf. John 9:35–38; 10:25; Acts 13:12.)

Whether or not such receptivity plays a role in some cases, however, there is no thought that faith is efficacious only for events that could be explained psychosomatically (note secondary faith in Matt 8:13; 9:2; 15:28; Mark 2:5; Luke 7:9; John 4:50; death in Mark 5:36, 41–42; John 11:40–44; extrahuman effects in Mark 11:23–24; Matt 14:29; 21:21). Psychosomatic recovery is also not, as I have noted, the explanation most commonly applicable for some sorts of cures, such as the sudden stop of menorrhagia (Mark 5:34), long-term blindness (Mark 10:52), paralysis (Mark 2:11–12), and other conditions; had Jesus healed only psychosomatic ailments, he certainly would have failed publicly in many cases of organic blindness and the like, with no typical shamanic rituals to buffer the failure, and this could have reduced his crowds.

At least in the perspective of the Gospel writers, faith is not to be in one's amount of faith, as if it were a substance, but in God or Christ, who does the works (Mark 11:22; cf. Matt 18:6). Whereas Westerners after Kant tend to think of faith as a subjective feeling, the Gospels treat it more as a recognition of objective truth; the issue is less faith's finite possessor than its omnipotent object (Mark 11:22). The mention of faith is also missing in many accounts (e.g., Matt 8:14–15; 14:14; Mark 1:30–31; Luke 7:12–15; 13:11–13; John 5:6–9; 9:4–7); one dare not argue from silence, especially since Jesus himself supplied faith in many cases, but it is nevertheless clear that miracles can occur despite some participants' lack of faith (Matt 8:26; 14:17, 26; 16:8–10; Mark 4:40; 6:49; 8:4, 17–21; 9:24, 26; Luke 2:9; 5:4–9; 8:25; 11:14–15; especially Luke 1:20; cf. Luke 10:18). The disciples themselves are often the ones chided for their little faith (Mark 4:40; Luke 8:25; 12:28; cf. Luke 17:5), albeit especially in Matthew (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20).¹⁶⁸

While most historical Jesus scholars accept that Jesus performed acts that people believed to be cures, it is those drawing on medical anthropology (such as Pilch and Crossan) who most often emphasize that he did in fact cure illnesses. Their work offers extremely valuable insights from which I have learned. Yet some of these scholars contend that Jesus cured only culturally defined illnesses, not organic

168. Cotter's recent and excellent *Portrait*, thoroughly informed in ancient culture, helpfully highlights the petitioners and Jesus's response to them in some key Markan narratives and Q, often including the petitioners' boldness. For faith and its often bold expression in this work, see 6–7, 9, 12, 74–75, 100–102, 158, 254–55, 257.

disease.¹⁶⁹ More recently, drawing on psychoimmunology, scholars have begun to recognize that curing the former could also affect the latter.¹⁷⁰

Nevertheless, while this recognition is welcome, challenges ethnocentric readings, and may discern processes that Jesus may have sometimes used, even it still leaves some questions unanswered.¹⁷¹ Should we expect merely favorable immune responses to cure organic conditions like leprosy immediately? What of the raising of the dead? Such factors may be at work in many cures, but I believe that we still dance around an obvious question for some reports. It seems that scholarship is permitted to discuss any hypothesis—so long as we do not invoke God or other extrahuman intelligences.¹⁷² Why are we obligated to observe that rule, which is itself an ethnocentric imposition from a particular subculture? Granted that we can work within a discipline's circumscribed boundaries by not asking the question, the question is not consequently epistemologically illegitimate. Granted that not all our colleagues accept this approach, is there any reason why the hypothesis should not be allowed on the table (like other hypotheses on which scholars disagree among ourselves)?

Appropriately for those who see the Gospels as biographies about a person who lived not long before, Stevan Davies accepts larger than usual portions of their portrayal of Jesus as historically accurate because these can fit his spirit possession thesis. For him, Jesus was a healer employing the placebo effect.¹⁷³ Yet the exclusion of anything genuinely supernatural is “a premise I accept absolutely,” rendering impossible, for example, Jesus's resurrection.¹⁷⁴ Whenever we come across a principle that some take as axiomatic (e.g., the insistence of some popular writers on a “literal” interpretation of Revelation), I ask my students, “Who made up that rule?” That is, is it a rule that we are obligated to follow or merely an idea that we take for granted? If the answer to who made up the rule is in this case Hume, we have already surveyed evidence that raises serious questions about the logical value of his rule. Davies's careful approach allows him to accept more of the

169. Evaluating the dichotomy, see Capps, *Village Psychiatrist*, xv–xvi; Gaztambide, “Psychoimmunology,” 95–97. Capps, *Village Psychiatrist*, xvii–xviii, counters that in psychosomatic illness, emotional roots can create physical problems.

170. Gaztambide, “Psychoimmunology,” 97–99, following Felix Just, Marcus Borg, and Donald Capps; developing the evidence further on 99–108; cf. information in Lenzer, “Citizen.” This approach is more culturally open to ancient conceptions than most academic readings have been. Capps, *Village Psychiatrist*, xii, does not deny the involvement of genuine physical conditions, but avers that these are generated psychologically.

171. No approach is obligated to answer questions outside its purview, so my questions here are intended as supplemental rather than denying insights in this approach.

172. I am not contending that all those who make the above arguments deny God or supernatural activity. I am complaining rather that the constraints that limit usual academic inquiry should be open to challenge in view of significant evidence (though I work within such constraints as needed).

173. Davies, *Healer*, 77 (addressing anxiety-suppressed immune systems and psychogenic illnesses, 76).

174. *Ibid.*, 16. Thus he rejects nature miracles, unlike healings, as legendary (67), because they cannot fit his paradigm; in principle he allows raisings, but only insofar as the persons may have been comatose or perhaps just recently dead. Contrast those who argue (as I do below) that refusing nontheistic constraints may yield a fuller picture of reality (e.g., Polkinghorne, *Reality*, 83, 88).

early evidence than most scholars do; but admitting as possible also some cures that cannot be explained by the placebo effect would provide greater consistency in handling our sources. If it is natural to take most first- and second-generation reports as historically valuable, why screen out elements simply because they are contrary to a Humean worldview? Following the principle in logic known as Occam's razor, allowing supernatural activity provides the simplest interpretation for some of our other evidence that even Davies's interesting approach cannot accommodate.

The Placebo Effect

Having introduced the supernatural question, however, we must return to natural factors. One cannot deny that psychological factors play a role in many cures. While "magnetic" and many hypnotic explanations are now dated, the value of psychological factors in recovery is well documented. Some researchers have estimated that as many as half, or even more than half, of patients lack organic causes for their ailments,¹⁷⁵ although these estimates naturally include only those whose organic causes are diagnosed.¹⁷⁶ Most ailments do improve on their own with or without medical or other treatment.¹⁷⁷ The placebo effect often helps patients,¹⁷⁸ so that even some alternative medicines without proven chemical efficacy have benefited patients through this effect.¹⁷⁹ Some have even linked it to remission of

175. Frye, "Faith Healing," 18; Markle, "Body," 16–17; Baroody, "Healing," 87–88; Benson, *Healing*, 49; cf. Kelsey, *Healing*, 5; Buskirk, *Healing*, 25–44; Venter, *Healing*, 231; Robertson, *Miracles*, 144. Cf. even a reported case for deafness in Benson, *Healing*, 63. On psychosomatic cures, see also, e.g., Neal, *Power*, 77–78; Mayhue, *Healing*, 92–94; emotions in Frohock, *Healing Powers*, 133.

176. Remus, *Healer*, 109, notes that surveys suggest that clear diagnoses elude physicians in roughly half the occasions.

177. Frohock, *Healing Powers*, 133. Roberts, *Coburn*, 18, offers this observation based on his time in the Amazon rainforest, where most people lacked access to physicians.

178. See, e.g., Droege, *Faith Factor*, 15–33 (esp. 23–26; cf. also 9–12, on psychoneuroimmunology; on which see also Gaztambide, "Role," 303–6); Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 179–81; Gaztambide, "Role"; Frank, *Persuasion*, 65–74; Benson, *Healing*, 117; Bishop, *Healing*, 25–27; Buskirk, *Healing*, 45–49, 89–119; Hirschberg and Barasch, *Recovery*, 70; Eya, "Healing," 49 (citing, e.g., Beecher, "Placebo," though some of his work has subsequently generated controversy); Remus, *Healer*, 110–13; Beauregard and O'Leary, *Brain*, 144–50; Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 87; Schwarz, *Healing*, 169–70; Venter, *Healing*, 62; Wallis, "Healing," 51; Epperly, *Touch*, 35–36. Benson, *Healing*, 21, found that attitudes of wellness could prove two or three times as effective as an ordinary placebo. Benson, *Healing*, 184–87, found apparent but not adequately replicable effects of "healers" even on animals, hypothesizing (186) that positive human pheromones may have played a part. Randi, *Faith Healers*, 283–84, offers this complaint about "faith healing" claims, though he lays the same essential charge against psychotherapy (285–86); one might also wonder how spinal pressure could cure deafness (Bishop, *Healing*, 82–83, on early chiropractic). Cf. one comment (intended favorably) regarding African traditional healers: "The therapeutic effect comes basically from the client's belief that the healer is a powerful person" (Mkhwanazi, "Psychotherapist," 267).

179. Marilyn Marchione, "Experts: Placebo Power Behind Many Natural Cures," Associated Press, Nov. 10, 2009, http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20091110/ap_on_he_me/med_unproven_remedies_placebo; accessed Nov. 10, 2009. She cites sources claiming that the placebo effect accounts for a third of the benefits even in the case of accepted medicines.

some cases of cancer¹⁸⁰ or used it to explain faith cures of tuberculosis,¹⁸¹ though it should be noted that confidence does not always produce such effects. In some cases, the placebo effect has made a genuine difference between life and death.¹⁸² It is said that self-hypnosis has sometimes alleviated nonpsychosomatic, congenital ailments, though normally partially, gradually, and with need for the treatment to continue.¹⁸³

Through history, many religio-medical folk practices offered no pharmaceutical benefit but apparently did provide significant placebo effects.¹⁸⁴ Thus on the medical side eighteenth-century patients often improved after bloodletting, which we now know to be harmful; patients *expected* to improve because the medical establishment of the day supported the practice.¹⁸⁵ Herbert Benson of Harvard Medical School notes that because of confidence in physicians' orders, participants in one five-year study who neglected most of their prescribed placebos were almost twice as likely to die as those who took them.¹⁸⁶ Other medically worthless treatments have displayed objectively documented higher improvement rates—until the treatments were shown to be ineffective.¹⁸⁷ Other personal factors can be important; for example, physicians' personal concern for patients aids the recovery process.¹⁸⁸ In the case of one ailment where placebos proved as effective as medicines, confident physicians proved some 30 percent more effective than skeptical ones.¹⁸⁹ Mental health helps mobilize immune responses and facilitate physical recovery, and various kinds of meditation or religiously sanctioned expressions of confidence can aid in this process.¹⁹⁰

Whether the placebo effect stands behind a *particular* healing, of course, remains open to question. An Asian physician for whom a pastor prayed noted that before the prayer he could not bend down because his back had been sprained. After prayer, he was fine, with no need for pain medication, and went running

180. Hirschberg and Barasch, *Recovery*, 277–78; cf. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 40. Preliminary studies can suggest a generally positive correlation of spirituality with cancer coping and improvement, though more research is needed (cf. Sherman and Simonton, "Spirituality and Cancer" [for one ambiguity, see, e.g., 164]; Koenig, *Medicine*, 124–27).

181. Melinsky, *Miracles*, 98–100 (esp. the story of Pauline on 99–100), 163; Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 39–40.

182. Althouse, *Healing*, 107–9.

183. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 47–48.

184. Benson, *Healing*, 107–10 (citing Shapiro, "History"; Hand, *Magical Medicine*; Vogel, *Medicine*).

185. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 179. Bloodletting also appears in some Native American traditional medicine (Hultkrantz, *Healing*, 33–34, 66, 95).

186. Benson, *Healing*, 45 (citing Benson and McCallie, "Placebo Effect"; Horwitz et al., "Adherence"). For the negative version of the placebo effect, see, e.g., Benson, *Healing*, 39, 42, 53, 59, 62.

187. Benson, *Healing*, 34, 36–37. On other occasions, medicines or procedures work but not for the reasons theorists initially suppose (see, e.g., Clark, *Philosophy of Science*, 92–93, 112–13).

188. Cassell, *Miracles*, 215–18 (esp. 215, based on interviews with surgeons).

189. Moerman, *Meaning*, 38–39, as cited in Pilch, "Usefulness," 99–100.

190. See, e.g., Benson, *Healing*, 16–21 and passim; cf. Althouse, *Healing*, 117–21 (on Christian meditation); Krippner and Achterberg, "Experiences," 382 (on the biological benefits of "positive emotional changes" more generally); for Christian spirituality benefiting mental health, see, e.g., Joubert, "Spirituality"; Hoffman, Moriarty and Williamson, "Dynamics."

the next day. The doctor noted that he had originally thought that the placebo effect accounted for all healings but said that he could not explain his own case in those terms.¹⁹¹ Some scientists recognize that extraordinary cures labeled miracles “go way beyond mere placebo effects,” and even more powerful “expectation effects.”¹⁹² While in some cases psychosomatic explanations are probable, in some other cases they are futile: the healing of babies, the raising of the dead, or the stilling of storms.¹⁹³

As for explanations that depend on psychic human abilities, these explanations grow weak in cases of cures where faith was lacking, as sometimes reported at Lourdes and elsewhere (note also various other examples throughout this book).¹⁹⁴ Appeal to latent human powers¹⁹⁵ (even to still storms), like appeal to God or other superhuman forces, is ultimately an appeal beyond materialistic naturalism as we know it. That some find it appealing as an alternative to divine or other superhuman explanations, even when cures immediately follow prayer, suggests again the presuppositions that I have noted stand behind much of the modern antipathy toward miracles: atheism and deism.

Religion and Psychological Elements in Healing

Religion may support psychological elements in healing. Suggestibility (or, on a less charitable reading, gullibility) may account for some psychic healing claims.¹⁹⁶ Many studies link spiritual healing to altered states of consciousness.¹⁹⁷ Confidence can produce relaxation, which provides an immune system advantage.¹⁹⁸ A Japanese hypnotherapist observing shamans and Christian healers compared the trance behavior involved with hypnosis, regarding these practices as potentially

191. Bruce Collins, phone interview, April 11, 2009. Bruce provided me the doctor's correspondence (dated Feb. 9, 2009) and the names involved, which I omit in print for the sake of privacy.

192. McNamara and Szent-Imrey, “Learn,” 210, complaining that too little research has been done on the nature of religious faith in extraordinary cures. They use “costly signaling theory” to address forms of human illness and recovery in *ibid.*, 213–18.

193. Cf. *ibid.*, 213: “we have no [scientific] explanation for the miraculous healing of an infant.”

194. E.g., the story of Elaine Pabelo's raising in ch. 12.

195. Over half a century ago, Ikin, *Concepts*, 115–37, sought to bring together spiritual healing with the “new physics,” suggesting a latent power within nature (perhaps as a religious attempt to bridge to secular language). With some others, she suggested that psychic processes were as normal as physical ones (151–58).

196. Allison and Malony, “Surgery,” 54–55 (on Filipino psychic surgery; see also the sleight of hand argument in McClenon, *Events*, 107–15). McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 47, note the evolutionary approach in which more suggestible persons were more often cured in shamanic rituals, hence perpetuated their suggestibility genes.

197. See McClenon, *Healing*, 67, and sources in his notes. On 87–88 he notes the different brain activity during altered states of consciousness; on 89–91, brain activity and anomalous experiences; on 92, brain activity and hypnosis; on 92–93, hypnosis and anomalous experiences; and on 95–96, hypnosis and spiritual healing. Despite the empirical aspects of these studies, the specific configuration of connections may require more study. On altered states of consciousness, see brief discussions in appendixes B and E.

198. McClenon, *Healing*, 76, suggesting that rituals can facilitate this increased confidence.

therapeutic.¹⁹⁹ (One should note, however, that in a number of cultures it is the healer rather than the patient who typically enters a trance.)

In some cultures today, “indigenous folk-healers” offer a higher cure rate than Western medical practitioners there, especially in treating the many mental causes of illness.²⁰⁰ Some studies found that most cases involving the studied shamans were cured, partly or fully, with significantly higher average patient satisfaction than in the West.²⁰¹ Certainly traditional healers are more affordable and accessible than Western medicine.²⁰² Noting the inadequate medical help available for most Africans, many modern Western scholars thus praise the health support offered by traditional African healers and African Independent Churches (AICs) as a significant benefit to society, whether or not it involves supernatural elements.²⁰³ Some also complain that Western insensitivity toward nonorganic causes drives traditional Africans to faith healers and traditional healers, where such causes are taken seriously.²⁰⁴ Health workers generally affirm that these healers help people and fulfill a genuine social role,²⁰⁵ and many studies contend that they are even more effective in treating psychological disorders than psychotherapy is.²⁰⁶ Zambia’s

199. Cited in McClenon, *Healing*, 59.

200. Eve, *Miracles*, 354 (citing Kleinman, *Healers*, 71–82, 139–40, 366, especially regarding the Taiwanese shaman, or *táng-ki*). This would not be relevant for many illnesses reported cured in the NT, however, such as leprosy or most cases of paralysis and blindness. Eve, *Miracles*, 355–56, also notes that the NT reports do not allow time for the sort of “folk psychotherapy” attested in these other accounts.

201. McClenon, *Healing*, 62–63, cites regarding patient satisfaction Kleinman and Sung, “Practitioners,” though noting that their small study found no evidence for healing that could not be explained psychologically (and that half of doctors’ caseloads in the West deal with similar issues). On most cases being cured in one study, again allowing psychological explanations, McClenon, *Healing*, 63, cites Curley, *Elders*.

202. See, e.g., Amutabi, “Pharmacology,” 154, noting also that there are traditional practitioners for every two hundred to three hundred people, but only one trained medical person for thirty thousand people.

203. Many address the psychosomatic or positive psychotherapeutic value of traditional African healing forms: in AICs, see, e.g., Oosthuizen, “Healing,” 87; idem, “Baptism,” 187–88; idem, *Healer-Prophet*, 193; Mkhize, “Prayer-Healer”; Ayegboyin, “Heal,” 244, 245 (while also noting serious problems, 244–45); Edwards, “Healing,” 343–44; cf. Motala, “Influence”; in traditional religion, Mkhwanazi, “Psychotherapist” (on the therapeutic relationship, see 277); Ademilokun, “Contribution,” 131; Adeyemi, “Healing Systems,” 145–46; Cheetham and Griffiths, “Psychotherapist”; Benson, *Healing*, 110 (citing Gelfand, *Witch Doctor*). Given faith healing’s benefit for mental care, Peltzer, “Faith Healing,” 399, contends that it should be accepted as part of health care in South Africa (though noting on 404 that many of its remedies, even for STDs, are spiritual and essentially homeopathic). Cf., e.g., the South African Pentecostal cure of a woman’s anorexia in Denis, “Religion,” 187. Others also recommend sensitivity to local mental health taxonomies (e.g., for South African Muslims in Ally and Laher, “Perceptions”). Although some traditional diagnoses may simply defer problems or project them (hindering relationships), African traditional healing has an advantage from a systems perspective in that it treats the entire social context of a person’s psychological distress, in contrast to traditional Western psychiatry (Crawford and Lipsedge, “Help,” 143). Zionists and Pentecostals promote more faithful sexual behavior, helpful against HIV (Scorgie, “Weapons,” 89); Zionists provide communal support and emotional catharsis (91–93), and some non-Zionists come for ministry also (96).

204. Daneel, *Zionism*, 22–23, 57. Cf. a similar Native American case in Hultkrantz, *Healing*, 151. Some doctors, however, have claimed that “fetish priests” have tried to attack them “spiritually since I was destroying their livelihood” (Mensah, “Basis,” 177).

205. McClenon, *Healing*, 63.

206. See studies cited in McClenon, *Healing*, 62–67; for the placebo effect as a possible factor in shamanic healing, see Walsh, *Shamanism*, 212–14; West, *Sorcery*, 43–44, 92–93.

government legally certifies herbalist folk healers,²⁰⁷ and the World Health Organization (WHO) has trained many “native healers, sometimes incorporating them into Western medical clinics and hospitals” to make health accessible to more people.²⁰⁸ Nor are indigenous medicines limited to Africa; for example, one study of a tribe in the Philippines urges that folk medicine be continued there so long as scientific medicine remains unavailable.²⁰⁹ (Some have suggested that charismatic Christian healing also should be accepted as an alternative therapy “in contexts where access to conventional treatment is limited.”²¹⁰)

Even apart from the question of supernatural elements, however, not all effects of traditional African medicine are psychosomatic.²¹¹ Some traditional herbal remedies, for example, are natural remedies that may be chemically effective.²¹² Local experience may yield some substances that prove helpful in addressing local ailments;²¹³ some have even suggested that African medicine pioneered the use of immunizations even before Western medicine.²¹⁴ Herbal remedies are not, when employed only naturally, incompatible with the claims of different religions, including Christianity;²¹⁵ the questions are often more pharmaceuti-

207. Jules-Rosette, “Healers,” 128–29 (cf. also acceptance of spirit healers there, in Luig, “Worlds,” 132–33). Although illegal for a time in Mozambique, traditional healers are now legal there (Roque, “Mafumo,” 186) and sometimes even celebrated (West, *Sorcery*, 39).

208. Krippner, “Medicine,” 195. For differences, commonalities, and dialogue between Western medicine and African traditional practices in Africa, see Merwe, “Relevance,” 61–62.

209. Angel, “Craft,” 135 (again, based on herbal remedies, many of them not yet known or studied outside their context; cf. iv–v).

210. Brown, Mory, Williams, and McClymond, “Effects,” 864, 868.

211. Religious healing usually coexists “with naturalistic treatment” (Frank, *Persuasion*, 37). Traditional herbalists often have belief systems about spirits (see, e.g., Jules-Rosette, “Healers,” 128–29; Hultkrantz, *Healing*, 52, 94, 158) or practice divination (Jules-Rosette, “Healers,” 132–33; mediums in Emmons, *Ghosts*, 224), but these may be distinguished from some of the herbs they use.

212. Cf. Amutabi, “Pharmacology,” 155 (noting roots and herbs on 165–70); for “naturalistic” traditional medicine, including herbs and surgery, see Sofowora, *Traditional Medicine*. Sofowora distinguishes “occult” spirit activities from traditional medicine and treatments (43–44), though noting that they have often overlapped (e.g., 3–5, 44). For use of herbs, cf. also, e.g., Umeh, *Dibia*, 121–36 (esp. 126–30); Byaruhanga-Akiiki and Kealotswe, *Healing*, 164–74 (on some Asian remedies), 182–87 (in Africa); Crawford and Lipsedge, “Help,” 138–39 (among the Zulu); Abioye, “Faith,” 4; Akintan, “Priest,” 137–38; Haar and Ellis, “Possession,” 199–200; Roque, “Mafumo,” 184–89; Katz, *Energy*, 39, 51 (among the !Kung); in Caribbean healing, Hurbon, “Pentecostalism,” 134; in Haiti, Beauvoir, “Herbs,” 115–25 (suggesting chemical effectiveness); Native American herbalists in Hultkrantz, *Healing*, 33, 36, 94, 111–12, 147, 158; cf. traditional Japanese herbal remedies in Nakasone, “Healing,” 289; indigenous folk remedies in part of the Philippines in Castro, “Practices,” 309–67, and Angel, “Craft,” e.g., iv–v; some in indigenous Mexican culture in Heinrich, “Medicines.” The majority of students at the University of Zululand believed that diviners and herbalists were helpful for the sick (Nene, “Analysis,” 37–41, esp. 40), though some thought them more helpful for the “superstitious” (41).

213. Also other treatments, e.g., of snakebite by cutting open the wound and applying a tourniquet (Reynolds, *Magic*, 67).

214. McNaughton, *Blacksmiths*, 57–58, although the evidence cited is limited.

215. See, e.g., Gaiser, *Healing*, 57–58; the concession of William Wadé Harris in Walls, *Movement*, 98–99. Western Christians have sometimes collaborated with traditional healers (e.g., Seale, “Collaboration”; a missionary and an herbalist in Olson, *Bruchko*, 126–29), although generally more open to their more “naturalistic” methods such as herbs than competing supernatural approaches (Seale, “Collaboration,”

cal than religious.²¹⁶ (Some treatments involve water more than herbs.²¹⁷) In an era when Western medicine was far less dependable than today, John Wesley, for example, advocated traditional herbs and other folk remedies.²¹⁸ When Wesley seemed on his deathbed at the age of fifty-one, at the hour that some were praying for him, he had a poultice of sulfur and egg white on brown paper applied to his side. “The pain ceased in five minutes,” he declared, “the fever in half an hour,”

316–17). Kyomo, “Healing,” 146–47, tells of Danieli Kamwela, a traditional medicine man who devoted his traditional medical practice to Christ’s service after becoming a Christian (cf. the healing of a missionary’s daughter through these means, and the missionary’s subsequent support, 145–46). Members of some indigenous churches resort to both Christian faith healing and to herbalists, but to the latter as a later resort and with the emphatic caveat that the herbalists they consulted were not using non-Christian religion (Jules-Rosette, “Healers,” 130). Some groups, like the church of John Maranke, reject both traditional and modern medicines (Jules-Rosette, “Healers,” 134–35). Views of Muslims toward traditional medicine of various kinds varies also (see Kareem, “Attitude,” 79–81; cf. Ademola, “Attitude,” 110).

216. Emphasized to me by my brother-in-law Emmanuel Moussounga, who has a PhD in chemistry from Paris as well as a master’s degree in pharmacology. He has explored these issues locally and hopes to pursue more research as the funding becomes available. Benson, *Healing*, 109 (citing Ackerknecht, *Medicine and Ethnology*), suggests that many local herbs contained agents useful for healing but that these agents were often delivered in an inadequately therapeutic way. That many committed Christians prescribe local herbal remedies, often with claims of supernatural discernment, was clear to me during my interviews in Congo (July 2008); other African Christians believe such traditional concoctions unnecessary (Onesimus Asimwe, interview, Oct. 12, 2008, though he was not against genuinely medicinal substances). Some elements may be symbolic (Oosthuizen, *Healer-Prophet*, 76), and some who employ such substances regard them as merely props for faith, regarding faith as the important element (Mkhize, “Prayer-Healer,” 289, on a woman who attributed her gift to both God and ancestors). Church history is replete with many such healing symbols (such as oil, e.g., Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 22, 160–61; a revealed remedy of vinegar and salt, Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 12; berries, in a dream, 222–25), often borrowed from surrounding cultures. With many herbs, however, a pharmacological element is also in view.

217. In some parts of Africa, indigenous church healers use holy water rather than herbs (Wessels, “Practices,” 94, noting that they also avoid using bones, killing medicine, and snuff, probably more widespread prohibitions; for divergent views of traditional medicines among AIC prophets, see Oosthuizen, *Healer-Prophet*, 174). The Aladura view of water somewhat resembles its role in Yoruba traditional religion (Ayegboyin, “Heal,” 238); for use of water and other substances in Zionist healing practices, see Dube, “Search,” 122; Daneel, “Zionism,” 29; Edwards, “Healing,” 341; Oosthuizen, *Healer-Prophet*, 40, 59–60, 75, 76 (vinegar and brown sugar), 89; Okoye, “Healing,” 23; sacred baptismal water in Oosthuizen, “Baptism,” comparing Roman Catholic and Orthodox rituals; idem, *Healer-Prophet*, 149–64, 169 (for healing, esp. 44–46); among the Karanga, Shoko, *Religion*, 54 (sprinkling of holy water); among West African Seraphim, Parrinder, *Religion*, 121; for water and Vaseline among the amaNazarethas, see Moodley, *Shembe*, 173–75 (though Vimbeni Shembe attributes the healing to faith and prayer, 161); for oil, orange juice, eggs, and smoke in some “apostolic” churches, Shoko, *Religion*, 53. Traditional cults also emphasize water and washing (e.g., Beauvoir, “Herbs,” 132, on Haiti), although Christians would look to other precedents (2 Kgs 5:10; John 9:7). The symbol is culturally intelligible in many cultures; baths (Pliny *Ep.* 7.21.3; Fronto *Eloq.* 1.4) and hot springs (Vitruvius *Arch.* 8.3.4; Pliny *Nat.* 31.31.59–61; Philostratus *Hrk.* 23.30) were considered therapeutic in the ancient Mediterranean world (see comment in ch. 2).

218. See Pickstone, “Systems,” 171 (referring to his *Primitive Physick*). This approach in a sense empowered the poor with regard to their health, though we now know that many of these folk cures, like many of those of that era’s medical establishment, were not dependable (see, e.g., Wigger, *Saint*, 67–68, 75, 229, 248–49, 275, 329–30). On the social context of the *Primitive Physick*, as an act of pastoral concern, see Rack, “Healing,” 138–40, 143–46, though Asbury did not follow its prescriptions (Wigger, *Saint*, 264); for Wesley’s mixed record on contemporary science, see Brooke, *Science*, 189–91. In North America, some traditional faith healers in Appalachia have also employed herbs alongside prayer (Wigginton, *Foxfire Book*, 356).

and he began to recover.²¹⁹ Today we would doubt that the poultice did much, at least physically, for his rapid recovery, but neither would we think that it harmed him or compromised his faith.²²⁰

Nevertheless, in many cases of recoveries associated with religion or traditional culture, Western observers believe that psychological elements play a role. One study in Switzerland showed that when a faith healer laid hands on 532 smokers to pray for their deliverance, fully 40 percent remained smoke-free after four months (compared with 2 percent success for “behavior-modification techniques” and “13% for those using nicotine-replacement therapy”), though this figure fell to 20 percent after five years, undoubtedly due to factors that made smoking attractive in the first place. While one could explain the outcomes in terms of extraordinary supernatural causation, one could also cite psychological factors. Those with stronger religious belief in the efficacy of laying on of hands had a higher long-term cure rate, perhaps suggesting the element many religious people call faith.²²¹ In keeping with such an approach, one paralysis cured by emotional change was assumed to be functional rather than organic.²²²

When some clearly organic conditions have been cured, however, it seems reductionist to reduce all reports of healings to psychosomatic cures of functional limitations. This allowance for mind cures of a functional nature, while denying organic ones, long persisted as a traditional compromise with antisupernaturalist assumptions.²²³ Early twentieth-century modernist Christians could accept God acting by natural means through the human “mind and spirit” far more readily than God “intervening directly in physical nature.”²²⁴

Reductionism aside, we readily acknowledge that many cures may involve these natural factors. Most theists, including those affirming miraculous healing, can

219. Wesley, *Journal* (1974), 198 (Nov. 28, 1753). He was healthy enough to begin riding the next day (198), but apparently recovered full strength only gradually (199).

220. By contrast, the decoction of bark he ingested on Dec. 20 of the same year apparently set him back a few days (Wesley, *Journal* [1974], 199). In Olson, *Bruchko*, 148, Motilone Indians successfully employed antibiotics and prayer against snake venom, unaware that the antibiotics were useless for snake poison. Like Wesley, they used the best medicine they knew while depending on God. Jones, *Wonders*, 110, notes a similar combination of a worthless remedy and helpful faith and (114–15, 126) acknowledges recoveries after remedies he considers unhelpful.

221. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 28–29 (citing Gmur and Tschopp, “Factors”; for the 2 percent success rate, Law and Tang, “Analysis”); for an anecdotal report of instant supernatural healing from cigarette addiction, see Carothers, *Prison*, 49. Mainstream media also report the usefulness of religion in combating nicotine addiction; see Jeff Levine, “Study: Religion Helps Smokers Kick the Habit” (CNN, May 15, 1996), <http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/9605/15/nfm/holy.smokes/index.html>; accessed June 22, 2009, via Dr. David Larson’s website.

222. Hirschberg and Barasch, *Recovery*, 111–12. Note also the case in May, “Miracles,” 148.

223. Mullin, *Miracles*, 183 (on 184 noting liberal Christians’ earlier contrast made between healing and the more problematic nature miracles); cf. L. W. Grensted’s critique of Hickson in Mews, “Revival,” 330; also Wright, *Miracle*, 150–57, 167–69 (though he allows that Jesus’s miracles may be of a different character, 145–46, 169–70). Thouless, “Miracles,” 257, contends that “mental healing” can explain even organic cures but admits that the cases available so far had not yet proved amenable “to experimental study.”

224. Mullin, *Miracles*, 184.

affirm that God frequently works through such psychological factors for recovery.²²⁵ Indeed, some Christians focus especially on *spiritual* healing, with various degrees of efficacy.²²⁶ Most persons with disabilities are not miraculously healed, but many find strength in their faith to cope with their disabilities (cf. 1 Kgs 14:4–6; 2 Kgs 13:14; Luke 14:13, 21); from a believer's or a friend's standpoint, this ability may reflect divine grace. Nevertheless, for the purposes under discussion here, in these cases unconvinced observers will not view such recoveries as indisputable empirical evidence for extranormal divine activity.²²⁷

In the middle of the twentieth century, British Methodist theologian Leslie Weatherhead acknowledged psychological means of healing, including Mesmerism,²²⁸ hypnotism,²²⁹ and suggestion.²³⁰ Yet while psychological means were useful, he urged that the church must also “recover the lost art of healing through the direct activity of God.”²³¹ While affirming the value of medicine and psychology, he lamented that the church “has lost the supernatural gift of healing.” Though Christ used psychological principles, he insisted, psychology alone is not the fullness of Christ's supernatural power.²³²

Some narratives, such as raisings and nature miracles, are not as susceptible to this sort of explanation. These events are less frequent than faith cures but are often based on the same sort of eyewitness testimonies, often by individuals whose trustworthiness should not be in dispute. The frequent practice today of admitting the possibility of faith cures in the Gospels and Acts, while denying claims that would seem to require supernatural action (or at least highly improbable,

225. See, e.g., Mount, “Miracles?” 19; Brown, “Spiritual Healing,” 115–17; cf. De Orio, “Phenomenology,” 123–24. Some healings, MacNutt notes (*Power*, 68–70), work “through purely natural forces released in prayer,” although he notes extraordinary activity (70–74), including healing of nerve damage and the straightening of teeth (76–77). The high proportion of ailments that have psychological roots will also require cures that address those roots (MacNutt, *Power*, 79). Even in Scripture, God typically worked through natural processes—which, after all, God created (problematizing the distinction between “natural” and “supernatural”); even in Exod 14:21, God swept back the sea through an east wind, though this was not a *random* event. Some contend that the historic combination of spiritual and medical approaches in healing has been enjoying a resurgence after several scientific studies (cited in Cherry, *Healing Prayer*, 3–17; cf. Neal, *Smoke*, 126–34).

226. Csordas, “Healing,” recounts two case studies with a charismatic Catholic priest and psychologist; the second case (129–32) acknowledged minimal improvement, although the client's resistance would have made psychiatric progress equally difficult.

227. Some, of course, will not be convinced by any arguments. Moreover, even some unusual cures provide limited evidence. Spontaneous remission can happen with or without prayer (Mount, “Miracles?” 19). The exception would be a sufficient collocation of natural factors as to be too improbable naturally to attribute to coincidence (Corduan, “Miracle,” 104). While this collocation may be miraculous, it is not as often disputed as the sort of event inexplicable without some sort of supernatural agency (see discussion in Dietl, “Miracles,” 130). Moreover, even in the Gospels Jesus sometimes healed from compassion without a prior request when he was present (Luke 7:13–15).

228. Weatherhead, *Psychology*, 105–8.

229. *Ibid.*, 109–21.

230. *Ibid.*, 122–28.

231. *Ibid.*, 485.

232. *Ibid.*, 486.

extraordinary coincidences), is acceptable on nonsupernatural grounds. (Biblical supernaturalists can accept both miraculous and more natural faith cures, since, as I have repeatedly noted, God in Scripture often worked through nature, albeit usually doing so in extraordinary ways when the objective involved signs.) But if, as I argued in chapters 5–6, the case for antisupernaturalism is largely circular, then an open-minded approach should be willing to consider also those claims that do not fit this paradigm (including babies, raisings, and particularly extraordinary cures). One need not presuppose that miracles happen to be open to the possibility; by contrast, to foreclose the possibility *a priori* and without exploration rests on a closed-minded, hence uncritically held, presupposition. For an ideal, neutral observer not schooled in antisupernaturalism, which way would the totality of the evidence, including claims of raisings and nature miracles, point?

Conclusion

Based on the preceding discussion, even an atheist could affirm that many people believed themselves healed and experienced recovery through Jesus's and his first followers' ministry. That is, the primary, historical claim of this book would be sufficiently established even apart from a theistic perspective. Nevertheless, I believe that it is possible to strengthen the historical claim still further, as well as advance the book's secondary argument, by looking at the other side of some of the evidence.

Biased Standards?

The ground rules that the commissions established in order to validate a healing as miraculous—that is, that it could not merely be inexplicable, but also had to be unique and not found in the annals of either medicine or other religions—almost ensured that no healings would be deemed “miracles.” —Robert Bruce Mullin¹

... have concluded that she must have been misdiagnosed and mistreated for the past twenty years. These conscientious and competent doctors have risked a possible malpractice suit rather than admit the possibility of divine healing. —Ken Blue²

We have looked at various plausible naturalistic factors in recoveries sometimes associated with faith. Since the God of Scripture most often appears to work with natural factors, there is nothing in these observations that necessarily challenges a position grounded in Scripture, even theologically. Neither, however, would such activity convince an open-minded agnostic of a deity’s extranormal activity. Many Western Christian scholars in recent centuries have appropriately discovered God’s greatness in the regularity of nature, but those who take nature’s regularity for granted may find extraordinary works more persuasive than natural ones. In general terms, how might such extraordinary works be identified?

Keep in mind this book’s earlier discussion regarding Hume and Western skepticism toward miracles. Despite its shaky foundations, this Humean skepticism provides a starting bias in much of the traditional Western evaluation of the evidence for miracles, a bias that often screens out all evidence not in its favor.

Reductionism?

Clearly natural factors are at work in much healing, but some observers contend that attributing *all* medically unexplained recovery claims to exclusively psychological

1. Mullin, *Miracles*, 248.

2. Blue, *Authority*, 58.

causes, when other proposed factors may be at work, is reductionist.³ This warning surely applies to a number of the sorts of extranormal recoveries recounted earlier in this book, including healings of babies and the restoration of dead persons, for which a theological explanation is normally more supportable than a psychosomatic one.

One should also consider the cumulative factor: a specific coincidence appears increasingly less coincidental as its incidence level increases; the explanatory power of coincidence is not unlimited (as even David Hume recognized).⁴ One Western observer protests, "It strains the credulity of anyone who has seen literally countless instances of healing following prayer to be told that these instances are always" due to chance or psychological factors.⁵ Thus in one report, when a girl immobilized in her lower limbs by polio was, after a prayer of faith, promptly able to walk "holding only her father's arm," one professor derided the experience as a coincidence. To this remark her father, also a professor, responded that if her healing was a coincidence, it was surely a miraculous one.⁶ If some people find all of these reports incredible, they should remember that the basis for their skepticism is the premise that such events cannot happen. They should also remember, as I argued earlier, that premise is only an assumption, not the conclusion of an examination of all (or normally even of many) miracle claims.

Avoiding a reductionist approach, a recent academic work in the sociology of religion notes that some of the reports of miracles that the authors collected could involve spontaneous remission, psychosomatic illnesses, or exaggerated rumors, yet other reports defied such naturalistic explanations and would be regarded by believers as supernatural.⁷ They allow that many cases may allow "complementary explanations"—both social and theological, both human and suprahuman elements.⁸ One need not rule out the usual sociological variables, they note, by

3. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 29–31, acknowledging psychosomatic ailments, and that mental attitudes can improve cure rates but denying that these explanations cover many of the cases he notes; cf. Frohock, *Healing Powers*, 135–36. Hickson, *Heal*, 72, cites the published letter of Bishop Herbert J. Molony of Chekiang Province in China, dated June 14, 1921: "many of the cures are not to be accounted for on any theory of 'suggestion.' This plays its part, as in all hope-inspiring medical practice, but it cannot account for some of the things I have seen." Others have also claimed some healing of organic, congenital, or "incurable" ailments (e.g., Shaub, "Analysis," 85, regarding Price, "Healing," 13, in the early period of World War II). Against reductionism more generally, see, e.g., Davies, "Preface," xi–xii; Polkinghorne, *Reality*, 8–9, 29–30, 37 (observing that particle physics does not explain every level of reality).

4. Hume, *Miracles*, 31–32: healing is not always a miracle, but if it is conjoined causally with a specific command to be healed it is a miracle. It is not miraculous if the conjunction can be explained as coincidence, but miraculous if coincidence is disproved (presumably with respect to the frequency of collocation vis-à-vis the level of infrequency of comparable cures apart from such collocation).

5. Puxley, "Experience," 171. The context of prayer fits the sort of religious context often applied in evaluating miracles, noted in ch. 5.

6. Edmunds, "Sick."

7. Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 152–53, citing favorably also the similar opinion of a theologian in Hong Kong. They critique Durkheim's approach as too reductionist ("or at least a bit arrogant"; 219).

8. Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 158. Some others have also allowed this approach (e.g., Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 40).

adding another that may be at work at times: what they call “the realm of the Spirit.”⁹ The stark division that some drive between such explanations, assuming them to be incompatible in all cases, reflects the milieu in which such a division originated.¹⁰ That is, the division reflects historically conditioned assumptions that are not deemed self-evident to all cultures. It is that either-or, forced-choice logic that I seek to avoid in my evaluation of proposed explanations. Some cases are explicable purely naturally; some are not explicable purely naturally; many are cumulatively *more* explicable with supernatural elements, although the degree of their persuasiveness varies according to the observer’s presuppositions more generally. From a theistic perspective, a divine act need not involve creation *ex nihilo* to be dramatic; signs could often expedite or employ natural processes or functions (whether psychological, physical, or both) to achieve results that chance in nature would not produce on its own.

A Historic Bias against Faith?

While natural factors such as those noted earlier caution us against taking all faith healing claims at face value, and even more so against using all of them as incontrovertible evidence of divine activity, unspoken factors are often at work in setting the bar of proof impossibly high. Hume’s position demands “overwhelming evidence”¹¹ before accepting the validity of a miracle. Yet Hume deliberately sets the standard of “overwhelming” as virtually impossible, rejecting virtually any historical or present testimony. As one scholar points out, “In the nature of the case it is rarely possible to obtain such overwhelming evidence for any historical event.” Hence, many presume “that the kinds of things that demonstrably do not happen most of the time, never have happened.”¹² Following this paradigm, research sometimes works with an interpretive grid that dismisses potential evidence.¹³

9. Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 159; cf. also 219–20.

10. See Mullin, *Miracles*, passim, esp. 223–24. In addition to the intellectual milieu more generally, professional specialization and disciplinary boundaries augmented the dichotomy (103–4, 246–47). Research shows that most people who affirm divine healing accept medical explanations of disease and normal means of recovery but additionally affirm a higher metaphysical level; that is, they do not treat the spheres as incompatible or express hostility toward medicine (Poloma, *Assemblies*, 58–60).

11. The degree to which such evidence is deemed “overwhelming” varies according to the individual critic’s standard; one presupposing supernatural activity may require less evidence in a particular case than someone more skeptical of this. Likewise, the more dogmatic one’s antisupernaturalism the less any amount of documentation will appear convincing, regardless of its effect on a more neutral observer.

12. Hesse, “Miracles,” 40. For a response to the presuppositions informing Hume’s approach, see also Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 61–63; the summary of J. Houston’s arguments, and my other treatments of Hume in chs. 5–6 earlier. Virtually no report persuades those unwilling to be persuaded; even the most public sort of claim, such as a reported event at Fatima in front of seventy thousand people (cited in Hoffman and McGuire, “Miracles,” 225), is disputed (in this case, at least on the level of interpretation).

13. As warned by, e.g., Wink, “Write,” 6.

The Biased Vancouver Study

Some scholars today still cite against miraculous healing claims a supposedly objective committee that dismissed as exaggerated or deceptive 350 Pentecostal healing claims—in a study conducted in 1925.¹⁴ This study illustrates well the problem of bias against healing that effectively screens out any evidence potentially favoring it. The study conceded only five cures, all of which it claimed could have been effected medically, and thirty-eight cases of some improvement, while five persons, it reported emphatically, “had become insane.”¹⁵ Undoubtedly a large proportion of the claims did prove false or exaggerated,¹⁶ but one also suspects that the study did not proceed without guiding premises and that it proved what its authors expected it to.

Historian James Opp has recently probed the presuppositions of this supposedly objective study, which concerned the results of Charles Price’s 1923 meetings in Vancouver. Although the only public study of its era to collect much data on faith healers,¹⁷ its approach to the data is deeply marred by a predetermined allegiance to the idea, explicitly stated in the study’s introduction, that God works only through natural causes.¹⁸ The reader will recall from my historical survey that this perspective reflected a dominant viewpoint in academic circles of that era.

Nearly “all of the ministers in Vancouver who had publicly opposed the faith healer” were members of this committee, the most prominent being A. E. Cooke.¹⁹ Cooke had initially invited Price to the city but then turned against him as stoking false hopes. What Cooke did not say publicly, yet was understood by all who knew him, was that his daughter had failed to be cured in the meetings.²⁰ Cooke thus had understandable yet subjective personal incentive for his hostility—appropriately never directed, however, toward the medical establishment’s inability

14. Anderson, *Vision*, 93; followed more recently by Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism*, 146. Academia and the cultural establishment more generally were largely hostile to Pentecostalism in 1925, in contrast to the generally more open posture today. Cf. the 1932 committee challenging healing claims of the heterodox A. H. Dallimore (Guy, “Miracles,” 458–59). Journalist Margaret Macpherson claimed to have been instantly healed of twenty years of lumbago in his meetings (offering the claim three years later; 462), but doctors thought that Dallimore cured by suggestion (461).

15. Anderson, *Vision*, 93–94. Thus, for example, one patient with a previous history of mental illness had become “insane” after prayer and “died a week later from ‘the exhaustion of acute mania’” (Opp, *Lord for Body*, 181). A very similar complaint was lodged against Bosworth, again reflecting older nineteenth-century psychological theories (Opp, *Lord for Body*, 165).

16. Anderson, *Vision*, 94, cites Stanley Frodsham and Donald Gee, early Pentecostal leaders who were in a position to know (but who also may have been stating their positions forcefully to make a point to uncritical members of their own faith community) as objecting to inadequate documentation and complaining that only a small proportion of miracle claims proved demonstrably true. One should note, however, that these authors nevertheless maintained that genuine miracles did occur (see, e.g., Frodsham, *Apostle*).

17. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 178.

18. *Ibid.*, 179. The study did have the beneficial effect of making “Pentecostal editors . . . more careful in publishing reports without substantiation” (Reyes, “Framework,” 88–89).

19. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 178.

20. *Ibid.*, 162.

to cure the same daughter. The most significant physician on the committee had previously worked with Cooke in discrediting chiropractic.²¹ The committee had an agenda to discredit both faith healing and Price²² and urged that laws should be passed allowing only physicians, not ministers, to practice curative "hypnotism."²³

Given the dominance of his critics on the committee, it is hardly surprising that Price and his supporters declined to cooperate with it; several ministers supportive of him withdrew from the committee once its predisposition was obvious. Likewise, the local Baptist Ministerial Association "passed a resolution refusing to cooperate and protested that too many critics of the campaign were now investigating it."²⁴ Because of the consequent shortage of cooperative subjects, the committee investigated not just claimed healings but anyone who had received prayer, depending on newspaper appeals for information.²⁵

Two Methodist ministers who remained on the committee protested the majority perspective and issued a minority report. They noted that the committee investigated less than 6 percent of those anointed and that the study was not representative because those claiming cures viewed the committee as hostile and therefore refused to cooperate.²⁶ The minority report complained that the committee did not actually directly listen to the testimonies of those who claimed to be healed, and assumed that those claiming healing could not properly evaluate whether or not they had been cured.²⁷

Even so, the committee found thirty-eight persons who experienced improvement after prayer (in addition to the five who recovered). Some of the "improvements" reported sound significant, but these were attributed to suggestion and mass hypnotism.²⁸ (Public hypnosis was a favorite explanation of the era for healing claims.²⁹) The committee clearly implied that the celebrated case of Ruby Dimmick was purely psychological, enraging "her father, Rev. J. F. Dimmick," who noted that "no one on the committee had actually interviewed him or Ruby, nor did they even discuss the case with Dr Hall." Rev. Dimmick pointed out that the orthopedic hospital would hardly have admitted her to begin with had her condition been

21. *Ibid.*, 178.

22. *Ibid.*, 176.

23. *Ibid.*, 181.

24. *Ibid.*, 179.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, 182–83 (quotation from 183). They also challenged the committee's emphasis that 39 had died, showing this as nonrepresentative. Since those examined constituted only 6 percent of the total who received prayer, then 668 persons altogether should have died, yet "government statistics actually showed a decrease in the death rate over the seven months following the campaign when compared with the previous year" (183).

27. *Ibid.*, 184. That this accusation accurately represents the perspective of the majority report is clear from Cooke's insistence that only "a trained expert" and not the patient could diagnose what if anything was wrong with the patient (184), and reflects the naturalistic medical premises then dominant (185).

28. *Ibid.*, 180.

29. *Ibid.*, 166–69. The claim also appears in Perry, "Reporting," 107.

considered “hysteria” rather than a spinal problem!³⁰ Although her physician at first had been skeptical, by 1926 he conceded in writing that a miracle had in fact taken place.³¹ The committee’s ready dismissal of cases such as Dimmick’s reveals the way that it sorted evidence.

One woman clearly had “improved motor function,” but because X-rays showed that her bones were not healed, the “improved muscle function” that enabled her to walk better was dismissed as “functional” rather than “organic.”³² To this objection that the cures were of nonorganic causes, the minority report pointed out that most cures by physicians could be dismissed by the same standards.³³ Another observer who claimed to know members of the committee complained that they dismissed demonstrable healings “of previously diagnosed tuberculosis and cancer” by simply claiming “that the original diagnoses were mistaken”—so that they rejected even what empirical evidence they did have available.³⁴ Rev. W. J. Knott, well known in the city, “testified that he had been cured of [a] goiter from which he had been suffering for years,” almost instantly; family members affectionately kissed “the place where the goiter had been.”³⁵

Understandably the committee emphasized the dashed hopes and disappointed faith of those not cured.³⁶ Price himself did not, however, claim that everyone for whom he prayed recovered;³⁷ people are not always cured medically, either. Some doctors supported Price,³⁸ but a central issue at conflict with many other doctors and ministers of the era was epistemological:³⁹ while faith healers (in contrast to Christian Science) did not deny the reality of natural causes, they also allowed (in contrast to antisupernaturalists) supernatural causes as well.

Similar Past Critiques of Other Public Healing Claims

Similarly, a committee produced a devastating critique of James Moore Hickson’s healings in England. Contemporaries, however, recognized that the committee

30. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 186. In the nineteenth century, “hysteria” was a common female affliction and diagnosis, but this largely vanished when it became culturally unacceptable (Buskirk, *Healing*, 35–36).

31. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 186; for his former skepticism, see 157. He had initially pronounced her cured even soon after the meeting (“Healings at Victoria,” 15); another observer declared “that her spine was perfectly straight and there was a complete healing of the foot” (“Healings at Victoria,” 15).

32. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 186–87. If Price’s detractors produced public X-rays, in this case, Price displayed photos of those healed, holding their previous bandages and so forth (191–95).

33. *Ibid.*, 183.

34. *Ibid.*, 187.

35. “Healings at Victoria,” 15, citing (see 9) the *Victoria Daily Times*. According to the article, Knott was expected to die because the goiter was now constricting his breathing (“to strangle him”).

36. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 181. Lourdes works to guard against this response, so that most of the uncured nevertheless go away encouraged (Cranston, *Miracle*, 156–60).

37. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 159, 182 (though he did associate swooning with faith, 159). Cf. accusations that Francisco Olazábal did not heal everyone who requested prayer, and his response that God does the healing and did not heal everyone he prayed for (Espinosa, “Healing in Borderlands,” 141).

38. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 182. A small number of physicians even shifted from medical practice to emphasizing divine healing (177, 195–202).

39. *Ibid.*, passim, e.g., 208–10.

began with the commitment to discredit Hickson and that most local doctors involved refused to verify cures, claiming that those healed must have been simply misdiagnosed to begin with.⁴⁰

Less reported was a similar study of miracles in Bangor, Maine, reported by a biblical scholar undoubtedly interested in parallels with NT miracles. He identifies the possibility of fraud: the campaign advertisement listed fifteen testimonials, at least nine with “addresses unknown to the postal authorities, and only two had local addresses.”⁴¹ He rightly warned that an irrelevant cause could be attached to a person’s recovery, and a person might not genuinely recover at all. Thus one girl with tuberculosis removed her cast to walk a week prematurely (Sept. 1925), and now she limps badly.⁴² Another woman, able to walk but not well without a crutch, went a few days without it until she became disillusioned with the healing minister and started using her crutch again.⁴³ Clearly the reporter pinpoints those not healed who sometimes hope to be healed in such meetings.

The critic further viewed some recovery claims as too weak to count as favorable evidence: a man with a damaged knee had worn a bandage for three years; he removed the bandage, but he had been having no recurrence of symptoms.⁴⁴ A woman was cured from “periodic attacks of vertigo and severe nausea,” which had not recurred since the meetings.⁴⁵ Although such cases do not provide strong evidence for supernatural healing, the examiner’s verdict here is sarcastic: “Imaginary ailments, of course, disappear instantly.”⁴⁶

Even this critic is prepared to admit a few cures, yet he attributes these not to divine intervention but to encouragement. He complains about “self-deception”: a young man with heart and lung problems, who had given up and was nearly bedridden, received so much courage from the meeting that he went back to work, though medically his condition was *presumably* unchanged.⁴⁷ Likewise he noted “an old woman almost completely crippled with rheumatism who is now doing her housework and knitting mittens.”⁴⁸ Most strangely, he relegates to a footnote the observation that a woman “claimed to have been entirely blind in one eye. She described how her sight was instantly restored at the meeting. She was found to be now able-bodied and apparently had fair eyesight, though in need of glasses.”⁴⁹ Later he places this testimony among psychological cures, despite her own claim:

40. Mews, “Revival,” 330. Hickson accepted doctors (307), but while he praised doctors for what they accomplished, he also claimed that Jesus could cure what medicine could not (304).

41. Perry, “Reporting,” 106n11. Maine had already seen some semi-cultic Pentecostal extremism; see, e.g., the account in Wacker, “Living,” 432.

42. Perry, “Reporting,” 105.

43. *Ibid.*, 107. He attributes the healer’s success to her “hypnotic personality.”

44. *Ibid.*, 106 and n. 5.

45. *Ibid.*, 106 and n. 6.

46. *Ibid.*, 106.

47. *Ibid.*, 105–6 and n. 4, 108.

48. *Ibid.*, 108.

49. *Ibid.*, 105n3.

"One old woman who says she was nearly blind before, tells how the dazzling light broke upon her all at once with the restoration of the sight of her useless eye."⁵⁰ However one explains the other cures, restoration of sight to her eye seems like it should have given pause to someone not committed to an *a priori* skepticism.

Not everyone was cured, but assumptions about those who did claim healing do not seem to entertain all the possibilities. One further suspects some bias in reading the scholar's descriptions: such healing ideas "spread among the less intelligent all over the state, and even some of the educated clergy fell victims to it."⁵¹ He concludes that most "who received or sought healing were not closely connected with organized religion, but rather were folk of little knowledge and superficial exposure to religion." Lest one suppose he does not mean the description to denigrate them, he also speaks of their "washed-out, second-hand faith which was little more than superstition."⁵² That Jesus focused his ministry on outsiders, and that signs in Acts and subsequently appeared especially in the setting of outreach to nonbelievers, apparently escapes his notice. Nevertheless, his approach was common among members of the intellectual and often religious elite of his era.

In 1956, a British medical committee expressed skepticism about miraculous healing, although the report's own appendixes include statements from British physicians specifying some unusual recoveries. Thus, in one doctor's statement, two strokes had paralyzed and left speechless an aged woman; doctors diagnosed hemiplegia due to cerebral hemorrhage and counted her case hopeless. Within days after a healing service, she "was about again, and now thirteen years later, at the age of eighty-three, this patient is still walking to church twice every Sunday."⁵³ In another statement, a gynecologist had declared a case of cervical cancer inoperable because of its extent; after prayer, the pain left quickly and the cancer was completely gone within two months. The patient died from pneumonia eight years later, with no recurrence of cancer.⁵⁴ While cancers do remit, we should also remember that cancer treatments were far more limited in that era than today and that the cancer had already spread.

Nevertheless, the committee, while not denying a number of extraordinary cures,⁵⁵ concluded that such cures were probably the result of misdiagnosis, "remission, or possibly of spontaneous cure."⁵⁶ While the report plays down claims of healings by noting that most physicians responding to the query believed in divine healing and thus were "prejudiced in its favor,"⁵⁷ one physician is duly quoted as warning that in

50. *Ibid.*, 108.

51. *Ibid.*, 106.

52. *Ibid.*, 108.

53. Oursler, *Power*, 230.

54. *Ibid.*, 231.

55. *Ibid.*, 243, pointing out that the report seems to suggest that divine healings are not significant because physicians can achieve comparable results—an argument that is beside the point.

56. *Ibid.*, 232.

57. *Ibid.*, 240. Oursler complains that if they genuinely considered these physicians so severely prejudiced, they ought to demand that their licenses be withdrawn, since such prejudice would affect

cases where something appeared to be a miracle, it might simply reflect a law of nature not yet discovered.⁵⁸ It was not the first time in history that those who presupposed the nonexistence of miracles questioned the competence of colleagues more directly acquainted with cases in question who had interpreted the evidence differently.⁵⁹

While these nonsupernatural explanations are logically possible, one wonders what evidence, if any, even in cases much stronger than these, would be accepted for divine healing. Could not *any* unexplained recovery be simply called “spontaneous,” without thereby explaining it?⁶⁰ The burden of proof seems stacked impossibly against divine healing: any recovery that could be explained otherwise excludes divine healing, yet nearly any restoration noted in Scripture or today could potentially be explained on such terms.⁶¹ This criterion does not require the antisupernaturalist to offer a *plausible* explanation—just *any* explanation. Among viable explanations in the skeptic’s arsenal is now that apparent miracles could reflect *unknown* laws of nature—a criterion that effectively excludes any appeal to evidence. Even if a person had been duly deemed dead by physicians and returned to life the next day (as in a case I noted earlier in the book), an antisupernaturalist might choose to insist that, despite lack of detectable cardiac or brain activity, the person was not really dead. The committee could dismiss the reports of most of the physicians responding to their query about healing as undoubtedly believing in healing and thus being biased, as in the case above. Could not a believer in divine healing ask the same question of the committee? Why was it stacked with those who would a priori rule out any claim to healing?

Are Nonsupernatural Interpretations Always Better?

More recently, one physician has studied a number of healing claims and dismissed all of them. His analysis is helpful on many points, since, as I have noted, fraud and false diagnoses occur, and I think it likely that he has identified some of these cases.⁶² But just as advocates for miracles could force all proposed cases to fit their paradigm, it is possible to force all cases to fit a contrary paradigm, especially when driven by “moral outrage,” as this physician describes his commitment.⁶³

their practice (243). He also wonders why the doctors on the committee should be accepted as less prejudiced than the doctors whose testimonies they dismiss as prejudiced (243).

58. *Ibid.*, 241. Further suggesting the committee’s prejudice, they mention how rare are certified cures at Lourdes (while praising the thoroughness of the Medical Bureau there), yet mention nothing of the considerable documentation for the few cures proclaimed (241–42).

59. See Duffin, *Miracles*, 113, 133–34, where physicians not present during cures proved adamant against the judgment of attending physicians, on the grounds that miracles cannot happen.

60. Krippner and Achterberg, “Experiences,” 358, cites Simonton, Matthews-Simonton, and Creighton, *Getting Well*, 21, to the effect that any normally inexplicable cure can be designated “spontaneous” “in much the same way as the term *spontaneous generation* covered medical ignorance during the late Middle Ages.”

61. Cf. the same complaint regarding any paranormal claims more generally in McClenon, *Events*, 187; and the argument against other theistic claims addressed in Plantinga, “Science,” 109, 112–13.

62. See esp. May, “Miracles,” 145, 151.

63. *Ibid.*, 146. May expresses this (often justifiable) “outrage” in comments about “bogus claims,” healers doing “serious harm,” and fund-raising techniques that “profoundly nauseate me” (and in many

While there seems reason to concur that his criticisms of some figures may be justified, I believe that he too readily dismisses the healing claims of his fellow physician Rex Gardner as having secured “spurious credibility.”⁶⁴ He challenges Gardner’s case of instant healing of sensorineural hearing loss (see discussion in ch. 12) on the grounds that it is not absolutely unique;⁶⁵ nevertheless, it is clearly extremely rare, not yet explained, and at least in this case (we do not hear details about others) instantaneous and associated with prayer.

This physician’s study also works with the consistent approach of rejecting any supernatural claims for which a natural explanation is possible, even if the natural explanation is itself speculative.⁶⁶ For example, he dismisses a claim of healed long-term blindness as possibly reflecting merely the person feeling better about her sight⁶⁷ (though he would regard genuine restoration of sight as unusual).⁶⁸ He seems to hold a double standard in some cases: when Jesus healed someone blind or deaf, these are incurable disorders that do not “spontaneously remit,”⁶⁹ but as we have observed, he is less prepared to admit such claims today, even though they are sometimes better documented medically than the ancient cases could have been. While this author performs a useful service in challenging false or inadequate claims, therefore, I am inclined to suspect that his approach is too one-sided against contemporary healing claims.

Even his criticisms of healing evangelists’ testimonies can appear one-sided. In one case he challenges the medical facts in an evangelist’s video,⁷⁰ arguing that X-rays showed no change in a woman’s spine after her healing; he also notes that some claims in the original video include exaggerations or material not strictly relevant to the claims (that is, not all the operations involved the woman’s spine). Some of

cases the rest of us as well). Even some pure naturalists, however, recognize a valuable placebo effect in some healing beliefs (cf. even May himself, 155), so claims about “serious harm,” while sometimes true, especially in the sorts of cases May emphasizes, should be balanced with benefits of some other ministries even aside from supernatural questions.

64. *Ibid.*, 150.

65. *Ibid.*, 150–51.

66. *Ibid.*, 149–50, also challenges cases reported at Lourdes. While his argument regarding the lesion here is substantial, it is clearly one on which a number of doctors who certified the claim disagree, so the matter remains in dispute among experts. May has a newer article, too recent for me to obtain for this book, and it is possible that this approach is more balanced than in the earlier one.

67. *Ibid.*, 154.

68. For genuine restoration being unusual, see, e.g., *ibid.*, 147, 154.

69. *Ibid.*, 147. The double standard also appears in Pullum, “Believe,” 143, who notes that biblical miracles were empirically verifiable, whereas today “body parts are never regenerated like those cases in the Bible.” I cannot think of cases of body parts regenerated in the Bible. This approach is virtually the opposite of that of Capps, Ellens, and others.

70. May, “Miracles,” 152. Given May’s one-sided approach, however (though to be fair, articulating one’s thesis—in this case that the healing was not organic—does not require one to address every other issue), it is not surprising to me that the woman’s physician, who on the video affirms the dramatic transformation and his own amazement, refused to cooperate with May. Also to be fair, my access to the woman’s testimony is in sources more recent than May’s, which may have clarified some matters in response to his or others’ criticisms (I am working with the older article of May and the newer version of the cure account).

the ailments noted in the original video probably were not directly related to her spinal problems. While I am not qualified to comment on the specifically medical features of the case, however, the critic's argument seems one-sided. The woman clearly experienced a cure of some sort, whatever happened regarding her spine and some other details. Her family members, including a teenage daughter who had never known her to walk normally before and could not believe it when she bounded up the stairs, offer their testimony. Likewise, neighbors and others who witnessed the immediate change recount it; her own doctor also testifies to being astonished. Previously confined to walking sticks or a wheelchair for many years, she was immediately able to run, including when she returned home, and witnesses as well as video footage confirmed her regularly jogging, playing rugby, and swimming after the event. Any reader who might wish to criticize her transformation ought to give the footage a fair-minded viewing first.⁷¹ Why would a critic's report (mostly read by people who would not see the video) focus exclusively on particular negative factors but not the obvious transformation, unless the critic simply had an agenda of disputing all miracle claims rather than a fair-minded approach that could grant credence to some elements of them? If he simply insists that a true miracle must be certifiably organic, if this case is not organic, one might want to dispute his definition of miracle. (Here the shadow of Hume's legacy—restricting miracles to violations of nature—is often difficult to evade.) But he also disputed the case of Gardner noted above, where the auditory nerve damage clearly *was* organic.

Such a prejudice sometimes continues to inform modern discussions of healing miracles. Ken Blue reports that one woman was healed through prayer from severe epilepsy and a brain disturbance that had plagued her from ages six to twenty-six. Afterward, her EEG reading was normal, and her doctors, unable to believe the change, repeated the test two more times over the next few weeks. Finally they accepted that she was well but denied the possibility that she was healed through prayer.⁷² Now they "have concluded that she must have been misdiagnosed and mistreated for the past twenty years. These conscientious and competent doctors have risked a possible malpractice suit rather than admit the possibility of divine healing."⁷³ He reports a different case in which tests showed highly advanced uterine cancer; despite the sense of those praying that God healed the woman, the doctors removed the uterus—and then found it without cancer. "Though Brenda's doctors have no explanation themselves, they are not considering the possibility that God healed her."⁷⁴

71. See *Miracle Investigation* (dated 2005), which includes the account; and *Miraculous Healing* (currently dated 2008, though including earlier elements). She had been scheduled for a fourth spinal surgery, with little hope of success, which was afterward canceled. She also cites a dream prior to the crusade, claiming that the evangelist (Reinhard Bonnke) and the location looked like what she saw in the dream; though the youth meeting was large, the evangelist independently felt that God had singled her out for a special healing.

72. Blue, *Authority*, 57.

73. *Ibid.*, 58.

74. *Ibid.* In Dearing, *Healing*, 115–16, an urgent mastectomy was canceled due to healing; another case in Salmon, *Heals*, 38.

Seth Ablorh, a Christian doctor in Ghana mentioned in chapter 9, admits that he himself struggled with this antisupernatural bias from his training. He was working alongside a visiting oncological surgeon from the United States. The surgeon examined a woman already diagnosed with rectal cancer, exploring the lesion, doing a colostomy, and the like. The woman insisted that she believed that God would heal her, and they gave what would presumably normally be good advice: "God will heal you through surgery." When, however, they reached the theater to operate and the surgeon checked the lesion again, he could not discover it digitally or with a proctoscope. "We woke the patient up and discharged her saying we had missed the diagnosis though we were not the only ones who diagnosed her. She called it a miracle, but in our medical minds we were unwilling to accept that she had had divine healing."⁷⁵ Misdiagnosis and remissions occur, but when these attributions are overused to explain away any possible evidence, the evidence is not being treated fairly. In the short term any naturally unexplained recovery could be called a remission, without thereby explaining it.

When a doctor reports that a condition is not genuinely cured or that it often resolves on its own, she speaks within her expertise and we should give heed. When a doctor denies that a cure is miraculous based on a philosophic paradigm that excludes miracles, however, he speaks not as a doctor but as an amateur philosopher. In the latter case, the opinion merits no greater weight than that assigned to that of any other amateur philosopher.

The Demand for Medically Certified Testimony

I do cite some medically certified healings in this book, but limiting testimonies to those that are medically certified produces at best a critical minimum of a particular sort of evidence, not the sum total of evidence one would accept in normal circumstances. Clearly most patients do not experience extraordinary healings, so doctors do not have reason to expect them on a normal basis (they would otherwise be considered normal recoveries).

Nevertheless, it is possible to sort evidence in such a way as to screen out all alternative explanations. Some people accept *only* claims that are medically certified as valid, even if it means dismissing all eyewitness claims, of which there are numerous significant ones, as inauthentic. Granted, those who are healed should seek not only medical confirmation of their recovery but also (ideally) medical documentation. Nevertheless, various obstacles involved in securing such documentation around the world mean that refusal to accept any evidence without this kind of documentation will end up screening out a large proportion, probably the majority, of genuine cures. Moreover, as we noted above, even once claims are medically certified their relevance is often dismissed if any other explanation is

75. Mensah, "Basis," 178.

possible. Insofar as one may argue that “anything is possible,” virtually any claim may thus be dismissed, conveniently allowing any evidence to be ignored.

Securing Medical Documentation

If one must have a doctor’s certification that a recovery is a bona fide miracle, no recoveries will be classified as miracles provided one’s doctor is reticent (whether out of skepticism or professional reserve) to deem it as such, or where no doctors were available to document the healing. Likewise, this approach refuses to grant even the slightest credence to any of the countless eyewitness testimonies from places where medical help was not available, yet on matters such as a person’s previous blindness and subsequent ability to see, where one would expect intimate acquaintances to be reliable informants.⁷⁶

Clearly medical documentation strengthens the case for a genuine healing, and some works I have cited by doctors have included such documentation.⁷⁷ But what of a case in a traditional village where someone was publicly raised from death through prayer after many hours without detectable respiration or pulse?⁷⁸ Even if we granted in each case the inability of people who live around death regularly to distinguish death from a coma with scarcely detectable pulse and respiration, we must grant their ability to recognize full recoveries from that state as unusual, and their observation of the rare event’s significant association with prayer.⁷⁹ Does their eyewitness testimony of instant recovery count for nothing, simply because the witnesses in the village do not have medical degrees or instruments available?⁸⁰ Does not the probability of coincidence decrease with the rise in the number of such events during prayer, vis-à-vis how often they occur “spontaneously”? (Repeated statistical unlikelihood can make outcomes appear “fixed” by another source.⁸¹ Others also complain about unmerited faith in “the unlimited possibili-

76. At least if all other factors are equal, an eyewitness’s testimony should be preferred to a nonwitness interpreting the testimony (Levine, *Problem*, 111). If experience is reliable in knowing that water is normally not turned to wine, why would it not be reliable in recognizing when water is turned to wine? (Levine, *Problem*, 126, agreeing with Kellenberger, “Miracles,” 148 n.)

77. I have noted among others the sources in Gardner, *Healing Miracles*; Casdorph, *Miracles*; among non-physicians, such investigation is claimed, e.g., in Spraggett, *Kuhlman*. I have also found medical documentation for some healings (see ch. 15), though many others were from parts of the world where this was not even possible.

78. On the difficulties of obtaining medical documentation in financially poorer nations, cf. also Duffin, *Miracles*, 136.

79. This is especially the case where consequent changes in religious affiliation demonstrate that observers experienced these events quite differently from the norm.

80. If one charges that eyewitnesses can lie, even colluding as a group, one could also contend that those in charge of medical documentation might forge it, or (more easily) colluding doctors could lie. (Doctors deliberately falsifying information could lose their licenses, but many other witnesses also have a stake in maintaining their own credibility.) That is, one could use this approach of skepticism toward the evidence to dismiss any evidence one wished. While one expects some claimants to be false, one should not expect that to be the case for all of the huge numbers of claimants available today, including for many substantive reports.

81. Beckwith, “History,” 45.

ties of coincidence,” such as in the familiar but statistically virtually impossible illustration of a million monkeys randomly typing the works of Shakespeare.⁸²) The cumulative weight of the stronger cases seems compelling.⁸³

Moreover, of the people I interviewed who had been examined both before and after their recovery, most had no idea how to obtain medical documentation or initially even what I meant by it. One of the notable exceptions, though a doctor, had to go to some trouble to obtain it, not having it already in his possession. That even the most sincere people rarely request and retain before-and-after medical records of their recovery does not surprise me; I failed to collect it myself in years before I anticipated writing a book on the subject.⁸⁴ Not only in cases of claims that I find weak but also in some that I find strong, some claimants (particularly in some cultures or subcultures) do not understand even my need as a researcher for such documentation.⁸⁵ Granted that a case is stronger with such documentation, it need not follow that all cases are completely worthless without it.

As an investigative reporter discovered, though he originally wanted indisputable medical documentation for every case, this standard ultimately proved unreasonable. Doctors often disagree with one another; reports in medical journals are often not “infallibly documented”; and a mother does not need to have medical competence to testify that doctors explained that her child had a clubfoot.⁸⁶ The

82. Bridge, *Signs*, 29–30. An event need not be impossible naturally to be improbable enough to elicit faith, depending on the degree of the burden of proof that one’s assumptions require (Basinger and Basinger, “Concept,” 167, allow it for believers). Ideally, a technical study could quantify how much more often extranormal cures occur in the context of prayers or specific kinds of or specific persons’ prayers in contrast to such events in the general population (cf. the request for “quantitative [degree-yielding] criteria” for probabilities in Wykstra, “Problem,” 156), but my sample size for the control group is too small, and I do not know of studies quantifying such events in the general population on these matters. A proper study would have to be massive, and the variables are probably too many for its success on these terms. Yet see comment on “coincidence” in ch. 15.

83. From a mathematical perspective, see De Poe, “Bayesian Approach.” For the implausibility of cures at Lourdes being coincidental, see Cranston, *Miracle*, 259.

84. Though I was fairly aggressive in several cases where I hoped to get the documentation (and in some of these cases succeeded), I confess that my personality is not suited to pressing many busy informants beyond what they had already supplied. The very demand that people involved in cures adopt the researcher’s critical posture can prove antithetical to the native faith that helped produce the cures (see Laurentin, *Miracles*, 95), and it is difficult for me to justify my “right to information” at that expense. Nevertheless, investigative reporters either confirming (e.g., Spraggett; Grazier; Neal) or debunking (Emery; again, Spraggett) healing claims have proved more successful in this area. Some people eagerly offered to supply me old documentation but subsequently failed to find it in their many boxes of old papers. Most people would not spend hours looking for it simply to help a professor writing a book; in one case, someone who knew me did spend more than a workday looking for it but had an entire garage full of boxes.

85. In their sphere of relationships, people take other people’s word for what they have witnessed; to ask for documentation is to communicate hostile suspicion. I can eventually overcome much suspicion, but I cannot get them to re-create documentation they have long since discarded as irrelevant, even if they obtained it to begin with (which is usually not the case).

86. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 50. Spraggett himself doubted many healing evangelists but came to regard some evidence for supernatural healing as incontrovertible. Others also note that “instant medical confirmation” is rare but note that medical receptivity to allowing for divine healing is increasing (Lawrence, *Practice*, 32–33).

reporter provides an example where specialists disagreed about the sudden healing of a case of necrosis of the hip after prayer: an orthopedist insisted that “natural remissions” of this affliction “sometimes occur,” whereas a radiologist insisted that, after “careful study of the case,” that it was “medically extraordinary.”⁸⁷ Sometimes the written records also fail to elaborate on some key details that, in retrospect, would have been helpful in terms of evidence.

The reporter also discovered that medical documentation could be difficult to procure for logistical reasons, such as one hospital destroying outpatient records after ten years, attending physicians having died, or particular physicians failing to respond to requests.⁸⁸ When trying to follow up medical documentation (even more so for people from particular cultures), I discovered that people often did not know that they had a right to access their medical records.⁸⁹ In some other cases, people requested documentation several times and were not able to obtain it within the months before my book was due to the publisher.⁹⁰ Obtaining records might be among patients’ rights, but that does not mean that busy professionals will always hasten to their assistance (in some cases perhaps especially if they fear that they might be cited in support of a professionally unusual conclusion in which they have no stake, or if apparent irregularities could even be potentially cited legally against them). In some cultures, patients lacked access to medical records, as the hospitals refused to share them.⁹¹ (In one unusual case, when the hospital finally acquiesced to give a copy, my friend who was to obtain it was obstructed because

87. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 51. He shows how a pathologist and a psychiatrist came to opposite conclusions as to which recoveries were genuinely remarkable (*ibid.*).

88. *Ibid.*, 52. Spraggett notes all of these problems in the case on 82, but he found other nondocumentary corroborating evidence for the case in question (82–83, the type of braces earlier used counting as strong circumstantial evidence). My informants have also encountered some of these problems when seeking documentation for their situations.

89. Renae Yu-Ching Hsu noted that some international evangelical healing conferences and healed persons in Taiwan often seek medical confirmation (interview, Jan. 24, 2009), but also noted (based on her experience trying to secure information to help with my project) that many people do not know that they have a right to access their medical records (personal correspondence, May 10, 2009). Further, often “people cannot recognize that the [medical] documentation is part of their own testimonies,” hence evidence provided often falls short of “the strict demand required for scientific proof” (personal correspondence, June 29, 2009). In view of the obstacles, she observed that accumulating such evidence would take time and might be accommodated through something like an ongoing “online library” (personal correspondence, June 13, 24, 2009), a valuable proposal that perhaps others will develop further.

90. As in some cases I know where, after several months and more than one attempt, an individual was still trying (phone follow-up, Dec. 15, 2009; another case, e.g., June 7; Sept. 1, 2010). Some institutions responded more quickly, as in the case of Carl Cocherell, though it took him time to get his information even from one of these institutions. Critics should not overestimate the ease of the process. One person had given his documentation away; at least two others who were sure that they had it discovered that they did not know which of their scores of boxes contained it; they naturally were not ready to expend days trying to help my research project.

91. This occurred in one case in Nigeria, where, however, through the intercession of another doctor we were able to secure at least a summary statement. This practice was also noted to me by Dr. Nonyem E. Numbere, who collected some sources but noted that unlike in the United States, Nigerian hospitals retain all the records (phone interview, Dec. 14, 2009). This was also the case for part of the documentation for Yazmin Hommer in Mexico (Dec. 1, 2009), though she was able to obtain and share a sufficient amount.

genuinely violent riots, widely documented in international media, broke out in that city for the duration of his visit there.)

With many of the same cultures I faced a language barrier; with some other cultures, medical help (and thus any form of medical documentation) was rarely available to begin with. Even sharing one's testimony was difficult for many individuals, more often in some cultures than in others, because it was so intensely personal. Other informants, often eager to help, have also gone to get records for me only to run into the problem of hospitals having already destroyed them.⁹² One catch-22 is that we normally give more credence to cures that have persisted over many years; the farther in the past the cure happened, however, the less likely it is that one can secure medical records unless one has kept copies, which most people have not. All this to say that while it is reasonable to expect that some cases will be medically documented (and they are), it is not reasonable to dismiss all firsthand testimonies that lack such documentation, especially in places where people cannot be expected to have access to it (or perhaps even to treatment).

The difficulties can come from the other side, too, where some medical personnel have witnessed extraordinary recoveries but cannot provide documentation apart from their word. As noted earlier, Donald Moore is a speech language pathologist, a clinical director of voice and swallowing disorders, and has fifteen years of clinical experience working with patients who suffered cerebral vascular accidents (i.e., strokes). He is not lightly persuaded of miracles, regarding many stroke improvements as normal rehabilitation progress (on his advice I condensed and qualified some material in this book⁹³). In February 2009, however, Donald had a fifty-two-year-old patient who had suffered a severe brain stem stroke in the region of the medulla. Research shows that damage in the ability to swallow caused by medulla brain stem strokes is irreversible, and this case was quite a serious one. A video fluoroscopic swallow study confirmed that his dysphagia (inability to swallow) was so severe that the patient could not protect his airway during swallowing and thus "required alternate means of nutritional intake."

Several months later the same man "returned to have his swallow function re-evaluated." Donald explained to him that he would not be able to resume eating, but the man replied that he had "been eating for the past few weeks." Donald protested "that this was impossible given the nature of his stroke." The man then explained that he and his family had been praying and that he had been eating ever since. Moved by the man's faith, but not anticipating significant improvement, Donald conducted the study. To the shock of both Donald and the radiologist, this person who had "suffered a large medulla brain stem stroke was able to swallow," now eating through the mouth without artificial means. Since the patient had already mentioned prayer, Donald began to comment, and the man finished his sentence

92. E.g., a hospital in Mexico after six years (Eduardo Lara Reyes, personal correspondence, Sept. 23, 2009).

93. Donald Moore (personal correspondence, Dec. 4, 2009; Jan. 3, 5, 2010).

with, "I know, it's a miracle." (This incident happened shortly before the story of Yesenia Robinson, whose story involving Donald I recount elsewhere in this book.)

Such cures are not common, at least in circles we know in the United States; Donald said that was the first case of it he had witnessed in fifteen years. Because of HIPAA laws protecting the release of a patient's information, however, Donald discovered that he could not request or obtain medical records. What he could offer me was his professional opinion about an anonymous case, and that is what he has done here. Had Donald not been taking my class and learned that I was interested in cases with medical documentation, I would not have had any access to this story, or it would have been dismissed by skeptics as merely the tale of another person claiming healing against the evidence.⁹⁴

Beyond these matters, prejudiced approaches can deny the value of medical documentation even when it *is* available. Those who question supernatural healing claims often attribute the more convincing cases to an initial misdiagnosis.⁹⁵ Although genuine misdiagnosis does occur at times,⁹⁶ this approach sometimes has been used as a means to explain away extranormal healings retroactively,⁹⁷ and sometimes the initial evidence is too firm to aver a misdiagnosis.⁹⁸ (Recall the case above in which physicians preferred to claim that they must have misdiagnosed and mistreated the patient for twenty years rather than allow that the patient had been miraculously healed during prayer.⁹⁹) To simply dismiss every cure as a case of prior misdiagnosis is to allow one's presupposition to determine the outcome, especially when it involves many cases and the prior diagnoses involve multiple physicians.¹⁰⁰ One healing evangelist reasonably complains that if critics really believe that so many hundreds of healing cases result from initial misdiagnosis, they should be raising an outcry against such widespread misdiagnosis instead of against divine healing.¹⁰¹

94. Donald Moore (personal correspondence, Oct. 28, 2009; follow-up correspondence, Oct. 31, 2009), officially following up our earlier conversations.

95. A possibility noted in Frohock, *Healing Powers*, 133. The same explanation is sometimes given for other spontaneous remissions; see Lenzer, "Citizen" (while conceding some cases noted by Quackwatch).

96. See the probable example in Bishop, *Healing*, 177; the uncertain possibility in Alexander, *Signs*, 18. Remus, *Healer*, 109, even cites surveys arguing "that about half the time a firm diagnosis of illnesses is not possible," noting that even advanced tests can give wrong results; Downing, *Death*, 61, cites figures for frequently even fatal medical error and side effects. Again, this problem would not cover all healing reports I have noted (e.g., most cases of blindness), but it could well account for some of them.

97. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 28–29; cf. Melinsky, *Miracles*, 157.

98. E.g., Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 21. Among more recent cures at Lourdes, the standards of documentation for case histories are too stringent for possible misdiagnoses to pass (Cranston, *Miracle*, 259).

99. Blue, *Authority*, 58.

100. The complaint in Braden, "Study," 232 (noting on 227 multiple confirmations in one case and in another that the cancer had spread to many organs).

101. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 66. Matt Marsak, phone interview, Aug. 21, 2010, noted that his surgeon found no trace of cancer, even though all the lab tests showed cancer. When Matt suggested that God had answered prayer and healed him, the surgeon insisted that he must have been misdiagnosed, implying that all the previous experts were wrong. Matt suggested that if he really did accept such a position it could

Given the unpredictability of substantial healing claims and their dominance in places where they are most needed (i.e., where medical treatment is least available), it is not surprising that doctors are not usually personally present when a nonmedical healing occurs. (Many theists would argue that God in fact usually works through doctors when they are available.¹⁰² Both Scripture and the pattern of nature suggest that God does not usually lavish explicit miracles when natural means God has provided are available.) In some cases doctors are present, but how they interpret the cure can depend not only on whether or not such a cure took place (sometimes it really did not) but also on the learned assumptions through which the evidence is framed. Doctors who believe in supernatural healing are perhaps more likely to be present in such settings and will be more open to this explanation in cases where it can account for a cure. Since scientific training has traditionally focused solely on natural causes, however, it is not surprising that many doctors would try to exhaust all remotely possible natural explanations first. While considering natural explanations helps guard against credulity, it also risks serious bias when it must overlook or explain away what could constitute larger patterns of anomalies in the circles in question.¹⁰³ I have already suggested in chapter 6, and argue more fully below, that creating an insurmountable burden of proof for only one position reflects bias, since it de facto rules out any opposing arguments a priori.

For example, could a baby who appeared dead start breathing again, without prayer?¹⁰⁴ Undoubtedly it could. But it does not happen very often, so if it happens a number of times during prayer, why not consider whether a supernatural factor could be involved? Someone could argue that if it happens to 0.001 percent of babies (though this is a number I have simply invented for the sake of the argument), out of billions of babies born it must sometimes happen during prayer, even during prayers of intense faith. It does not happen commonly enough to allow a statistical perspective on what proportion of these occasions happen during prayer,¹⁰⁵ but

invite a malpractice suit, whereupon, he reports, the doctor quickly backed down from the misdiagnosis proposal. My point here is not that misdiagnosis does not occur, but that the verdict can sometimes involve retroactive interpretation after eliminating supernatural activity or an anomaly as an option.

102. See, e.g., Crandall, *Raising*, 41.

103. Cf. Weintraub, "Credibility," 374: some rule out theistic explanations a priori by arguing that any event must be explained naturalistically even if it can be explained theistically. "But this behaviouristic bias is no more tenable in divine psychology than it is in its human counterparts." This analogy might, however, offer little help to those whose view of human personality is purely materialistic (arguable, but an analogy not applicable to a Creator external to the universe).

104. By this I mean not that the baby would go limp and stop breathing for a few seconds, raising concern, but that it would apparently stop breathing for a few minutes and give signs of being dead, such as discoloration, raising panic or (more dramatically) mourning.

105. Shermer, "Miracle," notes that "one-in-a-million miracles happen 295 times a day in America," arguing that rare coincidences are still bound to occur; see the helpful probability calculations in Charnak and Broch, *Debunked*, 48–49, 56–60, 133–35 (note the positive but qualified review in Dyson, "One"). My imaginary estimate is one in one hundred thousand altogether, rather than one in a million per day, but to my knowledge there is no precise estimation of such cases available. What is much more unusual is that such incidents happen to show up (connected with prayer) in my very limited sample size. I address

if it happens during prayer a number of times (cf., e.g., the cluster of examples of raising testimonies around Mama Jeanne in ch. 12, and another in the family of the person who happens to be writing this book for unrelated reasons), is it not closed-minded to just dismiss or peremptorily explain away a possible relationship in these cases? I have not gathered all possible cases but only those I have come across; and some of these I came across unexpectedly in interviews, out of fewer than two hundred people I interviewed (none of them famous healers).¹⁰⁶

Working with the dominant nonsupernatural paradigm of Western academia, one can “explain” almost any cure as a spontaneous remission or, in the most difficult cases, an anomaly (which by definition is not yet explained). But observers not committed to a methodology that a priori privileges any remotely possible naturalistic explanation over any supernatural one (i.e., observers not committed to the approach challenged in chs. 5–6) will not foreclose the possibility of supernatural explanations. One philosopher cites as an analogy G. E. Moore’s refutation of idealist skepticism concerning the material world: he “held up his hand and claimed, ‘here is my hand.’” Moore understood that the argument was more complex, but he also recognized “that common sense places a significant burden on the Idealists.” Denials of miracles can become strained under some circumstances.¹⁰⁷

The Demand’s Epistemological Premise

Again, some healing claims are medically documented. Here I merely address the question of why some critics will admit *only* this kind of evidence, and, as we have seen, often not even this. Naturally this observation is relevant to accounts in the Gospels and Acts. If we can accept cures as genuine only where modern Western medical documentation is available, then all cures in the Gospels and Acts, as well as any reported until perhaps a century ago, and the vast majority reported in most of the world’s cultures today, can be dismissed by fiat. Such a methodology would not even allow one to offer educated guesses about what might have happened in the first century or in places where no medical documentation is available, but those employing a rigorously skeptical methodology sometimes employ it today.

In one case, for example, a woman testified to having “been miraculously healed after being blind for 16 years,” yet a critic rejects this claim because no medical investigation was undertaken.¹⁰⁸ He agrees that registered blindness does not go

some sample probability calculations in ch. 15 and especially appendix E, but too many variables exist in the real world to quantify these with precision.

106. One might adjust this by noting that only a minority of people who knew that I was interested in information offered some; while some of these other people told me that they had miracle accounts (some of them dramatic, like raisings) and did not get back to me, I will ignore them for the sake of argument and multiply by as much as fifteen. Three thousand people still should not provide so many stories of this nature. Some were referrals from people I knew who knew them, but even if one multiplied by ten times more (a generous figure, since most cases were not referrals, and a number were merely confirmations of others’ accounts), we are still talking about many extraordinary cases in a comparatively small sample size.

107. Kelly, “Miracle,” 50.

108. May, “Miracle,” 152–53.

away without medical intervention but suggests that perhaps her vision simply improved; perhaps “she was depressed and now isn’t,” hence “feels better about her vision.”¹⁰⁹ I lack access to the source of the original report and therefore do not know the degree of blindness to which she refers; I grant that people sometimes make exaggerated claims, though, unless they are boldly lying, usually not *this* exaggerated. Nevertheless, I am more directly aware of some other claims of healed blindness (see ch. 12) where such charges would not hold up whether or not medical documents were available (in some cases they are).

In normal circumstances, we accept the claims of credible eyewitnesses who have much at stake; for most sorts of claims, no medical evidence or the like is available, but we do not for that reason disregard the claims.¹¹⁰ For example, we would not require photographic evidence that a particular driver involved in an accident ran a red light if sufficiently credible witnesses attest this claim. As I have noted, many discussions in philosophy and law, including philosophic discussions of miracles, support the acceptance of a reliable witness, and still more the cumulative force of multiple independent witnesses. A number of healing claims are of the sorts of conditions that do not require an advanced degree in medicine to verify. If we will not grant the competence of a person who is blind or her family to attest that she was blind and received sight unless we possess a doctor’s certification to that effect, are we actually saying that only a physician is competent to diagnose blindness? Physicians themselves would not make this claim,¹¹¹ which is essentially a now-disputed academic premise taken much too far.¹¹² Courts, unlike the rest of us, can subpoena records, but if records were unavailable (say in the case of a person in a part of the world who had never been able to afford medical treatment), would we not ordinarily accept testimony that the person was blind?¹¹³

In cases where medical expertise is not necessary to pronounce a genuine cure, is a critic implying that only a certain class of people, namely physicians, can constitute reliable witnesses? (Again, physicians would certainly not make this claim.) Even here, some accept the testimony of physicians normally, but when the physicians are verifying cures at Lourdes, some skeptics will then challenge these physicians’ integrity, even though not all the physicians testifying are even persons of faith.¹¹⁴

109. *Ibid.*, 154.

110. This observation is certainly true in historiography, where few claims can “be verified scientifically” (Licona, *Resurrection*, 171n119).

111. Dr. Tahira Adelekan, phone interview, April 24, 2009 (not in response to May’s article, which I had not yet discovered). Indeed, when patients come to physicians for particular ailments, physicians normally ask their symptoms, although they can then run appropriately targeted medical tests to determine organic causes.

112. Tedlock, “Observation,” 71, notes that traditional anthropology assumed “that a subject’s way of knowing is incompatible with the scientist’s way of knowing and that the domain of objectivity is the sole property of the outsider,” an approach that has become increasingly controversial.

113. That we might be less inclined to do so if she or he were no longer blind, if she or he claimed divine rather than human medical intervention, works from the assumption that such divine interventions do not occur. Since that is the premise under dispute, it is not legitimate logically to assume it here.

114. See Cranston, *Miracle*, 186–87.

That is, one can never satisfy a closed mind, which can always find ways to exclude more and more evidence by narrowing the range of what is acceptable.

Yet if the reason for excluding nonphysicians' testimony about obvious cures is a matter not of competence but of testimonial reliability, one could apply this principle more broadly and admit as testimony in court only the verdicts of physicians. Such a practice would be absurd, hence should not be demanded in the sorts of healing accounts where the nature of the infirmity and its cure would be obvious, even without specialized training, to those involved (who sometimes, but not on average, happened to be physicians).

That some people will not accept a cure as genuine without medical documentation, and sometimes additionally reject medical documentation's validity if the doctor is known to accept the possibility of miracles, may say something about who has designed the rules of the game in their interests as well as about the nature of the evidence. Indeed, where some sort of medical documentation *has* been provided, some critics have rejected the appeal to "mere" medical documentation as unscientific without measurements of entire groups who seek healing.¹¹⁵ This latter approach presumes that if supernatural healing is true, everyone who seeks it should be healed—a straw-man view held by few of supernatural healing's actual proponents. Neither Scripture nor Christian theology uses miracles as an excuse to neglect wisdom (for us including medical science) or avoid working for justice and peace in the world. Miracles are portrayed as merely sample signs of a future age, a reminder of what the world can be like; they are not intended as a large-scale panacea for the world's problems.

Yet critics sometimes will dismiss even medical testimony or documentation if occurrences are not common. Thus, in response to a medically documented case of a man dead for thirty or forty minutes being raised when a renowned cardiologist prayed for him, a critic dismisses the case as isolated, hence anecdotal, not able to be counted scientifically.¹¹⁶ Technically, this objection may be correct for how the rules of science are written. Yet, as I have noted, no one in practice lives with such a constricted epistemology as if such rules are our only source of knowledge. The nature of some sorts of events remains significant even if they are documented only rarely. That is, simply because one epistemic method does not confirm something true does not mean that we cannot know it by other epistemic approaches that we

115. West, *Miracles*, 121; cf. Duffin, *Miracles*, 34. No large-scale study of such healings is possible, however, since the usual premises of scientific publication a priori exclude most cases from consideration (Llewellyn, "Events," 253).

116. Dr. Richard Sloan (on Fox News's coverage of the raising; <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=268481614851027361&q=fox+news+miracle&to>; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUJiD_UFNCE; accessed May 9, 2009). Sloan reasonably protests that the man would not have revived without the additional electrical shock, and seems likely correct on this point. Nevertheless, the reverse is also true: had Dr. Crandall not felt compelled to raise the man who otherwise appeared beyond hope, no electrical shock would have been applied. (Certainly no one will make this case a new precedent for shocking bodies after forty minutes of death.) Moreover, a raising after so long a time is at best extraordinarily rare; the recovery and especially the lack of brain damage are medically inexplicable.

employ on a regular basis, since the first epistemic method may be limited in its scope or the data available to it may be limited. Regarding the matter in question, let us hypothesize a figure that one in a quarter million persons is supernaturally raised after certified death in the West today. Yet we would not expect controlled studies to shed much light on the matter, since even hundreds of studies would likely lack reported examples useful for comparison, and exceptions could again be deemed isolated, hence (again) essentially anecdotal.

Even solid medical documentation is not adequate by itself to surmount strongly held presuppositions, because one may insist in every case (even if there are thousands of them) that another explanation is possible. My colleague in Hebrew Bible, Emmanuel Itapson, was told that his third child had “the death chromosome” and would likely die before birth if not aborted. The family prayed, and the boy is now nine years old.¹¹⁷ Because 1 percent of those with this chromosome are known to live beyond infancy,¹¹⁸ one cannot prove beyond any doubt that prayer is the factor that helped him to live so long; yet I am prepared to grant that likelihood in view of the significant number of extraordinary answers to prayer in Emmanuel’s circle, including one mentioned in chapter 9 and another in chapter 12.

Likewise, a child dying of fibrosing alveolitis was sent home to die but began to improve shortly after being taken to a British Pentecostal healing service. He eventually became a fully healthy boy. This diagnosis in a child’s first year “is *almost* uniformly fatal,” one physician notes, and the case is medically documented. The physicians involved believed that the cure “was the work of God, and it has been locally talked about as miraculous.” Nevertheless, the writer, himself suspecting a miracle, warns that the expression “*almost* uniformly” is the catch. Demonstrating that a healing is miraculous is difficult because “medicine knows few absolutes,” and a detractor can always claim an “inexplicable spontaneous remission.”¹¹⁹ If one’s worldview does not allow for a connection between prayer and healing, one might ignore the connection, even when the connection would prove frequent. Still, this doctor notes that sufficient analogies can allow us to view “the direct intervention of God” as the most plausible explanation for those whose worldview allows this.¹²⁰ If medically impossible cases like bone restoration and cataract disappearance are granted, and if we allow or infer supernatural involvement in

117. Emmanuel Itapson, phone interview, Dec. 15, 2009.

118. Some of which might also be answers to prayer, but this becomes difficult to quantify, since certainly more than 1 percent of families have prayed for their children’s healing.

119. Gardner, “Miracles,” 1928. May, “Miracles,” 150, attributes one of Gardner’s clearest cases to “spontaneous remission,” while admitting that “the phenomenon . . . is ill-understood” (presently inexplicable). Faith, prayer, and the like are often present in spontaneous remissions where these factors (or results) have been noted (see Roberts, “Contributions,” 248–49, citing O’Regan and Hirschberg, *Remission*, 45). Speed, *Incurables*, 23, notes that when a woman was suddenly and permanently healed after fifteen years of inability to walk unaided, despite nerve and muscle degeneration, some other doctors (besides Speed) titled it a “remission.”

120. Gardner, “Miracles,” 1929, arguing that sources like Bede had sufficient reason to hold this perspective within their theological frame of reference.

such cases, we hardly dare assume that supernatural causes would be *limited* to cases where natural explanations are never possible.

Events in history are not repeatable in controlled studies; yet should we draw from that observation the inference that they are therefore not *true*? One is compelled to ask what kind of narrow epistemology would require us to rule out virtually any reliable information in history. When one employs a method of verifying miracles that insists that they be replicable in controlled settings, yet regards as natural and nonmiraculous any event that is so replicable,¹²¹ one has framed the method so as to secure the expected antisupernatural outcome. Moreover, a miraculous raising report does not actually appear in complete isolation. If we have a significant number of raisings reported in the specific context of prayer, is it sounder research to explore the common factor in such cases or to ignore it because we have already presupposed that religious elements do not count?

As I have noted, some people also respond to medical certification of an incurable condition that is afterward cured by claiming that the condition must have been initially misdiagnosed.¹²² The four consultants who examined a dying medical intern remain confident of their diagnosis, but because her subsequent healing is medically inexplicable, some critics still suggest that the doctors must have been mistaken.¹²³ Events that surprise doctors, as often narrated by informants in previous chapters, need not be supernatural; none of us is omniscient, and all of us are sometimes surprised in our various disciplines. But some unexpected recoveries challenge conventional paradigms more than others do: for example, pleasant surprise about a skin condition improving differs from astonishment about badly damaged organs being completely healthy. While misdiagnosis occurs and might even be frequent,¹²⁴ when it provides a ready answer to all healing claims one wonders if it is not simply used to sustain antisupernaturalistic presuppositions by dismissing all evidence.¹²⁵ Given all the claims of healings in the world, attributing most of them to misdiagnosis would also present a very incompetent medical industry meriting far more pervasive lawsuits—an evaluation I think as wrong as the antisupernaturalism it would be constructed to support.

121. Cf. how Laato, "Miracles," 68, describes the usual scientific approach; the complaint in Gorsuch, "Limits," 282; the suggestion in Pyysiäinen, "Fascination," 20, that naturally explicable events are not considered miracles. Llewellyn, "Events," 244, complains that skepticism is built into the usual scientific approach from the beginning.

122. E.g., Parker, "Suffering," 216; Blue, *Authority*, 58; Mews, "Revival," 330; Frohock, *Healing Powers*, 133.

123. Gardner, "Miracles," 1929.

124. Cf., e.g., Remus, *Healer*, 109. It is possible that I may have experienced at least one relevant case: after a doctor examined my swollen knee, which could not bend, he insisted I would never again be able to pray kneeling. At that time in my life, this verdict was unthinkable; the affliction departed after I prayed (ca. 1981) and never recurred, but his designation for the condition (cellulitis) does not seem to fit his verdict. Possibly I simply misunderstood him. In some parts of the Majority World, our family and friends know firsthand that misdiagnosis (sometimes deliberate, for pecuniary motives) and mistreatment are common, in spite of many other devoted physicians serving altruistically there.

125. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 28–29.

People who can explain away reliable eyewitness testimony of cataracts instantly disappearing (a recognition that should not require graduate training in ophthalmology) are people who have designed the rules so they can explain away whatever is necessary. In a culture shaped by Enlightenment assumptions about miracles, Western skeptics could conceivably deny tens of thousands of claims by attributing all of them to misdiagnosis, misinterpretation, and so forth. Such dismissal of any possible evidence, at the expense of viewing malpractice as pervasive and coincidence as extraordinarily rife during prayers, makes the collection of any eyewitness claims and medical documentation superfluous; such skepticism is impervious to correction. One wonders if many of the Majority World perspectives noted earlier in the book are not more epistemically open-minded on such matters.

At the same time, it cannot be denied that most nonprofessionals are not in a good position to verify how extraordinary most sorts of recoveries might be. Pursuing medical documentation also can helpfully explore whether some allegedly inexplicable healing claims are genuinely medically inexplicable; even many well-intentioned reports of better-than-expected recoveries can have plausible natural explanations, and some reports involve misunderstandings of the medical situation. Though I do think (and statistics suggest) that most of us would expect a pattern of multiple, instant cures of blindness, deafness, paralysis, and death to meet that standard, many different kinds of cures (e.g., headaches and insomnia, much as the cures are appreciated) may remain more debated ground. I shall return to these questions further below; I shall also call attention to some medical documentation with regard to Lourdes below and with regard to other cases in chapter 15. My point here is to note the dangers of bias.

Use of Videotapes?

I digress briefly to respond to the occasional complaint that more healings should be captured on videotape today if they are truly happening.¹²⁶ The problem here, as with medical documentation, is that since one usually cannot predict where a healing will occur, one usually cannot film it in process.¹²⁷ The exception could be mass healing meetings, which do produce some videos, but this is the sort of setting where critics also raise the most questions regarding motives and methods. Videotaping interviews with those claiming healing is much easier, because one has already narrowed down the range of where to look; such sources do exist.¹²⁸

126. A science professor reasonably raised this question during a public lecture I gave on the subject of this book at Wheaton College, March 16, 2009.

127. Compare the semimythical chupacabra; people claimed sightings or capturings, but many have refused to believe the witnesses because they took no photographs. Finally, someone produced a video of a strange animal that fits some of the typical descriptions (Mike Krumboltz, "The Chupacabra Caught?" <http://buzz.yahoo.com/buzzlog/92971?fp=1>; accessed Sept. 2, 2009). My point is not whether the photographed animal is in fact the chupacabra but an observation about human nature: belief about the creature might change with the photograph, but its existence did not.

128. E.g., Dr. Candy Gunther Brown allowed me to view several tapes she had available, including one made immediately after the person's cure. Individual photos of testimonies, before-and-after healing

Most of the cures reported in this book also occur in places and at times when the average persons present lacked means to videotape, even had they known when to start videotaping. Moreover, medical documentation seems more reliable than what is normally observable on a video.

Nevertheless, for those interested in such sources, some cures in faith settings have been videotaped. Some may question the authenticity of all of these, but should not employ unfair standards: one should not ask for evidence that challenges one's worldview and then dismiss any evidence that does not easily fit it (however else they might explain it). Some of these appear, for example, on a popular DVD called *Finger of God*.¹²⁹ I have also noted some footage from a Baptist church in Ethiopia,¹³⁰ and local examples like the latter could undoubtedly be multiplied today. Yet, as my (then) eleven-year-old son perceptively pointed out to me, even if a skeptic demands videos, if his skepticism is inflexible he will reject their value once produced, claiming that the footage was faked.¹³¹ In many kinds of cases, only those strongly committed to skepticism a priori would insist on such an approach. Fabrication can be fairly safely dismissed with *Finger of God*, whatever one's interpretation of some material in the film;¹³² nor would one expect the Bakers, involved in highly sacrificial ministry, to have been involved in faked footage. (As we have noted, limited medical documentation also supports the existence of dramatic cures in their ministry.) Because the Ethiopian example came to me through a trusted friend who has witnessed such events at the church, I personally would not suspect fabrication in that video, either.

A video exists of a young man's instant healing from Guillain-Barré syndrome, in a midwestern U.S. church (though the camera is directed toward him only after commotion erupts). Previously, placing pressure on his feet caused intense pain, but he now left behind his wheelchair to run around the room. A friend of ours had known his condition for the previous few months and the genuineness of his recovery afterward, matching his own depiction of his condition before a minister prayed for him in faith.¹³³

photos, and reproductions of X-rays are more common (e.g., Numbere, *Vision*, 152), and I have seen before-and-after photos even from close friends (Marie Brown, personal correspondence, May 31, 2006). Of course, this technology has been available longer.

129. *Finger of God*, most notably the healing of deafness in Mozambique.

130. Pastor Dawit Molalegn, Atsheber DVD 2.

131. Some have even compared traditional miracles functionally with special effects' impact on humans, as in Vries, "Miracles," 51–52. Some psychic healers also have videotapes (e.g., the one noted in McClenon, *Events*, 134; cf. psychic phenomena on 232).

132. For the most part it lacks dramatic special effects (cases involving "gold dust" as the only exceptions, and the part of the film most enigmatic to me) and involves people in informal, unplanned settings.

133. I viewed the video on May 3, 2010, at [http://cmp.ihop.tv/gp.php?pid=zZzFzChe0FUVH7cy_PiH9uCDBehUxVx](http://cmp.ihop.tv/gp.php?pid=zZzFzChe0FUVH7cy_PiH9uCDBehUxVx;); and Jonathan's subsequent testimony on May 6, 2010, at http://cmp.ihop.tv/gp.php?pid=zYsSrFPhHn_612mVuiLx14weh7Dp0woc. Lauren Mason confirmed the events for us in personal correspondence, May 3, 5, 6, 8; interview, June 3, 2010; confirmed also by the young man himself, in Jonathan Pollard (personal correspondence, May 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22, 2010), with some medical documentation (sent to me July 22, 2010).

Likewise, a video captures the healing of Randy McKenzie at a conference in Abbotsford, British Columbia, on September 22, 2006. Moments after experiencing healing, he bends over and sideways repeatedly, pain-free, noting that he has not been able to do this for four years. Then he actually picks up his wife. How can we guarantee that Randy McKenzie was actually unable to do something like this before? The video provides what usual journalistic standards would treat as compelling evidence for his previous condition, with X-rays, interviews with his family and friends, and so forth.¹³⁴ I was originally informed of this testimony and long-term healing through therapist and broadcaster Craig Miller, who knows the family, and Randy's wife, Susan, provided further information.¹³⁵

Finally, a friend pointed me to an internet video of Delia Knox beginning to have feeling in her paralyzed legs and then walking with others supporting her, from August 30, 2010. Several days later, another video showed her walking several feet with no support. Such steps might not sound impressive, yet I discovered local news reports from two years earlier showing that she had indeed been organically paralyzed due to nerve damage from a car accident; in fact, she had not walked for more than two decades. Initially she was walking only haltingly while regaining strength. A new video on October 27, however, showed her walking normally as she prayed for others.¹³⁶

Not knowing Hume, I do not know whether he would have balked at calling such an event a miracle (as his essay suggests) or would have altered his perspective had he been present and known the persons involved. Whatever nomenclature we use, Knox appears to have experienced an extraordinary change in her ability

134. The video ("McKenzie Story") also recounts earlier healing incidents; further information appears at <http://www.teamfamilyonline.com/miracles/>; www.RandyandSusan.org. The battery pack briefly mentioned in the video functioned only briefly (Susan McKenzie, personal correspondence, July 20, 2010).

135. Craig Miller (personal correspondence, July 12–13, 2010); Susan McKenzie (personal correspondence, July 14, 20, 2010).

136. These videos and other information appeared at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYjM4xrw1ds>, Aug. 30, 2010; accessed Sept. 2, 2010; Press-Register staff, "Miracle in Mobile? Singer Delia Knox Says She Can Walk Again after 22 Years Thanks to Revival," Sept. 2, 2010, http://blog.al.com/live/2010/09/miracle_in_mobile_singer_delia.html; accessed Sept. 2; http://blog.al.com/live/2010/09/delia_knox_revival.html, Sept. 4; accessed Sept. 4, 2010; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whk_14KIoKo&feature=player_embedded#; accessed Oct. 28, 2010 (my thanks to Jeff Lundblad for tech help here). "Delia Knox Walks," *Thrive Magazine* (Buffalo, N.Y.), Sept. 8, 2010, <http://www.thrivebuffalo.org/delia-knox-walks/2010/9/8/delia-knox-walks.html>; accessed Dec. 29, 2010; "Paralysed for 23 Yrs, Woman Walks Again," *The Times of India*, Dec. 23, 2010, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/7148516.cms?prtpage=1>; accessed Dec. 29, 2010. The paralyzing accident occurred on Dec. 25, 1987. I can imagine no way that her able locomotion in the Oct. 28 video could have been faked, and many suggestions of internet critics border on the absurd: the claim that she faked paralysis for twenty-two years for the sake of later claiming healing lacks any modicum of common sense; the suggestion that she was misdiagnosed for so many years and merely psychologically paralyzed would appear little better, attributing extraordinary incompetence to the medical profession (but I have not been able to obtain concrete information). The assertion of fraud by some unaware of her previous condition simply recycles presuppositions; aside from earlier public reports, I have reports from people who knew her when she was paralyzed (e.g., Alycia Wood, personal correspondence, Sept. 2 [via Michael Licona]; Nov. 1, 2010). Barring significant forthcoming evidence to the contrary, charges of fraud appear libelous special pleading.

to walk, and the earlier footage strongly suggests that this change began with a dramatic spiritual experience. The experience precedes the book's release too closely to allow further evaluation; unable to contact her (despite attempts) or view earlier medical records, I merely offer this example as a response to protests that cure experiences are never videotaped. Sometimes they are.

I defer to future researchers for their conclusions regarding videos circulated by some controversial circles with which I lack direct contact; for example, some have told me that, despite genuine healings occurring in Nigeria, evidence suggests faked documentation in at least some cases.¹³⁷ Because, as I have noted, some people are hostile to supernatural beliefs altogether, it is not surprising that controversy surrounds many figures who emphasize healing; but controversies can also arise for legitimate reasons. One case disputed at the time of this book's writing involves a large church in Lagos, Nigeria, that has videotaped a number of dramatic, visible disorders and corresponding healing claims.¹³⁸ Some critics have denied the church's credibility and argued that its videos are fabricated.¹³⁹ Conversely, a medical expert argued, with some significant evidence, that some videos of medically inexplicable visible healings there involve what appear to be genuine medical conditions (though sometimes mislabeled by the church) and noted that during his visits there he witnessed some healings similar to those on the videos.¹⁴⁰ Nor is his knowledge merely secondhand in this regard; he further noted that he himself was immediately healed of a chronic condition that had plagued him for seven years when he received prayer at the church.¹⁴¹

137. Dr. Gary Maxey, founder of West Africa Theological Seminary, affirms that many genuine miracles are occurring but that evidence is fairly compelling that at least one Nigerian preacher (different from the one in question in my context here) paid substantial money to have documentation faked (personal correspondence, May 25, 2009, and esp. May 26, 2009). See also the warning in *Numero, Vision*, 433. Most churches, of course, could not afford such fake documentation, but neither is fraud surprising; fake documentation of sorts is not a new problem (e.g., Josh 9:4–6; Lucian *Alex.* 12, 14, 26; *Acts Pet.* 8/28; cf. Scherrer, "Signs").

138. From the Synagogue Church of All Nations, video footage that I have watched includes (from the internet; also reported in Jackson, "Back," including a neurosurgeon's observations; questioned by detractors) the apparent resuscitation of a dead man, Moses Marule; and (from video materials shared with me by Dr. David Zaritzky) the healing of a man unable to walk (who appears surprised himself but eventually runs), what are said to be visible cancers of the lip, buttocks, and anus (Dr. David Zaritzky, phone interview, May 24, 2009, notes that he and other doctors watching identified them instead as a sort of venereal disease affecting the lips, and that he saw the woman's healed condition in a later video; severe decubitus ulcers; and a severe, infected rectal prolapse), and others. Raising of the dead also occurs on a Reinhard Bonnke video mentioned earlier.

139. See discussion in the next paragraph. More positive assessments appear in, e.g., Ajaero, "Life"; Achi, "Joshua"; the report in Phillips, "Chiluba," is neutral. Many Brazilian Pentecostals believe that the IURD's televised exorcisms in Brazil are "stage managed" (Shaw, *Awakening*, 145).

140. Dr. David Zaritzky notes that he showed the videos to some other doctors, and that the graphic details were accurate and one would not expect these to be faked in Africa (David Zaritzky, phone interview, May 24, 2009). He had some even more graphic footage that he did not share with me.

141. David Zaritzky, personal correspondence, June 13, 2009, including his healing testimony that he plans as part of a forthcoming book. The condition involved both a serious back injury due to an

Most sources in Nigeria that I have consulted outside the church, while acknowledging that many miracles occur in Nigeria, have noted frequent criticisms of this particular church.¹⁴² Some accusations that I have read could involve merely contextualization for an African setting; others, if true, are significant and could call into question the integrity of key leadership in the church.¹⁴³ At the same time, the church has responded in detail to some charges, including a videotaped confession of one who claimed to be the source for some false rumors.¹⁴⁴ I cannot offer firmer conclusions about this particular church without investigating personally on the scene, which I have not done.

In any case, herein lie limitations of videotapes. Even videotapes will not always persuade skeptics. Moreover, skepticism is not always unwarranted in particular cases. If less creditable evangelists of a former generation could fake healings,¹⁴⁵ we cannot rule out that some sources, especially those designed to promote a particular healing ministry, might do the same today. There is in fact reason to affirm that in some settings some documentation has been faked,¹⁴⁶ though the reasons

accident and consequent long-term sleeplessness; he also noted a fairly specific prophecy that addressed and healed a deep pain in his life.

142. Because of the controversy, I solicited confidential opinions from a range of Nigerian church sources, both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal. Both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals also affirmed that many genuine miracles do occur in Nigeria.

143. Of particular concern are the allegations of Bayo Ajede (including allegations concerning sexual immorality), whom T. B. Joshua in one interview denied knowing, yet who clearly was his close associate (Grady, "Followers," esp. 16). Further (and responded to in the next note) is a DVD circulated in Nigeria regarding *Deception of the Age: The Rise of a Nigerian Antichrist*, with accusations of sexual exploitation and fakery (from esp. two of his former associates, summarized in "Fear Grips T. B. Joshua," *Diamond Christian Magazine* (May 20, 2009): 6–7, though some articles in this issue resemble typical tabloid journalism). If true, these charges would effectively discredit this ministry; some elements do not appear to fit other footage I have seen, but I cannot speak to other charges. Lesser charges of authoritarian control appear likely (at least for the past) even from the church's responses.

144. See most extensively <http://www.scoan.org/blasphemers.htm>; accessed June 6, 2009; among other charges addressed here, charges of burying pregnant women for witchcraft at the church and (long ago) drug dealing seem trumped up. (Some have charged other churches with burying corpses and cult objects to gain power, as reported in Burgess, *Revolution*, 301n22. But while some do seek to gain power at the expense of others' welfare—see comments in appendix B—in a given case the charge seems more easily offered than proved.) Some responses appear to discredit the testimony of the accusers, focusing on those in the *Deception* video noted above, as effectively as any defense attorney would seek to do; some of this "discrediting" in these cases, however, depends on members' prior confessions, the circumstances of which are unclear (being largely limited to selections from what had been videotaped). David Zaritzky (personal correspondence, June 13, 2009) noted that some of these charges were unfamiliar to him, but he answered some others from personal knowledge of some who ministered there. False rumors and accusations against ministries are common (e.g., Numbere, *Vision*, 175–76, 456); in this case, I lack means to sort out much of what is true from what is untrue.

145. Pullum, "Selling," 154–55, suggests that earlier media captured some dramatic public expressions of healing, yet he does not appear persuaded by them.

146. Shared with me as a general observation by those who also affirm that many genuine miracles are occurring in Nigeria, including Dr. Gary Maxey (personal correspondence, May 26, 2009); Dr. Danny McCain (personal correspondence, June 1, 2009). At least in the past century and currently, I suspect that such faking has happened most often in settings of capitalist competition among healing ministers or individual claimants seeking to acquire attention. Yet, as I noted in ch. 13 and above, fraud has a long

for affirming this in some cases are irrelevant to the vast majority of documented cases I have cited. Having offered this concession, I would remind skeptics who will not accept *any* evidence to consider whether they may be privileging their presuppositions above evidence. At least some immediate healings have been recorded on videotape by creditable sources that should not be quickly dismissed.

How to Sort the Evidence

Many of the recoveries listed in chapters 7–12 are compatible with but do not require a supernatural explanation. That is, if one prays for a thousand generically sick patients, the odds are good that many will recover with or without prayer and even with or without medical treatment, though instant cures of something like blindness would belong to a different category. Even in the case of serious illnesses, many cures could be the sort of spontaneous remissions that occur with or without prayer.¹⁴⁷ While most believers would regard any recoveries as divine grace, directly or indirectly,¹⁴⁸ it is more difficult to utilize them as indisputable proof of specifically divine activity.

It should be noted, however, that at least some “natural” remissions without reported prayer surely do involve prayer. One person whose ability to see changed measurably after prayer noted her optometrist’s remark that he had seen these “inexplicable” cures of eyesight only three times previously in his practice, all related to prayer.¹⁴⁹ But in many or most cures associated with prayer, this information is not shared with doctors. Research shows that those “who utilize non-medical forms of healing often do not tell their doctors for fear of irritating or losing them.”¹⁵⁰ Some persons whom I had interviewed had instantaneous “spontaneous recoveries during prayer, including one case in which other cases of such spontaneous recoveries were not known, but their doctors classified the recoveries as anomalies and refused to admit that a miracle had occurred. One doctor also told me of a dramatic, medically inexplicable healing that occurred after prayer, in which

history; early Christian authors also felt uncomfortable with some miracle claims (Mark 13:22; Matt 7:22; 24:24; 2 Thess 2:9; Rev 13:13–15).

147. Cf. Frohock, *Healing Powers*, 134, countering one healing claimant’s enthusiasm about his heart growing new veins by noting that this “is a common and natural phenomenon.”

148. See, e.g., Rose, *Faith Healing*, 134–35; O’Connor, *Movement*, 163. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 14–15, notes that Christian theology could define as a miracle any answer to prayer; a definition acceptable to medical science, however, would be narrower.

149. Anna Gulick (personal correspondence, June 10, 2010, the day of the conversation). She reported that he said that “two were cataracts, and in one case the improvement was significant enough that surgery was canceled,” though “in all three cases, the patient continued to receive some medical help” after the significant cure (hence explaining his continued knowledge of their situation).

150. Poloma, *Assemblies*, 57. Before reading Poloma’s sociological study, I had already noted that some of those I interviewed had testified to their churches but admitted that they had not bothered to inform their physicians that they had prayed. Some patients on recovery have failed to even inform their doctors of their cure (see Duffin, *Miracles*, 131).

case he was an eyewitness, but the surgeon was content to label it a “spontaneous healing.”¹⁵¹ This approach to classifying data to fit existing naturalistic paradigms inevitably obscures all potential evidence in conflict with the paradigm. Because the specialist in one case was not willing to consider the recovery as miraculous, although it was unique and instantaneous during a prayer, the next time such a healing occurs, others could cite the first case as an anomaly and note that such remissions have “happened on other occasions.” No mention of prayer is likely to appear in any of the medical records.¹⁵²

Meanwhile, remissions and similar explanations cannot cover many other examples provided, such as most healings of blindness. Moreover, eliminating potential remissions can function as an unduly stringent criterion,¹⁵³ if it disallows the cumulative import of a disproportionate number of remissions after prayer in circles where such prayers appear to prove particularly effective. One Christian physician notes that most miraculous healings could be dismissed as remissions, but it is significant that they happen so often immediately after prayers of faith in Jesus’s name.¹⁵⁴

I have omitted many reports of healings of cancer due to critics who explain such healings in terms of natural remissions, especially when the same person later experiences cancer again, but long-term healings without treatment are not so common. Some have even estimated that “the spontaneous remission rate for cancer is about one in 100,000.”¹⁵⁵ This figure could well overestimate the rareness of spontaneous remissions; yet because those diagnosed with cancer are normally taken into treatment immediately, hard figures for *spontaneous* remissions without

151. Tonye Briggs, phone interview, Dec. 16, 2009. In this case, a deep wound about 10–15 cm wide closed overnight, after prayer, a day before the medical student’s arm was scheduled to be amputated, an instance for which there should be no medical explanation.

152. Similarly, talk about divine intervention is often screened out of public reports (as in the cases in, e.g., Malarkey, *Boy*, 201, 204–5; Gebru Woldu, interview, May 20, 2010). To correlate some anomalies with prayer is not to suggest a theology in which God acts only when people pray, or to suggest that all remissions involve prayer. But for the questions presently involved, prayer seems the most relevant potential factor to attempt to correlate.

153. The ways questions or assumptions are framed can affect outcomes. Thus, as I mention elsewhere in this book, one professor, when I asked him if he could believe in a genuine miracle if someone were raised from the dead in front of him, unhesitatingly responded, “No.” Yet he considered me closed-minded for being a Christian, although I was a convert from atheism who had once myself discounted Christians’ intelligence. Likewise, my brother, a physicist, tried to recount to a colleague his eyewitness knowledge of a healing personally known to him. His conversation partner refused to believe him and also refused to come meet the family or visit the circles where such phenomena appeared more frequent. Common as such an approach is, I believe that Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 165, is right to contest its objectivity.

154. *Ibid.*, 24–25. Most miracle reports involve prayer (Prather, *Miracles*, 214).

155. Flach, *Faith*, 92, though admitting that faith remissions are merely improbable naturally, not impossible. Flach is a physician here citing another doctor. The usual estimates range from one in sixty thousand to one in one hundred thousand (Ellens, “Miracles and Process,” 11, following Lenzner, “Citizen,” 56). Dr. Nicole Matthews (personal correspondence, April 14, 2009, extending discussion from April 1) emphasized to me that genuine malignancies (as opposed to benign tumors) require treatment (even homeopathic therapy uses “herbs that have some cell growth limiting factors”); disappearance without treatment is thus extraordinary.

medical treatment are difficult to come by.¹⁵⁶ The point is that they cannot be taken for granted; thus a case like the permanent healing of the three-year-old's untreated leukemia in Brazzaville, cited earlier,¹⁵⁷ and in a context with other numerous attested healings attributed to divine activity,¹⁵⁸ should still be deemed extraordinary. One must also account for the smaller proportion (yet strikingly large number) of dramatic recoveries suggested above that are not readily amenable to such explanations even on an individual level, such as suddenly regaining sight or life.

Critics of Lourdes

Because claims of cures associated with Lourdes cluster in one location rather than occur randomly throughout the world, Lourdes lends itself more readily to collecting medical documentation than most individual sources for healing claims do. This observation makes studies of Lourdes helpful for research even though the percentage of healing claims there is lower than the proportion in many other settings. Regardless of one's perspective on miracle claims at Lourdes, it thus offers a useful case study in methodology, as well as of both the importance and the difficulty of surmounting reductionism.¹⁵⁹ Theologians may debate whether healings took place because of Lourdes or whether the same healings could have taken place anywhere through faith, but this question (also relevant to other healing contexts) is not necessary for the point we are investigating here.

The Catholic Church has strict evaluation criteria in place at Lourdes and in most generations has left the burden of proof heavily on the miracle claim. As we shall see, some standards are *too* stringent.¹⁶⁰ Increasingly rigorous standards have reflected the Roman Catholic approach to all miracle claims since the Counter-Reformation. The approach does not imply that other claimed miracles may not have occurred, but seeks a secure minimum that withstands external scrutiny.¹⁶¹

156. Dr. Tahira Adelekan, phone interview, April 24, 2009; on spontaneous remission rates without treatment being unknown, see also Krippner and Achterberg, "Experiences," 358; for estimates of remissions being more common than the standard estimate, see McNamara and Szent-Imrey, "Learn," 209. Some clearly have recovered using alternate therapies of some sort, but natural recovery seems far from the norm.

157. From Jacques Vernaude, personal correspondence, Aug. 29, 2005.

158. Known to me far before I planned to write this book: Jacques Moussounga independently attested Jacques Vernaude's ministry in healing, sharing this with his daughter Méline; Méline spoke of it shortly after we met (in our first extended conversation, Oct. 1, 1989), long before we considered marriage but after I already knew of the healing of Jacques Vernaude's daughter (from that daughter, confirmed by her father).

159. Others have also raised the discussion of Lourdes in connection with studies of biblical miracles (cf., e.g., Légasse, "L'Historien," 141). Thus in his book regarding Jesus's miracles, Sabourin, *Miracles*, 162–63, suggests that miraculous cures there are likely but notes reasons for caution (esp. in the need to distinguish "normal" spontaneous cures from miraculous ones).

160. Cf. also Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, 123–24; Williams, *Doctor*, 72, 75.

161. See Duffin, *Miracles*, passim. For the formative historical context of early Protestant skepticism and seminal medical thinkers in establishing the sorts of rigorous approach now in place (including the office of *promotor fidei*, i.e., "the devil's advocate"), see Duffin, *Miracles*, 19–35. On the minimalist evidential approach, without denying other miracles, see 35, 111. Critics today who, by contrast, reject any testimony without medical documentation, not merely for a minimally secure base of data but even to evaluate which claims might be deemed probable, rarely seek to defend their rejection of eyewitness testimony. This

One critic of supernatural healing at Lourdes, D. J. West, censures the bias of the Medical Bureau there, but his own evaluation seems open to the same charge. Since recoveries in real life are never instantaneous, West claims, doctors at Lourdes face “the necessity to distort facts to fit them in” and “fail utterly to preserve that detached frame of mind so essential to a fair consideration of the respective merits of all possible interpretations.”¹⁶² I defer conclusions on medical points to those with medical competence; yet it must be noted, against the critic’s concern about bias, that members of the Medical Bureau have included not only Catholics but also Protestants and those who do not claim adherence to Christian faith or any faith.¹⁶³ The bureau’s responsibility is not to certify miracles but to certify cures and to determine whether they can be explained naturalistically.¹⁶⁴ Three different panels of physicians examine each case, later panels screening out some cases accepted by the earlier panels.¹⁶⁵ Responding to criticisms, the bureau has become increasingly strict in its standards, excluding even many medically inexplicable cases.¹⁶⁶

One also does not need any particular medical expertise to observe that West’s own language reflects his starting assumptions in this case. Assuming that natural recoveries are never instantaneous, he simply disallows evidence from Lourdes for instantaneous *supernatural* healing. That is, he will not accept as evidence what cannot be explained in purely natural terms, yet what can be explained in purely natural terms he can discount as not a true miracle. (Another example below will illustrate how his method effectively screens out evidence that does not match his presuppositions.) Further, he places the standard of proof so high that few ailments or recoveries can even be considered.¹⁶⁷ A psychiatrist and parapsychologist, West affirms that “psychological influence plays some part in almost all illnesses and a

behavior supports the suspicion that in most cases their epistemological approach is authority: accepting without argument a particular historically conditioned approach (while broadening its application).

162. West, *Miracles*, 123. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 33, calls West, a psychiatrist, a “friendly critic”; Sabourin, *Miracles*, 158, offers a cordial critique, noting West’s predisposition for psychic explanations based on his previous work.

163. Cranston, *Miracle*, 73–74, 186; Garner, “Regressions,” 1257, notes that they prefer “documentation by non-Catholics.” More than fifteen hundred doctors from all religious or nonreligious backgrounds participated in the examinations in 1953, the year for which figures are reported in Cranston, *Miracle*, 74, 80. At that time the bureau was supported by the dues of some five thousand physicians from roughly thirty nations (82, emphasizing that no money came from the church); note the international composition of the twenty-seven members of the International Medical Committee as of 1986 in Cranston, *Miracle*, 335. Religious diversity is even more true of doctors involved outside Lourdes (see, e.g., the astonished report of one agnostic physician in Cranston, *Miracle*, 182–83; the opinion of the Dutch Jewish neurologist in Cranston, *Miracle*, 249).

164. Wakefield, *Miracle*, 41. Of course, some will explain any event naturalistically, even if it is by insisting that a naturalistic explanation will someday be found; but the bar of evidence at Lourdes seems quite high, probably thereby even excluding many cures for which a naturalistic explanation, while possible, is nowhere close to the simplest option for a theist.

165. Garner, “Regressions,” 1255.

166. *Ibid.*, 1259, accounting for some reduction of the numbers. It might also be possible that greater dependence on medicine and scientific worldview has decreased some of potential supplicants’ dependence on miracles, just as established Pentecostal denominations tend to give less attention to signs than initially.

167. See, e.g., West, *Miracles*, 22.

large part in many,” including “organic” diseases.¹⁶⁸ Since he attributes nearly anything to psychological factors, an approach that attributes to supernatural factors only what one cannot attempt to explain otherwise¹⁶⁹ will have few cases to work with. Despite his argument for psychosomatic cures, many who have been cured were not expecting it;¹⁷⁰ some were not Catholic; and some had no faith in any religion at the time of their cure.¹⁷¹ Nor do the vast majority of doctors expect suggestibility to instantly cure organic lesions, as in some reported cases.¹⁷²

Of the just eleven cases that West examines, some do indeed seem disputable, but the book includes considerable “explaining away.” Thus he avers that “lay witnesses” to a woman rising from being bedridden do not count scientifically without medical documentation of an organic cure.¹⁷³ While strictly speaking this may mean that we cannot be sure of an organic cure (and I am not qualified to evaluate the case in question), few cases described as this one is in the records should be deemed purely psychological ailments. Because a person bedridden for six years cannot get up and immediately walk (even true of someone otherwise healthy who has been lying in bed for months), the author doubts this aspect of the claim.¹⁷⁴ That is, he denies the possibility of instant cures because these rarely occur naturally (i.e., if they occurred it would be miraculous), yet would deny as

168. E.g., *ibid.*, 20. Langford, “Problem,” 49, thinks that healings at Lourdes fit psychosomatic explanations; he allows (S2) that God works in psychosomatic ways but is skeptical of other miracles. Suggesting psychological cures, Frank, *Persuasion*, S8, allows that Lourdes cures may be genuine without being miraculous; he emphasizes (S9) that those cured were usually “simple” rather than critical people.

169. One feature implied in the dictionary definition cited by the person introducing Peter May in May, “Miracles,” 144. As noted in ch. 5, definitions vary, but this one does not correspond well to any biblical conception.

170. Cranston, *Miracle*, 260 (and *passim* among examples in the book).

171. *Ibid.*, 155. Note, e.g., Gabriel Gargam, a paralyzed atheist near death, was cured immediately, though still gaunt (gaining twenty pounds in days; 40–41, 269). Also Elie Auclair, an atheist before his cure, though in this case he later suffered physical relapse months after his conversion and maintained his postconversion faith (185–86). Louis Olivari, a half-paralyzed French Communist, was an atheist who went to Lourdes only at his Catholic wife’s insistence; moved by the earnest faith of the ten-year-old blind boy next to him, praying for Olivari, he prayed that God, if he existed, would heal the boy; the boy was uncured, but the atheist was immediately and completely healed when he left the water. The Medical Bureau refused to certify the cure without a long process of verifying that the change was organic, but Olivari was convinced and became a Christian (Oursler, *Power*, 59–61; Rose, *Faith Healing*, 95). Catholic miracle stories in recent centuries typically include the element of patients’ surprise at their cure (Duffin, *Miracles*, 177). Skeptics were also healed in Salmon’s ministry (Salmon, *Heals*, 34). Similarly, a woman with eczema for thirty-five years decided two days after the healing meeting that she simply had lacked sufficient faith; the next morning she awoke healed (63–64).

172. See Cranston, *Miracle*, 260–61.

173. West, *Miracles*, 36.

174. *Ibid.*, 41. Similarly, Hume dismissed a claimed miracle cure because a physician declared that such cures do not occur (*naturally*) as quickly as the eyewitnesses claimed; but this evaluation simply presupposes pure naturalism (deSilva, “Meaning,” 14–15). For similar cases, see Duffin, *Miracles*, 133–34. Frank, *Persuasion*, 57–58, views Lourdes cures as gradual; although the paralyzed may walk immediately or the blind see immediately, subsequent “actual tissue healing takes hours, days, or weeks,” and weight gain is gradual. Yet why should we require instant healing of what is curable naturally in order for the curing of the naturally incurable aspect to be considered genuinely extraordinary?

miraculous any cure that could happen naturally. In other words, he construes naturally explicable elements as pointing to a natural recovery but treats as false any elements that are not naturally explicable. This is a catch-22 in which the rules are so fixed as to rule out any evidence for miracles; the approach thus simply presupposes that no supernatural explanation is to be admitted.

Rigorous Standards at Lourdes

By any standards, most ailing pilgrims at Lourdes are not cured there,¹⁷⁵ but these numbers appear even smaller by Lourdes's own rigorous standards.¹⁷⁶ While most of the diseases healed at Lourdes are also those known to sometimes undergo spontaneous remission in "secular" settings,¹⁷⁷ the standards for evidence are very strict there.¹⁷⁸ On extremely rare occasions doctors there (and elsewhere) have been duped,¹⁷⁹ but in the vast majority of cases the Medical Bureau is able to screen out attempts at fraud immediately.¹⁸⁰

Only a small minority of pilgrims reported healings, although not all pilgrims are ill to begin with. By some estimates, most groups of organized pilgrims in the first half century reported between 0.001 and 0.02 percent cures,¹⁸¹ certainly

175. One doctor directed patients there for twelve years without seeing any recoveries, but he observed a positive change in their mental attitude (Buskirk, *Healing*, 51–52; cf. Frank, *Persuasion*, 56, who believes that most are psychologically benefited); another reported a tuberculosis recovery, which he attributed to mental attitudes (Buskirk, *Healing*, 52). Hay, "Concept," 193, notes that while the Medical Bureau at Lourdes does not exaggerate, many believers in Lourdes overestimate the actual number of cures. West, *Miracles*, 121, complains that merely giving medical documentation for cures is not scientific unless one studies entire groups; but this approach implicitly presupposes that Lourdes claims to cure everyone. Amiotte-Suchet, "Egaux," argues that Catholics accept the rareness of miracles, expecting them less often than Pentecostals do (though sometimes exaggerating the latter's expectations).

176. For their very difficult standards, designed to secure a minimum of assured results, see, e.g., Cranston, *Miracle*, 75–79. Doctors are advised to be as rigorous as possible, erring on the side of skepticism rather than credulity (81).

177. Hirschberg and Barasch, *Recovery*, 106–7; Melinsky, *Miracles*, 163 (on cancer and tuberculosis). West, *Miracles*, 42, complains that "spontaneous recoveries" happen and these may thus happen with respect to pilgrimage to Lourdes only coincidentally.

178. See, e.g., Rose, *Faith Healing*, 96; Dearmer, *Body and Soul*, 307, 308–15. Other Christian traditions also have used healing locations, including in the United States (see Ogilbee and Riess, *Pilgrimage*, 3–50).

179. Some healings, such as that of Gabrielle Durand in the early twentieth century, are well verified (Scherzer, *Healing*, 138–39), though on another occasion doctors there (as well as *other* doctors) were duped (139–40; Major, *Faiths*, 34–36).

180. See Cranston, *Miracle*, 186–90. In one case, a woman had been paid by an antireligious organization to claim a healing falsely that could then be publicized to discredit standards at Lourdes; instead, the examination physicians immediately recognized the falsehood (190). In his novel *Lourdes*, Zola deliberately fabricated external falsehoods about Lourdes (Cranston, *Miracle*, 190); nevertheless, he himself witnessed "the overnight disappearance of horrendous leg and facial ulcers" that he could not explain naturally (Garner, "Regressions," 1262).

181. See the statistics in Kselman, *Miracles*, 201–3. These figures do not specify how many pilgrims specifically *sought* cures and would not include all subsequent or any unreported cures; at the same time, they would include a number of cures that medical science would not find impressive. Warfield, *Miracles*, 107, who generously concedes as much as 10 percent cured (a much higher figure), focuses instead on the disappointment of those uncured, though this observation cannot discount genuine cures.

significantly lower than the expected reported cure rate through medical science. If the point of Lourdes is to function as a theological sign rather than as a medical institution, however, comparison with medicine's cure rate is beside the point (though comparison with rates of spontaneous remission need not be). Of millions of pilgrims over the years,¹⁸² with probably more than half a million sick,¹⁸³ about five thousand miracle claims have been recorded (less than 1 percent). Of these, the medical committees evaluating cures there have judged a smaller number to be "medically inexplicable." Only these screened cures have been forwarded on to bishops for further discussion, and of these only sixty-five have survived the evaluation of all examiners and been pronounced certain "miracles."¹⁸⁴ If the only genuine cures are those that have been deemed both medically inexplicable¹⁸⁵ and religiously approved, the cure rate is abysmally low—perhaps no better than one would find in hospitals dealing with the same number of "incurable" patients. Even many who affirm that supernatural healings occur there do not contend that they should be expected very often.

When one examines the statistics, though, one should also examine the stringent criteria employed there—cures are more frequent than the critical minimum finally counted as miracles. The concern of many pilgrims is their travel and health, not obtaining documentation; to satisfy the Medical Bureau's investigation, however, they must have full medical documentation of their prior condition, including any available hospital records.¹⁸⁶ Investigators cannot always obtain sufficient

182. Critics may also have exaggerated the number of pilgrims (Melinsky, *Miracles*, 162, though unsympathetic to attempts to evaluate and document miracles) but the average number probably exceeds three million annually (Marnham, *Lourdes*, 183); room exists to hold only one hundred thousand at a time at the torchlight procession (Cranston, *Miracle*, 103). However, only some of these are ill, and of these only those with medical certification can be examined by the bureau if cured, which reduces the figures considerably (in 1954, this was 33,276; Cranston, *Miracle*, 75).

183. Cranston, *Miracle*, 113, estimated that half a million sick had visited in the first 128 years. This estimate may be too low; it would suggest an average of only four thousand a year, though smaller numbers in the early years would skew that average for later years. Oursler, *Power*, 65, estimates that only 1 percent of annual pilgrims are ill, of which two hundred to three hundred claim cures.

184. Varying slightly regarding the number of initial claims, Marnham, *Lourdes*, viii; Hirschberg and Barasch, *Recovery*, 107; MacNutt, *Power*, 66; Mullin, *Miracles*, 120. But apparently most do remain uncured (cf. similar pilgrimages in Oktavec, *Prayers*, 37–38; more positively, 52); for a severe critique, doubting any of the cures, see Randi, *Faith Healers*, 20–30; also skeptical, Schwarz, *Healing*, 61–62; Bishop, *Healing*, 143–54.

185. A common definition for "miracle" today is "a permanently inexplicable event" (Basinger and Basinger, "Concept," 165; idem, *Miracle*, 23), but on this definition one denying a miracle could simply deny the permanence of its (nonsupernatural) inexplicability (Basinger and Basinger, "Concept," 166; idem, *Miracle*, 71; Basinger, "Apologetics," 352–53); see discussion of "God of the gaps" arguments below. Apart from the question of actual supernatural causation, it is cognitively easier to explain apparently naturally inexplicable events in relation to known religious assumptions (Pyysiäinen, "Mind," in terms of mental processing of counterintuitive events; the article does not seek to resolve whether or not miracles in the strong sense might actually happen, which it avers [738–39] that science cannot address). On the neural and mental processing of such events, see also helpfully Paloutzian, Rogers, Swenson, and Lowe, "Attributions"; a theist can construe such psychological structures providentially (e.g., Lawal, "Psychology," 151–52). Recognizing events as miracles involves not a mere "feeling" of awe (Hume, *Miracles*, 35, notes that wonder tales feel pleasant) but a "cognitive process" (Rogers, "Miracles," 111).

186. Cranston, *Miracle*, 118; cf. Williams, *Doctor*, 72.

documentation to proceed, since many doctors do not respond to requests for it, lacking interest and/or time.¹⁸⁷ Tracking down the witnesses can be difficult if they have moved. If patients have taken medicine that could possibly have produced the cure, they are excluded from consideration.¹⁸⁸ Most patients today, however, will seek the best of medicine as well as prayer. If one's ailment is not demonstrably organic, one is excluded, even though this excludes from consideration many genuine afflictions.¹⁸⁹

Many people thus find themselves cured, yet if their cures cannot pass all the stringent criteria to achieve certainty, they are not pronounced miraculous by the church.¹⁹⁰ For example, a Protestant doctor notes that he "saw with my own eyes" that a woman who had been suffering from "advanced ankylosing spondylitis of the spine" was now able to pick up objects from the floor "without the slightest pain or difficulty." Lourdes rejected this cure because X-rays showed that her spine remained diseased, but the doctor notes that her new ability defied scientific explanation.¹⁹¹ More than twelve hundred cures accepted by the Medical Bureau after multiple examinations lacked some (though usually not all) of the requisite documentation and thus were never processed.¹⁹² Anyone who has tried to collect medical documentation recognizes that factors beyond the researcher's control sometimes make this process difficult. Besides the fairly secure cures, the bureau knows of four thousand other probable cures.¹⁹³ Many others were cured and never submitted any information to the bureau.¹⁹⁴ Forty doctors confirmed the cure of a medically incurable, quadriplegic postencephalitic idiot—a child who went from complete insensibility and lack of control to intelligent normalcy—but because some documents were missing, the cure was never officially proclaimed.¹⁹⁵ By the minimalist standards employed at Lourdes, it is likely that many of Jesus's miracles reported in the Gospels would have been screened out had they occurred instead at Lourdes.¹⁹⁶

Unfair skepticism at any point in the process, whether from doctors or church leaders, can skew the results just as credulity throughout the process would. The

187. Cranston, *Miracle*, 119.

188. *Ibid.*

189. *Ibid.*, 125; cf. Williams, *Doctor*, 75.

190. Cranston, *Miracle*, 119.

191. Woodard, *Faith*, 53 (noting that she had remained healed three years at the time that he met her and reviewed her case records; pure willpower could not produce such results).

192. Cranston, *Miracle*, 153. Sometimes doctors' records are not sufficiently precise; some other doctors refuse to provide requested information, whether out of prejudice against Lourdes or for other reasons (154). More recently, Garner, "Regressions," 1257, notes "nearly 1500 well documented cures, with case-notes, X-ray films and photographs," with another three thousand to four thousand lacking adequate data but presumably including many cures.

193. Cranston, *Miracle*, 154.

194. *Ibid.*

195. *Ibid.*, 242–46, noting on 245 that none of the doctors had ever seen such a case in their medical careers.

196. Cf. a similar observation in Miller, "Miracle Worker," 21.

makeup of the committee and their philosophic predispositions, as well as those of bishops and diocesan councils, apparently plays a noteworthy role; some eras and regions include a number of reported healings, whereas others report barely any.¹⁹⁷ For example, no healings were admitted “between 1913 and 1946.”¹⁹⁸ Yet between 1925 and 1946, thousands of reported cures appear in the Medical Bureau’s records, of which eighty-nine were viewed as inexplicable;¹⁹⁹ those responsible for evaluating them simply did not proclaim any of them as miracles during this period. After the long hiatus, twenty-four miracle proclamations cluster in thirty-four years, starting, as one writer observes, “at about the same time as the reorganization of the Medical Bureau and the decision to encourage the simultaneous development of the Marian shrine of Fatima.”²⁰⁰ The French church decided to acknowledge healings at Lourdes near the fiftieth anniversary; they proclaimed twenty-one cures, including some that had taken place earlier, over the span of a few months, a collection that even today remains roughly a third of those proclaimed there.²⁰¹ That is to say, discerning an individual miracle can involve subjectivity, whether in affirming or denying it.²⁰²

Some Dramatic Cures at Lourdes

Moreover, whatever one makes of some of the roughly six thousand claims offered, some (for which medical documentation remains available) seem rather impressive. Cures of tuberculosis peritonitis dominate many of the claims, and critics charge that these may reflect misdiagnosis or psychological recoveries.²⁰³

197. For those proclaimed miracles, by twenty-five-year periods: four appear in 1862–86; twenty-nine in 1887–1911 (twenty-eight proclamations, all between 1907–11); two in 1912–36; twenty in 1937–61; and two in 1962–79 (Marnham, *Lourdes*, 185). Meanwhile, Bishop, *Healing*, 148, highlights the “predominantly French Catholic” character of the medical committee, though one would expect Catholics to be those with the greatest interest in serving on the committee. Yet he also notes that the committee is suspicious even of healings where the person expected healing beforehand, since the healing *might* be explained psychologically (Bishop, *Healing*, 151–52). Bishop’s complaint that the water itself is not chemically special nor efficacious elsewhere (152–53) focuses on water rather than divine activity hence risks missing the point of why they are considered miracles.

198. Melinsky, *Miracles*, 162. Some of this period’s dearth reflects the limitations imposed by two world wars (Cranston, *Miracle*, 114–15), especially 1939–46 (Cranston, *Miracle*, 207).

199. Marnham, *Lourdes*, 186. West, *Miracles*, 8, warns that the documentation kept in the bureau before 1946 was inadequate, a problem that also limited the scientific evidence with which he could securely work in his 1957 book. The Medical Bureau passed seventy-one cures between 1947 and 1988.

200. Marnham, *Lourdes*, 186.

201. *Ibid.*, suggesting “political” factors. He also notes the high proportion of nuns and priests. External political factors also influenced miracle collections for canonizing saints; see Duffin, *Miracles*, 33 (Napoleon’s influence on suppression of religion), 39, 178.

202. Cf. the struggle of Alexis Carrel, an agnostic medical researcher, to interpret and come to terms with what he witnessed at Lourdes (Flach, *Faith*, 38–40).

203. West, *Miracles*, 122; Major, *Faiths*, 37–38. Even Warfield, *Miracles*, 110, concedes that genuine cures at Lourdes are undeniable yet (111) attributes them mostly to “hysterosis,” while leaving other cures (117–18; such as the instant healing of a broken bone) as mere anomalies or falsehoods. One wonders why a theist must automatically prefer this kind of psychological explanations, which themselves lack experimental confirmation, to theological explanations.

Tuberculosis did not lend itself to medical cures in that era, however, and if genuine was not cured by such means.²⁰⁴ Because scientists now know that tuberculosis sometimes is cured spontaneously (and medical treatments are now available), Catholic miracle records of the past half century no longer include new cases.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, some cases of cured cancer²⁰⁶ or tuberculosis²⁰⁷ seem too sudden, from near death to complete health in hours, to readily lend themselves to the suggestion of merely coincidental remissions. The clinical details of one cancer case were presented at a conference on bone sarcomata, with no one able to explain the case naturally; only afterward was it revealed that the cure occurred at Lourdes.²⁰⁸

Nevertheless, even if we explain these sorts of cures naturally, it is harder to naturally explain Francis Pascal, cured of “blindness” and “paralysis of the lower limbs,” at the age of three years and ten months, on August 28, 1938.²⁰⁹ While the keenness of his vision remained less than the average person’s,²¹⁰ this child who had been completely blind before the cure was now an active reader and writer.²¹¹ Other blind persons were also cured of documented, organic optic atrophy, able thereafter to see.²¹² One might also consider Marie Bigot, cured of blindness, deafness, and hemiplegia, on October 10, 1954.²¹³

A clear case of Hodgkin’s disease was cured on May 31, 1950: the pilgrim felt warmth and was healed, with all traces of the disease gone from his body. The original diagnosis of the disease cannot be disputed, as “the original histological specimens have been repeatedly and thoroughly reviewed.”²¹⁴ Vittorio Micheli vis-

204. Garner, “Regressions,” 1259.

205. Duffin, *Miracles*, 75–76.

206. Keep in mind that healings from cancer include medically documented, naturally inexplicable cases like Mlle Delot, whose cancer had spread, who had been given up by her physicians to die and was nearly dead, and who was instantly cured of cancer, even her damaged organs reforming (Cranston, *Miracle*, 127–29).

207. Sometimes the tubercular patient had great abscesses and was dying, yet within hours was so fully healed that she could walk under her own power and the wounds had closed (Mlle Brosse, in Cranston, *Miracle*, 180–84, including the astonished report of an agnostic physician, 182–83); the case of Jeanne Fretel, cured Oct. 8, 1948 (209–16, 269), is also noteworthy. Nearly half the confirmed cures until 1948 involved tuberculosis, partly because this was a common and then not really curable disease that drew many pilgrims to Lourdes (281); cases of healed tuberculosis have also been verified at Lourdes in more recent times (284–85, 292–93, 300–302).

208. *Ibid.*, 306. The full cure of a girl near death from Ewing’s Sarcoma in 1976 is significant because it “had never been found to regress spontaneously” (311). May, “Miracles,” 149–50, however, questions this diagnosis (citing a specialist’s conclusion based on slides) and further objects that it was partial and gradual.

209. Recognized as a miracle in 1949 (Marnham, *Lourdes*, 189; see Cranston, *Miracle*, 233–39, including her interviews with Pascal and his family; cf. Woodard, *Faith*, 57). For the full list of the persons and ailments cured, and dates, see Marnham, *Lourdes*, 187–91.

210. West, *Miracles*, 6.

211. Cranston, *Miracle*, 236, 237.

212. *Ibid.*, 42–44, 227–33 (the second case, of Gerard Baillie, healed Sept. 27, 1947, was of a seven-year-old).

213. Marnham, *Lourdes*, 190 (for more on her, see 192–94; Cranston, *Miracle*, 293–95). She happens to have been captured on film just before and after her cure (Cranston, *Miracle*, 295).

214. Marnham, *Lourdes*, 191; see also Cranston, *Miracle*, 289–90.

ited Lourdes on May 24, 1963; on June 1, he felt that he was healed, and subsequent X-rays showed “that the bony reconstruction of the parts destroyed was progressing steadily”—something that should not happen naturally.²¹⁵ Unable to work and deemed an invalid due to verified physical causes, the nearly blind Serge Perrin visited Lourdes and on May 1, 1970, was anointed. He unexpectedly “experienced some sensation, felt even in his feet”; within hours his vision returned fully, and he was able to walk unaided.²¹⁶ Doctors verified that no trace of his previous medical problems remained; six years later, in view of his continued health, the cure was recognized by the church as miraculous.²¹⁷ The medically documented instantaneous healing of a swollen and paralyzed arm drew public attention and television coverage in France in 1954 and 1960.²¹⁸ A paralyzed and nearly blind man was instantly, permanently, and unexpectedly cured on May 1, 1970.²¹⁹

In 1902, Alexis Carrel, not believing in miracles himself but learning of his patients cured at Lourdes, decided to investigate. On the train he cared for a dying girl, Marie Bailly, who was also traveling there, noting that her abdomen was swollen and that she was in danger of dying at any moment. She had peritonitis and was deathly pale and skeletal.²²⁰ At Lourdes, she was removed from the train by a stretcher, with almost no pulse. To the “stupefaction” of the physicians, she was cured, the “tumors” vanishing in front of them; one astonished medical observer added that such a serious affliction “has never been cured [naturally] in a few hours like the case on record here.”²²¹ Because Carrel had become interested in miracles, the University of Lyons medical faculty rejected him in 1905; he joined the Rockefeller Institute instead and in 1912 received the Nobel Prize in physiology and medicine, his memoir of the healing being published only later.²²²

In an academic journal article, Terence Nichols also recounts an earlier cure from 1878. The “gangrenous ulcer” on Joachime Dehant’s right leg was twelve inches by six inches and had “penetrated to the bone.” Her companions on the

215. Marnham, *Lourdes*, 195 (see more fully 195–96; his full dossier appears on 198–216). X-rays and army records showed that sarcoma had nearly destroyed his left pelvis, disconnecting it from the femur; X-rays a few months later showed regression of the sarcoma and the pelvic bone regenerating. Many orthopedic surgeons were consulted who had dealt with bone cancer; none had “encountered a case of spontaneous cure of a malignant tumour of the bone” (Garner, “Regressions,” 1259).

216. Marnham, *Lourdes*, 197. Mays, “Miracles,” 150, thinks that this case was “psychosomatic,” though on 155 he concedes that “it is very difficult to be sure whether a person is a hysteric or not.”

217. Marnham, *Lourdes*, 197–98.

218. Cranston, *Miracle*, 295–96.

219. *Ibid.*, 307–8.

220. Oursler, *Power*, 72; Nichols, “Miracles,” 706.

221. Nichols, “Miracles,” 706, citing the original sources (esp. in Carrel, *Voyage*; Boissarie, *Healing*). Boissarie was one of the early physicians examining cases at Lourdes. See also the account in Cranston, *Miracle*, 172–76; briefly, Woodard, *Faith*, 51.

222. Nichols, “Miracles,” 707; Cranston, *Miracle*, 35. A Jewish neurologist became interested in Lourdes based on Carrel’s testimony, noting that since he trusted his word on cardiological experiments he ought to trust his word on this matter as well (Cranston, *Miracle*, 249). Trusting his eyewitness testimony need not involve agreement with all his views; Carrel’s advocacy of the then sometimes accepted idea of euthanasia for dangerous criminals would be at best extremely controversial today.

train, nauseated by the odor, vomited. Nevertheless, the second time she bathed in the pool at Lourdes, she was healed, leaving only a scar. Investigators gathered testimony not only from physicians at Lourdes and her own physicians who had treated her for more than a decade but also from her traveling companions, family, and others who knew her in her hometown.²²³ Perhaps some skeptics would dismiss the evidence as being from a generation prior to our own, hence not directly observed by us; again, this approach would make historiography beyond the living memory of eyewitnesses impossible. Because the cure took two or three hours²²⁴ or because it left a scar,²²⁵ some critics might dismiss the supernatural element, but such criticisms seem petty in view of the recovery.

Only a small percentage of cures are officially pronounced, but many dramatic healings occur among the much larger body of healings that are not among the official cures. A Methodist visitor to Lourdes testifies of being instantly healed there of disabilities that are not known to be cured naturally in this way.²²⁶ An investigative reporter spoke with a woman who had been diagnosed as having “an inoperable malignancy located between her pulmonary artery and her heart” and told that she had six months to live. She was cured during her second time bathing in the water at Lourdes.²²⁷ She informed the reporter that about sixty cures had been reported in the half-year before his visit; one case involved the instant healing of a man whose cancer had eaten away “most of his hip bone,” and she showed the reporter the X-rays confirming the full restoration of the bone.²²⁸ In a half-year period, some sixteen hundred physicians from thirty-two different nations and a diverse range of religious or nonreligious perspectives visited the Medical Bureau, where they are welcomed to examine the evidence for themselves.²²⁹ That infants and unbelievers have been healed works against purely psychosomatic explanations.²³⁰

223. Nichols, “Miracles,” 707, following Boissarie, *Healing*, 2–9; see also Cranston, *Miracle*, 39.

224. Nichols, “Miracles,” 708.

225. Many of the cures leave “some vestige to show that the original illness existed, e.g., scars or a bone in a slightly different position” (Cranston, *Miracle*, 119); cf. the dramatic case of Belgian Pierre De Rudder, where scarring indicated the injury but new, whiter bone tissue had connected what had been considered a medically incurable fracture (Oursler, *Power*, 71, noting on 72 that twenty-eight physicians were involved in certifying the cure). Vestiges of an original injury or illness do not seem objectionable from the standpoint of biblical theism (see Gen 32:25, 31–32; Lev 13:23, 28). In one account, however, a physician admits that he had refused to accept a cure as miraculous if he found a scar—and he found none (Duffin, *Miracles*, 137).

226. Heron, *Channels*, 142–43.

227. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 29. One dying woman had a massive tumor that was inoperable due to her heart condition; it disappeared immediately and without a period of convalescence, with visible changes (Cranston, *Miracle*, 177–78).

228. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 30.

229. *Ibid.*, 31–32.

230. *Ibid.*, 32 (cf. also in Kuhlman’s meetings, unbelievers on 165 and infants on 171). Healings include those who denied the supernatural (until the cure) and also Muslims and Jews at an extension site (Garner, “Regressions,” 1257). Frank, *Persuasion*, 59, counters that the skeptics healed at Lourdes probably had some “emotional conflict,” thus explaining why they would become believers after they were cured. Since any but the most inflexible skeptic might find a cure persuasive (hence might well become a believer), one wonders if Frank’s explanation does not force evidence (as in his complaints about psychoanalysis on 124).

Granted that most pilgrims are not healed, some extraordinary healings have been documented. What of those cures that have been excluded by the minimalist criteria in place? The exclusion of medically explicable cures is a time-honored approach, employed in the Middle Ages, when it did not limit as many claims.²³¹ But in this era, it is difficult for doctors to call any healing medically inexplicable, since any given cure might have a potential secular explanation, whether or not that is the most plausible explanation for a given case. One English Catholic defender of miracles in 1914 complained that critics reckoned miracles at Lourdes impossible, and when evidence that such cures had occurred proved overwhelming, "it is given a big long name and called natural."²³² Moreover, most people who might travel to Lourdes today could first seek medical treatment elsewhere, thereby usually removing them from the medical committee's potential list of "miracles."²³³ Proclaimed cures have thus declined as medical standards have risen.²³⁴ This trend might reflect not only more rigorous standards at Lourdes but also improved health in society; the extreme conditions often cured at Lourdes in the past, such as tuberculosis, are also much rarer than they once were.²³⁵

Whether one feels free to count the religious context at Lourdes affects one's interpretation of the results. One scholar skeptical of supernatural approaches readily grants that the healings occur. He affirms that "some utterly extraordinary cures" have occurred there,²³⁶ noting that enemies of the Catholic Church and leading medical scientists like Alexis Carrel have been persuaded by the data.²³⁷ He concedes that some cases cannot even be explained psychosomatically;²³⁸ among examples, he lists "the instant healing of a terribly disfigured face, and the instantaneous healing of a club foot on a two and one half year old child," shown by non-Catholics to be permanent. Further, he cites a news article about a three-year-old with terminal cancer and the bones being eaten away; after the healing, even "the bones in her skull grew back. Her doctor, a Protestant, said that 'miracle' would not be too strong a word to use."²³⁹

Yet this same scholar notes that scientists can reject the supernatural interpretation at Lourdes by suggesting that some sort of naturalistic interpretation would

231. See Lugt, "Incubus," 175–76.

232. Hillaire Belloc, in Mullin, *Miracles*, 219 (citing Chesterton, *Miracles*, 4, 11). Cf. the complaint of Larmer, "Explanations," 9: simply "calling an event a nonrepeatable counterinstance does not really explain its occurrence," and by labeling an event such an antisupernaturalist is merely rejecting "the theist's explanation," not providing an alternative explanation. Larmer counts multiple healings through a healer against calling them "nonrepeatable" (9–10), though miracles, like human actions, are not repeatable (cf. discussion in, e.g., Kellenberger, "Miracles," 149) or predictable in the sense expected in physics. Others might call them "a unique series of non-repeatable events" (Levine, *Problem*, 37, noting that Hume's epistemology would not accommodate these).

233. Hirschberg and Barasch, *Recovery*, 108; Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 218–19.

234. Cranston, *Miracle*, 115.

235. *Ibid.*, 116.

236. Diamond, "Miracles," 311.

237. *Ibid.*, 312; he notes on 313 that scientists "unanimously" concur that these healings take place there.

238. *Ibid.*, 312.

239. *Ibid.*, citing *Newsweek*, Aug. 9, 1971. For the cures of children at Lourdes, see Cranston, *Miracle*, 227–46.

arise if only we had sufficient evidence. The collocation of natural factors in this case might occur together only one in ten million times, he argues, but, because he assumes the miraculous impossible, must have occurred here.²⁴⁰ Scientists need autonomy to do their work, he insists, not having to wait to see if theologians will pronounce some event miraculous.²⁴¹ Some theologians might wish to retort that they need some autonomy to evaluate miracles without the theological premise of their entire discipline being ruled out by thinkers committed to antisupernaturalist assumptions. The scholar's antisupernatural assumptions in this case have made a fair evaluation of the data impossible.

Rigorous Standards, Hostile Assumptions

Rigorous standards can reflect integrity, but to rule out any evidence that does not meet these standards risks giving too much ground to an antisupernaturalist worldview whose advocates generally assume rather than argue their case (see chs. 5–6). While allowing for a fairly certain critical minimum, such standards should not be used negatively, to argue that miracle claims not meeting these criteria are inauthentic. Exceptionally rigorous criteria may seek to meet an unreasonable standard required by skeptics who will accept very little evidence that could be construed as contrary to their case. Skeptics on the committee at Lourdes may reject even a particularly dramatic cure as “inexplicable” no matter how many tests are run, on the principle that one must always come up with a natural explanation, which can be produced sooner or later.²⁴²

One sociologist thus critiques the admitted methodology of a medical investigator who denies faith healing. If the person claiming healing has had any medical treatment (hence been deemed incurable before the healing), the investigator attributed the healing to this medical treatment no matter how unusual the recovery was. By contrast, if the person did not have medical treatment, the investigator dismissed the cure as not being properly diagnosed. In other words, the investigation demonstrated nothing except its own starting assumptions that had screened out the possibility of miraculous cures in advance.²⁴³

With reference to Lourdes, Francis MacNutt, a PhD in theology and a leader who has been influential in the healing ministry in the Roman Catholic Church,²⁴⁴ notes,

240. Diamond, “Miracles,” 314–15, 323.

241. *Ibid.*, 321.

242. Laurentin, *Miracles*, 91. He critiques the excessive rigor in the process at Lourdes with reasonable examples (*ibid.*, 35, 90–91).

243. Poloma, *Assemblies*, 57–58. It is because of such clearly hostile studies that some of those involved in divine healing today are unwilling to cooperate with researchers (since those who cooperate can be misrepresented) or even see value in collecting medical documentation. Some investigators now urge practitioners of healing not to cooperate with research, since the very mind-set that strips cures of divine involvement is antithetical to the faith necessary to produce them (cf. Laurentin, *Miracles*, 95).

244. Csordas, *Language*, 32, describes him as “the first and most widely known among American Catholic Charismatic healers”; see also MacNutt's influence in Csordas, *Self*, 25, 36, 42, 230–31. For his PhD in theology, see MacNutt, *Healing*, 24.

"The doctors themselves were frustrated. Although they could see consistent evidence of God's healing power, most of these cures could not be proven as absolutely beyond the natural curative power of nature."²⁴⁵ Some sorts of healings I have noted also appear at times as medical anomalies.²⁴⁶ MacNutt notes that, by the standards of proof some require, proof is hard to come by: "Once, when I described to a group of doctors how I prayed and a tumor disappeared within an hour, one doctor responded that I couldn't prove that the prayer was what *caused* the tumor to go down. All I could legitimately claim was that I prayed and *after* that the tumor disappeared."

MacNutt admits that this objection is technically true;²⁴⁷ it fits the narrow epistemology used in some settings (though not in much of ordinary life). Nevertheless, MacNutt contends that this pattern occurs frequently enough when he prays to invite the belief that more is at work than mere coincidence.²⁴⁸ As others have observed, the clustering of a significant number of occurrences around a particular factor logically reduces the likelihood of mere "coincidence."²⁴⁹ To the degree that a particular person's²⁵⁰ prayers (given a sufficient sample size) increases the likelihood of unusual recovery in a statistically significant way, the probability should to that degree favor a connection between that person's prayers (or something associated with them) and the outcome rather than favor mere coincidence—unless one's worldview excludes the former possibility. Naturally, some particularly dramatic miracles invite that consideration no matter how rare they may be.²⁵¹

Yet even two external investigators who use the stringent criterion mentioned above (admitting as a demonstrable miracle only a claim that lacks a possible natural explanation) happened upon two extraordinary cases that they felt met it. A priest in a healing service told a man to walk; the man had been wheelchair-bound for

245. MacNutt, *Power*, 66.

246. Some of the recorded anomalies not specifically attributed to prayer may nevertheless occur in response to prayer; this connection is not normally noted in medical records.

247. MacNutt, *Power*, 66–67. For a defense of a miraculous interpretation of tumors disappearing when other explanations are less plausible, see Young, "Petitioning," 197.

248. MacNutt, *Power*, 79; at Lourdes, see Cranston, *Miracle*, 259. Similarly, Kraft, *Power*, 126–27, claims to have witnessed "hundreds of physical healings," though most were minor (he includes the healing of a neck injury, 78–79; a "serious 30-year back problem," 127; an ankle injury, 148).

249. See, e.g., Ashe, *Miracles*, 163–64, 185, though he attributes these patterns to "subconscious" knowledge and the realm of the mind (167, 190). While concurring with Ashe's principle regarding coincidence, I am less convinced by his particular example of Nostradamus, given ambiguities. In philosophy of science, cf. the frequent understanding that the whole is greater than the parts, with a higher level of complexity (Davies, "Preface," x).

250. I specify "a particular person" because it would be difficult to assume, including from biblical perspectives, that everyone shares equally a special sensitivity for this kind of prayer. That individuals are simply religious would not by itself constitute a certain basis for this sensitivity. Nevertheless, the most consistent settings for dramatic healing reports seem to be new evangelism contexts, which are not in statistically testable settings (bringing us back to the relevance of the case study approach for this kind of research). Many of those I interviewed concerning healings acknowledged God's sovereignty and recognized that healings were not disbursed according to merit.

251. Cf. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 61, arguing that paranormal healings were too common in Kuhlman's meetings to be attributed to mere chance. Avoiding theological explanations, Spraggett calls it simply, "anti-chance" (62).

twenty years, and his muscles and nerves could not sustain him walking. Yet he walked—though his astonished doctor found that his muscles and nerves still should be incapable of doing so—for three months until his muscles and nerves also were restored.²⁵² Likewise, one healing of a four-year-old attributed to Mother Seton was not written up in a medical journal because the hematologist said (in 1993) that he was afraid to do so.²⁵³ The particular investigators to whom I refer here do not seem to offer these reports from the standpoint of traditional religious conviction: they allow that perhaps psychological factors were at work;²⁵⁴ perhaps God acted, they opine, but perhaps “God” is simply some sort of “extrabiological energy.”²⁵⁵

Prejudice in the Academy?

Assumptions help shape how we read evidence as well as what evidence we acknowledge. Hostility toward recognizing unusual healings and even toward respecting supernatural interpretations as a legitimate academic perspective is less intense than it once was but still exists in some quarters. Many have complained about such prejudices, but bias and academic politics have a long history in no wise limited to this issue. Philosophic assumptions have frequently shaped even scientific paradigms. It has therefore always been important (though not always popular) for some observers to call to the academy’s attention the uneven criteria we sometimes employ in evaluating paradigms.

Prejudice against Religion and Meteorites

I have noted that a hematologist admitted that he feared to write about a religiously connected healing in a medical journal.²⁵⁶ By now the reader should be aware that while faith is often assumed to be a controlling bias,²⁵⁷ academic skepticism can also be a controlling and even coercive bias. This bias can include hostility toward faith perspectives, a demand for conformity with dominant academic beliefs,²⁵⁸ and the risk of “losing prestigious appointments”;²⁵⁹ it has also been described as “the anti-tenure variable.”²⁶⁰

252. Hirschberg and Barasch, *Recovery*, 113–15. At Lourdes the functionality of an organ the functionality of which is medically impossible, such as seeing through eyes the optic nerves of which remain atrophied, appears as a special miracle (Cranston, *Miracle*, 136).

253. Hirschberg and Barasch, *Recovery*, 137.

254. *Ibid.*, 138 (but would this fit the four-year-old?).

255. *Ibid.*, 144.

256. *Ibid.*, 137.

257. Against treating faith as a bias that must be bracketed out (in contrast to biases such as anti-faith), see, e.g., Padgett, “Advice.”

258. See nuanced discussion in Marsden, *Outrageous Idea*, 3–7, 13–24.

259. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 58. For one example, see the physician (who later won a Nobel Prize elsewhere) in Nichols, “Miracles,” 707; Cranston, *Miracle*, 35 (who also notes another medical student whose thesis was rejected because it studied cures at Lourdes).

260. David Larson, cited in Matthews, Larson, and Barry, *Bibliography*, ii; also see Sherrill and Larson, “Anti-Tenure Factor.” A naturalistic philosopher points out that scientific journals, as opposed to philosophic ones, will not accept articles arguing from theistic premises (Smith, “Metaphilosophy,” 197).

A recent sociological study concludes that most religious scientists remain silent about their faith, fearing disdain from peers and discrimination in their career.²⁶¹ Some whose convictions were known mentioned specific occasions of discrimination.²⁶² Those dissociating faith from science feel less pressure to “closet” their convictions,²⁶³ even at times to the extent of warning that any students who might wish to express religious opinions should drop the class.²⁶⁴ In one study, only a third of professors in the natural sciences professed belief in God (in contrast to perhaps 95 percent of the general population).²⁶⁵ More than one-third of science professors at elite universities envisioned no “positive role for religious people, institutions, and ideas on their campuses.”²⁶⁶ Despite the religious roots of many Western universities and divinity schools at their own universities, some professors even maintain that the existence of divinity schools is dangerous, tantamount to endorsing religion and undermining science.²⁶⁷ While such avidly antireligious voices in elite research universities account for only 5 percent of the interviewees in the research study, they are a very vocal minority.²⁶⁸

Some scholars warn that typical academic discourse, far from being neutral, represents its own subculture “of disbelief,”²⁶⁹ and sociologist Andrew Greeley, who had also attended a pre-Vatican II seminary, complains that “the academy had its own dogmas at least as rigid” as in that seminary with respect to paranormal claims.²⁷⁰ Some scholars complain that belief in miracles has been marginalized

261. Ecklund, *Science*, 43–45; cf. religious scientists’ concerns about marginalization on 73; experience or perceptions of discrimination, 116–22; closeted faith, on 76, 79, 100–102; one hostile scientist’s active suppression of religious voices on 78. Some criticize expressly religious schools for “considering religion in hiring decisions,” yet feared allowing known religious individuals to obtain jobs in their own department (ibid., 95).

262. Ibid., 117. Although the numbers were only 8 percent in the natural sciences and 12 percent in the social sciences, these percentages account for a significant percentage of those whose religious convictions are known (only 9 percent of scientists profess no doubt about God’s existence; see ibid., 16).

263. Cf. ibid., 79–80, 83–84.

264. Ibid., 84 (noting the professor’s open disdain even for sociologists of religion who simply research people’s beliefs); cf. ibid., 154.

265. Llewellyn, “Events,” 241. For scientists in general, surveys published in *Nature* have suggested that roughly 40 percent affirm a personal, prayer-answering God, but the proportion is significantly lower among scientists in elite universities; see Brooke, “Secularized,” 231, following especially Larson and Witham, “Keeping”; Larson and Witham, “Reject.”

266. Ecklund, *Science*, 91; cf. also some examples in ibid., 94–95. Conversely, 42 percent allowed for a positive role (often “supporting the private expression of religion”; ibid., 110).

267. Ibid., 97. Some others felt that such schools could exist, but “not to be given the same legitimacy or resources as science departments” (104). That concern, at least, is unfounded; in view of funding sources, there seems little danger of resource equity.

268. Ibid., 105–6.

269. McClenon, *Events*, 20. Statistically, skepticism about the paranormal increases with status in the scientific community, making deviance problematic there (xii), but in the United States, scientific training does not decrease the incidence of anomaly reports, and skepticism among elite scientists and academics does not dominate science undergraduates (35).

270. Greeley, *Sociology*, 5; cf. the new discussion in Yancey, *Scholarship* (59, 64, 66, 98–101, 116–19, 142, 153–54, 173). A nonpracticing Jewish scientist urged more openness to religious voices in academia, complaining, “the only diversity they [academics] don’t like is intellectual diversity” (Ecklund, *Science*, 124).

as virtually “heretical” in some academic circles.²⁷¹ A psychologist notes that peer review normally precludes the publication of events without natural explanations or that are not replicable, so that miracles almost by definition are anomalies excluded from appearing in scientific publications.²⁷² When their very possibility is in turn excluded in the name of science, because of self-restrictions in scientific epistemology, we are back to Hume’s circular exclusion of miracles by definition. One doctor who recounts miracles that have occurred in his practice also notes that the prejudice against miracle reports is so strong that even doctors who have seen miracles are often reluctant to risk their reputation to verify them. To include mention of prayer in the notes, which go to referral doctors and can be used by malpractice lawyers, carries serious risks in some places.²⁷³ More generally, beyond theistic premises, anthropologists have sometimes feared to publish “anomalous experiences” from their field work for fear of stigmatization.²⁷⁴

Less coercively, most of us in the academy (including myself) have been trained to work only with naturalistic methods. This training makes some sense in terms of dialogue on areas of common ground with our peers, yet it still predisposes us against attending to data that do not fit this paradigm or to viewing attempts to do so as of questionable academic value.²⁷⁵ One doctor complains that historians fail to ask the obvious question that doctors would ask of miracle accounts: “Were these patients healed as described or not?” He attributes this reticence to ask the obvious question to fear of “academic suicide.”²⁷⁶

Keep in mind that the bias that I describe here is not that found in religious ministries openly committed to the premise of supernatural healing but rather in academic circles that publicly pride themselves on objectivity and a supposed antithesis to religiously conditioned biases. Philosopher Robert Larmer recounted to me an occasion when he was dialoguing with another professor, who considered belief in miracles nothing more than a “two-thousand year-old superstition” incompatible with science. When Professor Larmer pointed out that there are

271. Gregory, “Secular Bias,” 138. Basil Mitchell, a long-time professor at Oxford, notes the “prevailing orthodoxy” against faith and danger to one’s academic reputation (Clark, *Philosophers*, 40–41); I recall during my doctoral work one of my favorite religion professors insisting that any professor who publicly acknowledged belief in God should be fired (a view happily not promulgated by the department more generally, which tolerated more diversity).

272. Llewellyn, “Events,” 253; cf. also Gorsuch, “Limits,” 282. Ellens, “Conclusion,” 301–2, suggests that scientific journals should in fact publish, hence collect, reports of paranormal experience, so they can be documented and examined together; he notes a small number of journals studying these anomalies.

273. Chauncey Crandall, phone interview, May 30, 2010; cf. idem, personal correspondence, Oct. 8, 2010.

274. McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 50 (citing Salamone, “Bori,” 15). Turner, “Advances,” 37, notes that even as late as the 1970s, her husband, she, and other anthropologists felt the pressure to remain “mainstream” in print (i.e., avoiding paranormal claims) for the sake of job security. At the time, challenging the settled theories of Durkheim regarding religion was risky (Turner, “Advances,” 39–40).

275. As one open-minded agnostic scientist honestly puts it, “As a result of my scientific studies, I have a deeply rooted belief in the philosophies of reductionism and materialism—the view that the whole is equal to the sum of the parts—even with respect to questions relating to life and mind” (Jastrow, “Forces,” 48).

276. Gardner, “Miracles,” 1928.

reports of miracles occurring today that can be subject to investigation, his detractor warned that it would waste scientists' time to check out such claims. Which of the two was really functioning on "blind faith"?²⁷⁷

Lest anyone (presumably outside the academy itself) suppose that scholarly consensus always follows data and proves impervious to bias, we can recall the history that I have already noted (ch. 6) concerning academic resistance to new scientific paradigms. Historically, many Enlightenment advances defined themselves over against popular superstition, which was often intertwined with popular religion. This background to the radical Enlightenment has unfortunately bequeathed a legacy of suspicion against claims more generally that could be associated with religion, regardless of other possible ways of reading the evidence.

What Michael Polanyi has observed about science is relevant to scholarship more generally. Science normally initially ignores claims that go against established consensus, he notes, thereby screening out of consideration a mass of claims or data likely to prove false or irrelevant. The problematic by-product of this necessary caution, however, is "the risk of occasionally disregarding thereby true evidence which conflicts (or seems to conflict) with the current teachings of science."²⁷⁸ As noted earlier, paradigm shifts normally meet initial resistance.²⁷⁹

Thus, for example, whereas today scientists study the natural effects of hypnosis, early investigators were barred from medical and scientific circles because of the technique's public associations with Mesmer and his followers.²⁸⁰ More dramatically, radical Enlightenment scientists reacted against popular supernaturalist interpretations of meteorites by denying the existence of meteorites altogether. Polanyi observes, "During the eighteenth century the French Academy of Science stubbornly denied the evidence for the fall of meteorites, which seemed massively obvious to everybody else. Their opposition to the superstitious beliefs which a popular tradition attached to such heavenly intervention blinded them to the facts in question."²⁸¹ Because Paris set the intellectual trends of the day, museums in at least five other European countries discarded their meteorites.²⁸² One need

277. Robert Larmer, personal correspondence, Aug. 5, 2009.

278. Polanyi, *Knowledge*, 138.

279. E.g., Kuhn, *Structure*, 64–65, 107, 133, 169.

280. McClenon, *Events*, 188–89; Walsh, *Shamanism*, 179–80. Mesmer witnessed the ministry of Father Gassner but attributed the cures to animal magnetism, by which he sought to produce his own cures (Major, *Faiths*, 180–88).

281. Polanyi, *Knowledge*, 138; noted again on 274; see also McClenon, *Events*, 2. On the wide variety of natural phenomena often construed as portents in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century popular sources, see Daston, "Facts," 102–3, 106; but theological agendas increasingly drove the rise of more natural interpretations for unexplained phenomena (Daston, "Facts," 107).

282. Polanyi, *Knowledge*, 138n2. This observation is not meant to deny that museums, like anyone else, are sometimes taken in by fraud; cf. Toby Sterling, "'Moon Rock' in Dutch Museum Is Just Petrified Wood," Associated Press, Aug. 27, 2009, accessed at http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090827/ap_on_re_eu/eu_netherlands_not_moon_rock; accessed Aug. 27, 2009. Cf. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 54, regarding Lavoisier; on 53–55, he also notes how other published scientific statements of certainty—such as the impossibility of blood circulation, chloroform, air flight, and space travel—were ultimately and sometimes quickly overturned by facts conveniently ignored by existing theories. One may also compare the

not attach theological significance to meteorites to note that a bias against that interpretation functioned as a prejudice that disregarded facts. Would such a bias necessarily disappear in cases where facts might more readily support a supernatural interpretation than they did in the case of meteorites?

Philosophic Assumptions behind Scientific Paradigms

While surveys reveal that even most “elite” scientists are not antireligious (contrary to misinformed stereotypes), the proportion of those holding some particular religious views differs starkly from the general population.²⁸³ Some members of the more hostile minority affirm a priori that no “supernatural” explanation should even be discussed at a university.²⁸⁴ Scientists associated with top-ranked research universities are only about one-seventh as likely to strongly believe in God as the general U.S. population is.²⁸⁵ Yet the *reasons* for those views usually have little to do with science itself, and sometimes lack an intellectual basis.²⁸⁶ Sometimes they even reflect a stereotyping of religion based on its worst examples, expressing a form of “religious illiteracy.”²⁸⁷ Many scientifically inclined persons who rule out supernatural explanations a priori may do so not because the data in their specialties demand this approach but because their initial plausibility structures reflect philosophic assumptions borrowed from outside their discipline.²⁸⁸ (Purely theological writers pontificating on matters of science naturally run the same risk.)

seventeenth-century religious belief in spirit possession with the alternative contemporary “scientific” belief in “black humors,” which proved unverifiable (Azouvi, “Rationalité”).

283. E.g., Catholics compose 27 percent of the U.S. population, but only 9 percent (one-third that figure) among elite scientists; evangelical Protestants, 28 percent and 2 percent, respectively; and, most strikingly, black Protestants, 8 percent and 0.2 percent, respectively; they are about three times more likely to be religiously unaffiliated (Ecklund, *Science*, 15, 33, 152). Still, about a fifth of elite scientists attend religious services (often mainline Protestant) regularly (*ibid.*, 151), and 39 percent claim that their religion or spirituality influences their interpersonal behavior (*ibid.*, 76).

284. Ecklund, *Science*, 96.

285. See *ibid.*, 16. More generally, 36 percent of elite scientists believe in God (*ibid.*, 35), compared to 94 percent of the general U.S. population (*ibid.*, 36); that is, others are two or three times more likely to believe in God. Nevertheless, over 20 percent of these scientists who do not view themselves as religious view themselves as “spiritual” (*ibid.*, 51), and the rising, younger generation of scientists tends to be more religious than their seniors (*ibid.*, 48).

286. *Ibid.*, 17, 151. One chemist, a religious believer, complained that some of his colleagues react against religion in an “anti-intellectual” manner (120). Examples of reasons for religious skepticism were the belief that religion let them down (20–21) and bad experiences with religion (21–22). For one extreme example: one scientist friend, one of the most brilliant people I have ever met, confided in me (Aug. 7, 1988) that he was an agnostic (at that time) because he could not believe in a god who would have let his girlfriend break up with him.

287. Ecklund, *Science*, 154 (for misconceptions, see 152–55).

288. See our discussion of the earlier influence of philosophy of religion in chs. 5 and 6. Ecklund, *Science*, 49, applies to the relationship between science and religion the sociological observation that groups with minimal contact tend to harbor greater prejudices. From a sociological standpoint, some scientists’ critiques of religion serve a boundary function of exalting science at other disciplines’ expense (Wuthnow, “Contradictions,” 163–64).

Philosophic approaches drove many paradigm shifts in science, both positively and negatively.²⁸⁹ Isaac Newton, for example, argued that matter was inert partly for theological reasons, to underline the distinction between creature and Creator.²⁹⁰ One may illustrate the matter more extensively from Johannes Kepler, the heliocentric astronomer who discovered the elliptical paths of planets and founded the modern approach to optics. Early in his career, Kepler was a theological student who found a job teaching mathematics.²⁹¹ Like Galileo, he believed that science and the Bible could be harmonized without damage to either, partly by not taking every biblical passage literally.²⁹²

Kepler conceived some of his ideas by adopting alternative ancient philosophic premises that challenged current philosophic paradigms. Though not directly relevant to his famous discoveries, Kepler was obsessed “with the harmony of the [heavenly] spheres and the five Pythagorean solids.”²⁹³ His original reasons for preferring Copernicus’s barely known heliocentric theory were “metaphysical,” based on an analogy to the Trinity in the heavens, which served his understanding of how the “heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps 19:1).²⁹⁴ Following ancient ideologies, Kepler sought to calculate the “music” of the “heavenly spheres”²⁹⁵ and

289. On modern science’s metaphysical foundations, see, e.g., Burtt, *Foundations*.

290. Murphy, “Apologetics,” 116. He also managed to subsume cosmic history within Archbishop James Ussher’s famous chronology, with creation in 4004 B.C.E. (Frankenberry, *Faith*, 103–4), a view we regard as astonishing today.

291. Koestler, “Kepler,” 49. For Kepler, “perfect knowledge is always mathematical” (Burtt, *Foundations*, 67), though he insisted that the observable world would verify correct mathematical constructs (Burtt, *Foundations*, 71). His later conflict with the Lutheran Church involved the Lord’s Supper, not science.

292. Frankenberry, *Faith*, 38; for some of his explanations, see Kepler, *Astronomy*, 59–66, 385–86 (reproduced in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 47–53). Francis Bacon assigned faith and science to distinct yet valid epistemic spheres, science dealing with empirical data and religion appealing “to revelation and final causes”; nature could not, however, reveal God’s character (ibid., 61). Bacon spoke of “our Saviour Christ” and the Trinity (ibid., 64, 66, citing Bacon, *Advancement*, 112–13). Pascal was more emphatically Christocentric (Frankenberry, *Faith*, 80), valuing experience with God over science for human existence (material from *Pensées* in ibid., 100–101).

293. Koestler, “Kepler,” 57; see also Frankenberry, *Faith*, 36–37. Copernicus’s approach appealed to Pythagorean and Platonic principles as an alternative to Aristotelianism (Burtt, *Foundations*, 52–56). Copernicus was a Catholic Church canon (albeit not a priest) suspected of sympathy with Lutheranism (see Repcheck, *Secret*, 68–69, 106–7, 129–31, 163–68; Vanessa Gera, “Astronomer Copernicus reburied as hero,” at http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100522/ap_on_re_eu/eu_poland_copernicus_reburied; accessed May 22, 2010). He cited Scripture and, contrary to popular distortions, was supported by some Protestant church leaders and scholars (Gingerich, “Copernicus,” adapted from the then-forthcoming Gingerich, *Book*). Copernicus also drew on prior heliocentric thought (Hart, *Delusions*, 60–62). Copernicus and those who embraced his views found no contradiction with their faith (Danielson, “Demoted”), including Kepler (Danielson, “Demoted,” 55–56). Kepler was a Lutheran who preferred Calvin’s approach to the Lord’s Supper yet rejected predestination (Frankenberry, *Faith*, 38); he and Galileo both appealed to Plato as a source (Efron, “Christianity,” 83), as did the later homology of Richard Owen, on which Darwin drew, and from which Owen inferred a form of theistic evolution (Rupke, “Theory,” 140).

294. Koestler, “Kepler,” 50; Gingerich, “Scientist,” 28; Burtt, *Foundations*, 60–61; Frankenberry, *Faith*, 35–36.

295. Burtt, *Foundations*, 63; Frankenberry, *Faith*, 34–35 (cf. 56–57, citing Kepler, *Harmony*, 146–47). Pythagoras reportedly calculated planetary distances in terms of music (Pliny *Nat.* 2.20.84); he allegedly meditated on the harmony of the heavenly spheres (Iamblichus *V.P.* 15.65–66). For the rhythm or music

viewed as one of his crowning achievements his geometric calculations of planetary distances, which have proved faulty.²⁹⁶ His view that mathematics could elucidate the harmony of nature, in accordance with divine design, rests on ancient Greek philosophy.²⁹⁷ He also accepted the widespread notion of his day, astonishing to most readers today, that astrology offered some value.²⁹⁸

Yet despite the faulty premises of much of his sky physics, it led him to reject the widely accepted philosophic necessity of motion in circles, hence cosmic epicycles²⁹⁹ (a view linked with incorrect traditional views of planets' movements). It also led him to articulate "the three correct laws of planetary motion."³⁰⁰ By contrast, while he came up with the theory of universal gravitation, his ideology led him, like Galileo and Descartes, to reject this theory. It did not serve his system, and gravity as a mysterious force seemed to be a return to medieval mysticism.³⁰¹ That error could lead Kepler to reject truth is not surprising, but how did erroneous grounds lead him to some true conclusions? Rather than simply accepting consensus, Kepler followed intuitions, some accurate and some inaccurate, and allowed empirical facts to adjust his insights.³⁰²

Kepler's explorations illustrate Polanyi's insight about balancing competing tensions. "Unfettered intuitive speculation would lead to extravagant wishful conclusions; while rigorous fulfilment of any set of critical rules would completely paralyse discovery." Thus the scientist's conscience must arbitrate between the two.³⁰³ Scholarship should be not reproached for appropriate caution, but it must also be open to a paradigm shift if sufficient neglected evidence is brought to scholars' attention. Contrary to what many people suppose, even the most empirically

of heavenly spheres, see, e.g., Cicero *Pub.* 6.18.18–19; Philo *Creation* 70; Lucian *Dance* 8; Maximus of Tyre 37.5 (citing Pythagoras); Menander Rhetor 2.17, 442.28–443.2; cf. Murray, *Stages*, 175. The praise of heavenly bodies in 1 *En.* 41:7 might but need not allude to this concept. Aristotle knew the Pythagorean view (*Heavens* 2.9, 290b.12–29) and argued against it (2.9, 290b.30–291a.26).

296. Burt, *Foundations*, 62.

297. *Ibid.*, 69. Similarly, Galileo, ignoring Kepler on planets' elliptical orbits, maintained the mathematically unworkable circular orbits of Copernicus (Hart, *Delusions*, 66). Meanwhile, Copernicus had maintained them on the ancient grounds that whatever was perfect was circular (62)—what thinkers today might consider circular reasoning.

298. Burt, *Foundations*, 69n45, citing here especially Kepler's *De Fundamentis Astrologiae Certioribus* (*Opera* 1.417ff.).

299. Koestler, "Kepler," 55.

300. *Ibid.*, 54.

301. *Ibid.*, 52–54, 57; cf. Frankenberry, *Faith*, 37.

302. Koestler, "Kepler," 56. For Kepler, error chanced on truth only rarely (McMullin, "Virtues," 499).

303. Polanyi, *Science*, 41. Licona, *Resurrection*, 104, cites MIT scientists who suggest that much exploration in science (like much in the humanities) follows the investigator's instincts. Polkinghorne, *Reality*, 95, notes that experience (e.g., the quantum world) sometimes exceeds expectations of coherence with conventional theories. Montgomery, "Science," 150–52, complains about a system that forces all data to fit a naturalistic paradigm. Subordinating all particulars to the general, he argues, precludes discovery, and explains why it took science an unnecessary extra half century to discover xenon tetrafluoride and other compounds with inert gases; generalizations based on the periodic table seemed to preclude it. By definition miracles involve particularities hence cannot be dismissed by appealing to general patterns (cf. Duffin, *Miracles*, 187).

mindful disciplines must be open to revising hypotheses.³⁰⁴ I believe that the data available today invite a challenge to Hume's antisupernaturalism; they certainly challenge a major assumption on which Hume builds his case, namely, the denial of credible eyewitnesses.

Academic politics has long played a role in the acceptability of views. Galileo suffered at the hands of fellow academics, in that case with much church backing;³⁰⁵ others suffer from it today, often with much secular backing. Some seventeenth-century scientists gained cultural prestige for scientific epistemology by demonstrating its utility for religion (hence inadvertently "modernizing" religion), but the social power situation has now reversed, with scientific epistemology not surprisingly holding greater cultural prestige.³⁰⁶ Cultural prestige helps shape the acceptability of views in circles that share those cultural predilections.

Not only philosophic shifts but also academic politics have created the common perception of hostility between science and faith. Yet it was the politics of knowledge, rather than an incompatibility between science and faith for many ordinary scientists and believers, that drove the dichotomy between science and faith.³⁰⁷ The history of that dichotomy has been severely distorted in antireligious polemic.³⁰⁸ Indeed, the myth of opposition between religion and science was cre-

304. Ecklund, *Science*, 108, cites physicist Sylvester James Gates Jr., director of String and Particle Theory at the University of Maryland, as noting that scientists can revise their beliefs in light of new evidence; "Science is about measuring things. It is not about truth, but it is about reducing the falsity of our beliefs"; Polkinghorne, *Reality*, 3. Similarly, Stephen Jay Gould recognized intuition and cultural shaping as factors in science and why its views change (*Mismeasure*, 21–23, as cited in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 259).

305. Galileo and his supporters were no less men of the church than their accusers were (cf. my 141n202; Brooke, *Science*, 78–79); academic politics drove much of the debate (see, e.g., Hart, *Delusions*, 62–66; Brooke, *Science*, 37; Hummel, *Connection*). Galileo insisted that it was Scripture's interpreters in the church hierarchy, and not Scripture itself, that erred (Frankenberry, *Faith*, 4, 10, quoting him). His real nemesis was the dominant Aristotelianism (*ibid.*, 8), and he expressly borrowed Augustine's approach to accommodation to articulate and defend his astronomical views as compatible with Scripture (see Lee, "Galileo"; for Augustine's reading of Genesis in light of the science of his era, see Lindberg, "Rise," 18). For commonalities between Galileo and Jesuit thinkers, see, e.g., Brooke, "Science," 8. Frankenberry, *Faith*, 6, contends that the heliocentrism Galileo advocated "was gaining the day within the Catholic hierarchy," but Galileo's overzealous pronouncement on Scripture interpretation created a political reaction. Even the Inquisition torturing or jailing Galileo was a rationalist myth (see Finocchiaro, "Galileo"; sources in Ecklund, *Science*, 208n1), though he did endure house arrest (Frankenberry, *Faith*, 6). Meanwhile, painting all religion with the brush of the Inquisition is somewhat analogous (though not in degree) to painting science with the brush of Nazi doctors like Josef Mengele; others (like Wuthnow, "Contradictions," 166) cite the Tuskegee experiment on syphilis-infected African-American men. (Despite the negative legacy of the Inquisition, cf. comments qualifying popular misconceptions in Hart, *Delusions*, 80–86, following Kamen, *Inquisition*, 28–54, 73.) Similarly, many today underline the atheistic ideologies of Hitler and Stalin (e.g., Freeman Dyson's 2000 Templeton Speech [in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 379–80]; Polkinghorne, *Physics*, 14), but one can hardly fault all atheists for their atrocities.

306. Harrison, "Miracles," 510.

307. See Poewe, "Rethinking," 253–54.

308. Cf., e.g., observations in Brooke, "Science," 19; *idem*, *Reconstructing Nature*; Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 24–29, 64–65; Welch, "Myths," 32–33, 35, 37; Wildman, "Quest," 48–49; Lindberg and Numbers, *Essays*; Numbers, "Aggressors"; *idem*, *Galileo*; Livingstone, Hart, and Noll, *Perspective*; Livingstone, *Defenders*. Note especially biologist Asa Gray, Darwin's contemporary defender in the United States and

ated by some radical French Enlightenment thinkers in the eighteenth century to combat the conservative French Catholic Church, but it thoroughly misrepresents the history of science.³⁰⁹ Two propagandistic books in the late nineteenth century, no longer accepted as accurate accounts, popularized the myth for Anglophone readers.³¹⁰ The arguments between many theologians and many scientists in some periods have been no greater than arguments among disciplines within the natural sciences themselves.³¹¹ What conflicts existed long ago are minimal today;³¹² indeed, whatever their personal faith, only about 15 percent of elite scientists today accept the conflict paradigm.³¹³ In view of such factors, one may lament that some

a committed evangelical; see Livingstone, *Defenders*, xi, 49, 60–64, 72–73, 76–77, 113, 171; Numbers, “Aggressors,” 28–29. Many evangelicals of Darwin’s era (including Gray, Charles Hodge, and B. B. Warfield) viewed evolution as the clearest evidence of design; it was only the attribution of such patterns to pure chance to which they objected (e.g., Livingstone, *Defenders*, 49, 63–64, 95, 104–5, 116, 135–38; cf. Polkinghorne, *Reality*, 39). Darwin himself originally marketed his theory as reflecting divine laws (Moore, “Darwin’s Faith,” 146); his *Origin of Species* (1859) employed “creation and its cognates over one hundred times,” opposing “miraculous creation” but affirming a theistic argument “for creation by law” (147). He lost his faith for personal theological reasons, not over evolution per se (146–48), but “never published a word directly against Christianity or belief in God” (151). The alleged witness of his deathbed conversion story is questionable, but she included personal details regarding Darwin’s home life difficult for her to have known (148–49).

309. See Lindberg, *Beginnings*; concisely, idem, “Adversaries” (here esp. 44). On Rousseau and Voltaire and their different forms of deism, see concisely, e.g., Brown, *Philosophy*, 81–86 (on Voltaire, cf. also idem, *Thought*, 288–94; on Rousseau, 294–99; Burne, “Rousseau,” 145–47; on Voltaire’s racial hierarchies and anti-Semitism, see Herrick, *Mythologies*, 164); on the influence of English deists on such authors, see Loos, *Miracles*, 14. On the myth of opposition more recently, see also, e.g., Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 56, 141–42. Some see it as the dominant model (Wiebe, “Compatibility,” 169, though going on to note various alternative models). Approaches to the relationship between “science” and “religion” often reify both categories into abstractions, severing them from actual scientists and persons of faith (Frankenberry, *Faith*, vii).

310. Hart, *Delusions*, 56, noting that Draper and White felt free to invent evidence as needed. See Numbers, “Introduction,” 1–3, 6–7; idem, “Aggressors,” 31–33; Shank, “Suppressed,” 19; Cormack, “Flat,” 28–29; Park, “Dissection,” 43, 47–49; Shackelford, “Bruno,” 60–61; Principe, “Catholics,” 99–100; Schoepflin, “Anesthesia,” 123, 129–30; Livingstone, “Huxley,” 153–54; Brooke, *Science*, 34–36.

311. E.g., when in the nineteenth century physicists insisted (against geologists) that the earth was at most one hundred million years old, and physicists argued whether light consisted of particles or waves (Gerhart and Russell, “Mathematics,” 127). See further Numbers, “Aggressors,” 50.

312. So Woodward, *Miracles*, 22. One might except from this particular spheres of inquiry, particularly arguments raised by young-earth creationists, but most theistic academics (including myself) do not hold that view. Indeed, contrary to popular misperceptions based on a novelistic drama, even populist Democratic politician William Jennings Bryan, best known for his problematic response to evolution, did not hold that view (Larson, “Trial,” 182–84).

313. Ecklund, *Science*, 19. Fewer than 5 percent are “extremely hostile” (78, 150). Stephen Jay Gould, a respectful agnostic, doubted that science and religion needed to experience conflict (although he denied any overlap in their spheres of inquiry; Gould, *Rocks*, 4, and *Dinosaur*, 48, as cited in Frankenberry, *Faith*, 254, 262; see also comment in Numbers, “Aggressors,” 47–48). Although most scientists view fundamentalism (and evangelicalism, which they inaccurately identify with it) negatively, largely because of issues like young-earth creationism, most have a positive view of those seeking to reconcile science and religion (Ecklund, *Science*, 46–47, who also notes on 155 that evangelicalism itself is changing). Comparing the views of trained scientists with those of rank-and-file churchgoers might be like comparing biblical scholars with amateur scientists lacking graduate training in science. On average, religious leaders appear more approving of scientific endeavor than scientists of religion (Duffin, *Miracles*, 185).

earlier theologians bought into the Kantian dichotomy between objective reason and subjective faith³¹⁴ too easily.

Even apart from objections to defining away potential objective grounds for faith and treating God radically differently than less controversial objects of belief, many philosophers of science today recognize that even scientific inquiry is sometimes less than totally objective³¹⁵ and that theoretical models, necessary as they are in science, inevitably both structure data and ignore some data.³¹⁶ Although theories provide maps of data and correlations,³¹⁷ they structure them³¹⁸ and may be themselves semantically reframed in the light of new data.³¹⁹ These observations concerning the philosophy of science are also relevant to academic paradigms more generally. Even direct psychological experiments can be distorted by research bias, since researchers' framing of questions or nonverbal cues can inadvertently direct participants toward desired responses.³²⁰ The widespread assumption of antisupernaturalism has been allowed to shape academic readings of the data, but scholars have rarely publicly revisited that data with alternative models in mind. For example, two anthropologists observe that scientists who confine their study to "normal" phenomena reinforce traditional paradigms, but taking into account extensive "anomalous" or extranormal data not readily explained by these paradigms invites "scientific innovations."³²¹

Uneven Criteria

As I have attempted to illustrate (and will seek to illustrate concisely but more concretely in ch. 15), many scholars still explain away massive amounts of data based on Humean antisupernaturalism. This approach forces them to apply standards that are inconsistent (as well as hostile to the perspectives of most of the world's cultures). If one applied to the medical profession the criteria that most critics apply to supernatural claims—that is, discounting any cures or remissions that conceivably *could* occur without intervention—we might have few medical cures.³²² Such a test would of course be patently unfair; medical technology dramati-

314. Cf., e.g., Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 46–47, for summary; Brown, *Philosophy*, 94–97; McGowan, *Authenticity*, 53. The problem continues today; some speak of religion as "based on feeling" (e.g., d'Aubigne, "Force," 157, though going on to affirm some value in this; cf. Karle, "No Way," 181–82; perhaps Holley, "Existence").

315. Maxwell, "Theories," 31; Bird, "Turn," 76.

316. See Hesse, "Language," 72–73; Sankey, "Method," 249–50; cf. Worrall, "Change."

317. Hanson, "Theory," 273.

318. *Ibid.*, 237. Empiricism observes facts, but arrangement and interpretation are necessary for significance (Lonergan, *Insight*, 411–12; cf. Meyer, *Realism*, 11–12).

319. Hanson, "Theory," 233–34. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 108, warns that "all data are theory-laden" (emphasis his; cf. 125–27).

320. See Pekala and Cardena, "Issues," 56 (on "demand characteristics").

321. McClenon and Nooney, "Experiences," 57.

322. In one study, treatment by prayer and laying on of hands (which was common, though not ubiquitous, in NT cases of healing) produced results regarding joint swelling comparable to that from some medical treatments and better than those of educational interventions, though this could be partly

cally improves cure rates for most physical disorders. Yet some critics dismiss all claims of supernatural healing by arguing that there are or may be natural analogies to such recoveries on some occasions, a dismissal that seems particularly forced when applied to multiple cases of blind eyes healed or the dead resuscitated after prayer. Likewise, in evaluating cure rates, it is inappropriate to lump genuine physicians with quacks. Yet all supernatural healing claims and claimants are generally lumped together, when in fact cure rates may differ among them.

Some critics of supernatural healing curiously exclude the significance of any healing claims if medical technology could produce the same result.³²³ Yet this criterion makes little sense in cases where such medical technology was not applied. The criterion in effect claims that anything that humans could do (even though they did not) cannot be attributed to divine agency, in effect excluding most of the evidence. Most conditions can be cured at least sometimes by medical technology now, and such technology is happily always improving; does this improvement logically reduce the miraculous character of cures earlier or independently occurring *without* such technology? If so, one could exclude not only cures that can also be duplicated naturally and medically but also those that might conceivably be cured in the future—that is, any cure. But would not such a criterion for miracles, which could effectively eliminate appeal to any claims, ultimately screen out any genuine cases of supernatural causation if there were some?

If so, the criterion decides the debate's outcome by default on the basis of a logically unrelated question; there is no necessary logical relationship between the possibility of an illness being cured medically and the possibility of it being cured supernaturally. That is, one can argue that a person who received curative medical treatment may have been cured by such treatment, but one cannot argue that a person who did *not receive such treatment*, yet was cured, was cured by such treatment. The potentially medical curability of an illness is therefore not a legitimate criterion for determining the possibility of supernatural involvement in the ailment's cure, when the medical cure was not applied.

Yet a similar prejudicial line of argumentation has long been privileged. Thus, for example, one nineteenth-century skeptic designed his argument to a priori

psychosomatic (Matthews, Marlowe, and MacNutt, "Effects," 1185; for the susceptibility of rheumatoid arthritis to "psychosomatic improvements," see Lerman, "Arthritis," as cited in Brown, Mory, Williams, and McClymond, "Effects," 865). The analogy here is limited, since it is supernatural healing and not medical healing that is under dispute in much of our cultural setting. Moreover, it is precarious to cite the results of a single study as representative of what all studies would likely find. Nevertheless, it does illustrate how the criterion would unfairly screen out the vast majority of possible evidence. Further, metaphysical naturalism is disputed by more people in the world than supernatural cures are, so speaking of what is "under dispute" presupposes particular starting assumptions.

323. Cf. the complaint in Melinsky, *Miracles*, 157. Critics of supernatural healing might suggest moreover that medical technology reduces a population's overall mortality more than the sum total of individual healings do (cf. Henson, *Notes*, 18), and where such technology is widely available I presume that this observation normally would be correct. But one should not compare apples and oranges: in Christian tradition miracles are meant to draw attention to God's activity and portend the kingdom, not to cure every affliction in the present.

exclude consideration of miracle claims by noting that a naturalistic explanation might eventually emerge.³²⁴ That the perpetual limitation of natural knowledge thereby unfairly screened out any possible evidence was not considered; he laid the burden of proof solely on supernatural claims and then placed the bar of proof for them impossibly high. Likewise, T. H. Huxley, following Hume's argument, doubted that any event could be extraordinary enough to justify the claim that its cause was supernatural.³²⁵ Some church commissions in the 1920s reflected the same bias, as historian Robert Bruce Mullin observes: "The ground rules that the commissions established in order to validate a healing as miraculous—that is, that it could not merely be inexplicable, but also had to be unique and not found in the annals of either medicine or other religions—almost ensured that no healings would be deemed 'miracles.'"³²⁶

By this approach, a skeptic can reject a supernatural explanation even when lacking a specific, plausible natural one by simply averring that a natural explanation may be forthcoming.³²⁷ The committed skeptic can then insist that this as-yet unfulfilled potentiality must be superior to any supernatural explanation. Yet with sufficient ingenuity and confidence that a naturalistic explanation is necessary, it is *inevitable* that naturalistic solutions (often competing, mutually contradictory ones) will emerge.³²⁸ That inevitability does not, however, guarantee that they will be *good* explanations or that they will not force too much of the evidence. As one scholar suggests, appealing to "as yet unknown laws of nature" to explain "even raisings from the dead" yields "a tremendous implausibility."³²⁹ Such deferred natural explanations are rendered the only possible interpretations merely by the *a priori* exclusion of the possibility of nonnatural interpretations.³³⁰

324. John Tyndall, in Mullin, *Miracles*, 42.

325. *Ibid.* Huxley's famous debate with Bishop Samuel Wilberforce reflected a generational conflict over how science should be conducted (Livingstone, "Huxley," 158); contrary to subsequent literary traditions, little is actually known of the content or outcome of the debate (Livingstone, "Huxley").

326. Mullin, *Miracles*, 248.

327. So Alexis Carrel regarding Lourdes, in Flach, *Faith*, 40; the position noted in Basinger and Basinger, "Concept," 166; Phillips, "Miracles," 35 (demurring); Larmer, "Criteria" (arguing against it). Cf. Frank, *Persuasion*, 58: the world is full of "inexplicable cures," so assumptions determine whether one views their cause as divine. Frank's objection (lodged against claims at Lourdes) is logically correct as far as it goes, but I believe that it neglects the *cumulative* weight of numerous such cures during prayer.

328. Because science by its historic nature is methodologically committed to finding natural explanations, it may view even the greatest of anomalies as having natural explanations (cf. Fern, "Critique," 347–48). Some go so far as to concede that instant healings occur (Diamond, "Miracles," 311) but refuse to interpret them supernaturally lest naturalistic science be stripped of its autonomy (321). Because we have compartmentalized epistemological approaches in different disciplines, science that seeks naturalistic explanations is doing what it is designed to do, but we must correspondingly recognize that it is not designed to answer or pronounce on other (nonnaturalistic) questions. As noted in chs. 5–6, the view that there is no reality outside of naturalistic explanations is simply a presupposition.

329. Purtill, "Proofs," 48 (regarding raisings in the Gospels). Revising laws of nature to explain anomalies is sometimes harder than simply accepting anomalies (Levine, *Problem*, 180); see discussion in ch. 5.

330. Larmer, "Evidence," 51; cf. Duffin, *Miracles*, 186–87, 189, highlighting the fideism involved in such an approach.

Thus, for example, one writer insists that cures at Lourdes so far never known to remit naturally might involve some exceedingly rare circumstance like the combination of a particular blood type with the chemical waters at Lourdes. Even if this combination went undetected because it occurred only “once in every ten million persons,”³³¹ the author contends, once eventually discovered it could be subsumed under a new scientific rule. The author considers such a yet-undiscovered scientific explanation, which allows prediction, preferable to accepting as divine mystery the question of why some are healed and others are not.³³² Despite possible theological solutions,³³³ he considers the theological quandary more difficult than the extraordinarily low probability of his alternate explanation and uses the former to justify supporting the latter. That is, his approach simply rules out from the start the possibility of a supernatural explanation (the explanation normally offered by the event’s immediate witnesses).

Nevertheless, perceptions of plausibility are shaped partly by presuppositions about what sorts of explanations are open to consideration. That is, the skeptic, as noted earlier, may in effect simply rule out the possibility of supernatural explanations a priori.³³⁴ That seems to be the case in the hypothetical example just offered. Analyses show that there is nothing particularly unusual about the bathing water at Lourdes—except that it is heavily contaminated with bacteria that nevertheless seem to fail to infect the bathers.³³⁵ I am not Catholic, but I think that attributing the cures to chemical properties in the shrine’s water is an extraordinarily implausible explanation.

Presuppositions and Burden of Proof

Such a methodology typically dismisses appeals to supernatural explanations as a tenuous god-of-the-gaps approach, since a nonsupernatural explanation may eventually emerge.³³⁶ But when a supernatural explanation seems the most plau-

331. Diamond, “Miracles,” 314.

332. *Ibid.*, 315.

333. While I defer that extensive discussion to theologians, one historical and philosophic factor already noted may be kept in mind. I argued earlier that the behavior of personal beings, which function at a high level of complexity, is not predictable in terms of scientific laws in the same way that less complex nature (e.g., particles) is. This unpredictability would be even more the case for a superintelligent personality not a part of nature. Miracles are meant to be special foretastes of the future kingdom rather than the new ordinary expectation of the present.

334. As noted in ch. 5, the skeptic who is inflexibly dogmatic against miracles in effect presupposes atheism or deism, hence cannot admit evidence contrary to his or her position.

335. Cranston, *Miracle*, 59, notes that “chemically . . . the water of the Spring at Lourdes contains no curative or medicinal properties whatever” (emphasis hers; cf. also 259); on 58–59, she gives reports showing that chemically it is merely normal mountain drinking water. One might expect the waters to breed infection rather than the reverse, with more than two thousand bathing per day, some afflicted by syphilis or tuberculosis (56–57); but she argues (56) that infections are not known to result. She notes (58–60) that the water is heavily polluted bacterially, yet testing showed that none of these microbes (some normally harmful) caused harm to test animals. On 60 she notes that test animals injected with water considered comparable did become infected. See also Woodard, *Faith*, 58–59.

336. E.g., Mott, “Science,” 66, though he believes that theism is the only valid explanation for human consciousness, which he thinks will remain a permanent “gap.” If “miracle” is defined only as what cannot be

sible explanation to the average observer genuinely not yet committed to either thoroughgoing naturalism or the possibility of supernatural action (in a case such as the raising of a dead person immediately after prayer), this objection may itself be susceptible to the label of a naturalism-of-the-gaps approach—except without any discernible gap.³³⁷ It rejects a plausible theistic explanation on the grounds

explained based on current scientific knowledge, some argue, current “miracles of the gaps” could eventually be eliminated (Langford, “Problem,” 47; cf. Basinger and Basinger, “Concept,” 165–67). But again, even where natural explanations are possible for details, theism allows that God often (or even usually) works through nature; when this activity through nature cumulatively suggests purpose (as perhaps in the case of highly unusual miracles), the possibility of explaining mechanisms of particular details should not distract one from recognizing the larger structure of purpose (a recognition accepted, for example, with respect to cultivated fields or human inventions making intelligent use of natural substances).

337. See Moreland, “Miracles,” 145–46; Licona, *Resurrection*, 586; cf. similar language on a different issue in Dembski and Wells, *Atheist*, 95. The objection is possible, but it is a defensive argument from silence and thus cannot be used to rule out the hypothesis of theism (esp. where an external intelligence best accounts for the composite activity of the first cells). A philosophically neutral approach cannot simply presuppose that there are no natural gaps (Collins, “Miracles,” 26), any more than presupposing that there must be such gaps; cf. Geivett, “Value,” 184: “Failure to eliminate the possibility of a naturalistic explanation does not entail that a naturalistic explanation currently exists or is close at hand.” To rule out miraculous explanations a priori by appealing to as-yet undiscovered laws is to stack the deck of the debate unfairly. An article in 1924 noted that appeals to “latent laws of nature” constituted de facto tacit admissions of the lack of a satisfactory alternative (Everts, “Exorcist,” 360). In 1925, Tennant, *Miracle*, 29–30, 65, 67, suggested that on an empirical approach one could not prove miracles, because nature is not exhaustively known (noting that science as such can neither affirm nor deny divine activity). Yet Tennant also allowed (cf. *Miracle*, 54–55, 58, 66) that miracles can more tentatively suggest faith. Without entering a debate about macroevolution more generally (many accept it as compatible with theism, though others have demurred), one may note that naturalistic critics of “god-of-the-gaps” approaches often fail to observe a similar tendency among some traditional evolutionary ethicists when they offer positive evolutionary “motives” for the emergence of each trait (cf. “teleonomy” in evolutionary biology, e.g., in Eccles, “Evolution,” 117–18; complaint in Nickles, “Discovery,” 447–48; against full “genetic determinism,” see, e.g., Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 78–80, 149–50). That is, some evolutionary approaches almost suggest, despite their rejection of such language, positive evolutionary “design,” in contrast to what one would expect from merely random mutations. In addition to some models today providing *too much* explanation, cf. the more explicitly goal-directed pre-Darwinian evolutionary models in Kuhn, *Structure*, 171; Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 54–55; or early theistic evolution in Livingstone, *Defenders*; Ramm, *View*, 186, 198–202. Many reject “laws” and speak only of evolutionary “trends” (e.g., Popper, *Historicism*, 107–8); nevertheless, even as a trend it seems significant that the complexity involved in human intelligence emerges (naturally much later in the process rather than earlier). Despite various levels of “conscious purpose” in higher mammals (cf. Eccles, “Evolution,” 118–32), survival of the fittest alone seems an inadequate mechanism to explain high levels of abstract thinking, especially as achieved in a species less than a million years old. (Davies, “Effectiveness,” 55, thus asks what value human mathematical ability had for survival in the jungle). (Although other explanations are possible, some also protest naturalistic evolutionary attempts to explain the persistence of religion; see Haight, *Atheism*, 58–59.) Some therefore find theistic teleology in evolution, against others who define it as purely nondirected; see, e.g., Gingerich, “Scientist” (a Harvard professor of astronomy and history of science; he objects to the necessity of assigning all development to randomness, 30); Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 51; see extended and nuanced discussion (emphasizing “directionality”) in McGrath, *Universe*, 183–201. Evolution seems to work randomly at a smaller level, but there is increasing information and complexity in some forms (see Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 237–40, also addressing theological approaches to this data; on 246–47 he sees God as designer of the self-organizing system; cf. Templeton, “Introduction,” 11–12, 17–19; Davies, “Effectiveness,” 56), like homo sapiens (the intellectual capabilities of which do not surface randomly throughout evolutionary history; however explained, the increasing complexity of some forms is “directional”). Polkinghorne, “Universe,”

that a plausible nontheistic position may emerge. Nontheistic explanations frequently do emerge; while not all of these are indisputable (often they compete), often emerging natural solutions are correct (even if a theist would still see God ultimately behind them).

But to argue that because explanations based on special divine action have sometimes been rightly displaced that all supernatural explanations ought to be displaced reflects a logical fallacy (generalizing based on particular cases). Why then do we not have many cases of the reverse, nonsupernatural explanations being displaced in the academy by supernatural ones? One might suggest that some antisupernatural explanations for the instant healing of blind eyes or raising of dead persons might have been displaced by theistic explanations had the latter been an acceptable option within academia. When the academy explicitly excludes the possibility (or at least the academic respectability) of supernatural explanations, however, it is next to impossible to find an academic defense of such explanations, except in the few disciplines that allow them. This does not mean that such explanations are indefensible; it means that various specialties' exclusion of such an appeal from their purview at the start have made it impossible for them to address it. Recall again that those disciplines that often do allow evaluation of such explanations, such as theology, are often marginalized from the epistemological center of modern academia.

To rule out theistic explanations wherever a nontheist expects potential for a nontheistic explanation reflects a presupposed preference for any nontheistic explanation. Theists are within their epistemological rights to demur from such an approach. Were we to apply the principle of deferred certainty to knowledge in general, we could never offer claims about anything.³³⁸ Indeed, our inadequate knowledge of nature's positive limits does not mean that there are no cases where we cannot appeal to its negative ones; we may be fairly confident, for example, that some things are not explicable in terms of mere human ability.³³⁹ Thus, Christian

106, suggests that the place to discern design is "in the fundamental structure of the universe," the intelligence and benevolence implied in natural laws. Hearn, "Purpose," 69, employs the analogy between studying the chemical activity of pen, ink, and paper (for traditional scientific approaches) and the communication an author uses these mechanical processes to convey; cf. similarly Osmond, "Physiologist," 163–64 (following MacKay, *Science*), for analogies of large-scale purpose not always seen at the level of detail. On "organized" complexity, suggesting information input, see, e.g., Davies, "Effectiveness," 45–46; at length, Dembski, *Inference*. Many argue that mere genetic accumulation of information in the course of evolution does not readily explain the initial infusion of information into the most basic organisms, apart from (on a theistic view) a preexisting superintelligence. Gaps in our knowledge do limit the completeness of our explanations (cf. Osmond, "Physiologist," 164–65, citing Goudge, *Ascent*, 127–28). To posit explanations for phenomena after the event (whether in terms of survival of the fittest or intelligence) can make sense within a coherent philosophic system, but such explanations lack the scientific persuasiveness offered in accurate predictions. (Theists and randomness advocates could both prescind from requiring such predictions of themselves, although they would do so for different reasons.)

338. See Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 56–57. The appropriateness of tentativeness must vary according to the strength of the information we have available.

339. Sabourin, *Miracles*, 16, doubting that a human command stilling a storm will ever be explicable naturalistically (i.e., in terms of mere biology).

doctors often recognize cases where naturalistic explanations are inadequate and “cannot identify the parameters of knowledge within which these events *might* be explained in any future development of the scientific approach.”³⁴⁰

Granted that a supernatural interpretation presupposes the existence of something supernatural, the ruling out of such an interpretation presupposes the non-existence of anything supernatural, and in some cases a supernatural explanation (such as theism) provides a more plausible explanation than coincidence would.³⁴¹ The antisupernaturalist position assumes that a theist may claim an event to be miraculous in public discourse only if the skeptic is persuaded that there is no possible natural explanation, even though the ideal skeptic claims a priori that all events could have a possible natural explanation. That is, skeptics “have laid out the rules of the game in such a way that they cannot possibly lose.”³⁴² To simply predicate naturalistic causes for all purported extranormal phenomena, even if a naturalistic explanation proves far less plausible than a supernatural one, is to make one’s position unfalsifiable³⁴³—hence to withdraw from genuine participation in public discourse.³⁴⁴

Since science does not claim comprehensive knowledge of the universe, it cannot conclusively demonstrate that particular miracle claims are outside the realm of natural possibility.³⁴⁵ Neither, however, can it exclude supernatural activity; in fact, affirming or denying divine activity requires a broader philosophic or theological framework than the questions that science as science is specifically competent to address. Such an observation suggests the limits of scientific epistemology rather than the impossibility or complete epistemic inaccessibility of miracles.³⁴⁶ Nevertheless, we do have degrees of probability, and statistics suggest that most observers would conclude that some reports in this book, if authentic, make better sense on the premise of supernatural action than without it.

Although observers must periodically revise putative laws of nature to fit new data, this approach is sometimes more difficult than simply admitting anomalies.³⁴⁷

340. Lees and Fiddes, “Healed,” 13.

341. On the assumption of theism in appeals to miracle, see Purtill, “Defining Miracles,” 70. See my notes on coincidence as an explanation in chs. 14, 15 (esp. 736, 758) and appendix E.

342. Corduan, “Miracle,” 101 (cf. also 106–7).

343. As noted by Geisler, “Miracles,” 83. Likewise, Corduan, “Miracle,” 110, complains that Flew’s insistence on falsifiability for theism challenges the unfalsifiability of his own insistence on interpreting all miracle claims naturalistically.

344. Cf. also Corduan, “Miracle,” 107.

345. See Carter, “Recognition.” While some seek to dismiss miracle claims based on as-yet undiscovered laws, one could as easily appeal to unknown law to support them (e.g., Mozley, *Lectures*, 113) if the unknown law were a higher order representing divine activity (130).

346. Cf. comments in Ellens, “God and Science,” 5.

347. Levine, *Problem*, 180. Such revision fits Hume’s approach (Mumford, “Laws,” 279) but is not always the most probable approach unless one must fit all evidence into an antisupernaturalist paradigm. Some seek coherence by finding theories to accommodate all the evidence within a naturalistic paradigm (a position noted in Weintraub, “Credibility,” 372), but the limitation of the paradigm to metaphysical naturalism can (and in my view does) arbitrarily force the evidence.

In some cases, however, including, I believe, some miracle claims I have noted, allowing the hypothesis of a supernatural agent³⁴⁸ might explain the circumstances better than either alternative. If allowance for supernatural agency is built into one's worldview, then miracles might be as much a part of the way things are as the ordinary course of nature is; they are simply not predictable based on lower-level physical laws because personal agents acting in history are not predictable based on those laws.

Other Complications

Even apart from such factors, it is difficult to procure statistics for supernatural healing claims here; although many pray for recoveries today and recoveries often follow, the heyday of large-scale and dramatic healing revivalism in the United States fell in the mid-twentieth century, and it is now far more popular in the Majority World.³⁴⁹ The samples above also suggest that supernatural healing claims are and have always been more common in new evangelistic contexts,³⁵⁰ thus in settings least accessible to modern controlled clinical studies.³⁵¹ Likewise, they are reported especially among the poor,³⁵² those with least access to medical in-

348. See discussion in chs. 5–6. As noted, scientific method tests hypotheses rather than ruling out their possibility without testing; what is illegitimate is refusal to allow one's hypothesis to be challenged (a refusal observed in instances above where no amount of evidence for supernatural activity is accepted). On "critical realism concerning theoretical models," see Barbour, *Myths*, 37–38.

349. On the shift, see Harrell, "Divine Healing," 227; also noted in Stewart, *Only Believe*, 106–7. In the Majority World, as in the U.S. revivals, the movement again is especially among the poor who are least likely to afford hospitals, where strict medical records are kept. (In Taiwan, tribal Christians reported many healings of cancer, whereas nontribal Christians reported them only rarely; see Chin, "Practices," 29.) Not every individual who prays necessarily exhibits the same charism of healing (cf. 1 Cor 12:9), nor are all settings equally conducive to it. I point this out with respect to some studies that I do not believe are looking in the most effective places.

350. So, e.g., Fant, *Miracles*, 108 ("on the mission fields"); McKenzie, "Miracles," 82–84; for applicability to church growth, e.g., Kwon, "Foundations," 187–90; for examples of the abundance in such settings, see, e.g., Grant, "Folk Religion" (cited in Filson, "Study," 137–38); Suico, "Pentecostalism," 356; Braun, *Here*, 160; Wilfred Mina, interview, Jan. 24, 2009 (on seeing miracles regularly in an evangelism context in rural northern Luzon, Philippines). Historically, see Latourette, *History of Christianity*, 344; Tucker, *Jerusalem*, 41; and comments in ch. 10. Many also expect them in such settings for theological reasons; see, e.g., Solomon, "Healing," 364; Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 17–33, 112; Lloyd-Jones, *Spirit*, 49; Go, "Ministry" (summary on ii); Gideon Achi, interview, May 25, 2009; cf. the connection with the kingdom in Cho, "Foundation," 90–94; with "outsiders" in Crump, *Knocking*, 43. Percy, "Miracles," 13–14, notes that Jesus focused on the excluded, and contrasts the frequent inward focus of modern healing movements. Many also argue that God performs miracles more typically where needs are greater (hence in Indonesia more than in the United States, in Tari, *Wind*, 104–5).

351. A Victorian skeptic posed the initial demand for controlled studies regarding prayer (Opp, *Lord for Body*, 15; Numbers, "Aggressors," 34–35; Mullin, *History*, 202, on John Tyndall). This approach perhaps characterized Victorian-era skepticism more generally; some "scientists publicly ridiculed church leaders who prayed for God's intervention against the cholera epidemic of 1866, denounced prayer as a form of superstition, and charged the church with" resisting progress (Wuthnow, "Contradictions," 163).

352. See, e.g., Währisch-Oblau, "Healthy," 97; Chevreau, *Turnings*, 16–17; MacNutt, *Healing*, 26–27; Bomann, *Faith in Barrios*; idem, "Salve."

tervention and thus the greatest need for supernatural intervention, but again among populations less apt to have doctors' reports than typical Westerners today would.³⁵³ Thus one can accumulate thousands of testimonies and in some cases secure before-and-after medical documentation,³⁵⁴ but these accounts do not easily yield to controlled experiments, just as some other sorts of evidence, such as any unrepeatable historical acts, do not.³⁵⁵

Another catch-22 in addressing antsupernaturalism is that the more dramatic and demonstrable the cure claim, the less likely it is to be accepted.³⁵⁶ An antsupernaturalist would be more disposed to accept healing claims that can be explained psychosomatically, precisely because they need not entail belief in the supernatural.³⁵⁷ An antsupernaturalist (albeit undoubtedly some others as well, given the claims' rareness) would thus be more disposed to reject claims such as these: a woman who had had her fingers partly amputated on one hand was healed of cancer. The fingers grew back after prayer, and "finger-nails are also forming."³⁵⁸ At age twenty-seven, Agatha Okafor of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, still lacked adult breasts; during prayer one day her breasts fully formed, and she went on to mother

353. Laurentin, *Miracles*, 15, 38, 89–90, develops the difficulty of this problem.

354. Though in many of these healing settings, people are mostly poor and lack access to empirical medical treatment, probably another factor in their dependence on other forms of healing.

355. Probably even less to deliberately skeptical settings inimical to faith, which may be one reason why Randi, *Healers*, 309–10, has had few takers, despite his commendable exposés of some clearly fraudulent healers. On the difference between historical and scientific language, see, e.g., Ramsey, "Miracles," 10. Even sciences addressing the past, "such as cosmology and evolutionary biology," necessarily depend on observation rather than experimentation (Polkinghorne, *Physics*, 11; cf. 9).

356. Cf. Wei, "Young," 337: a "miracle" that resembles natural events is credible, but one cannot appeal to God as an explanation; if it is "incredible," like biblical miracles, it must normally be "suspect." That is, the verdict remains as rigged against the consideration of divine activity as it has remained since the Enlightenment. Hume claimed that if uniform experience counts against miracles, one should not believe them; if it does not, then one cannot know that it is a miracle (a position noted in Mumford, "Laws," 279; countered in Hambourger, "Belief," 600), a position that underestimates the potential role of greater frequency of such events in specifically theistic contexts. Warfield, *Miracles*, 191, contends that faith healing (as he knew it through Charles Cullis's views) could not and did not claim to cure broken bones or missing teeth—a limitation no longer applicable to all miracle healing claims.

357. Warfield, *Miracles*, 119, complains that the claim of a Jansenist who lacked legs, as attested by two surgeons, yet grew them miraculously, is simply unbelievable.

358. This amazed the neighbors, who knew she had had fingers missing—see "Amputated Fingers" (1926); I do not report this account with confidence that it is correct, given the inadequate verification offered. Poloma, *Assemblies*, 273n3, notes that claims of raisings and restored limbs in early Pentecostal literature do not appear in more recent U.S. Assemblies publications, whether due to a change in the movement or an increase in verification standards (one might factor into this discussion also a shift in plausibility structures; having sampled early Pentecostal literature, I am inclined to admit any of the three explanations, including the first, for various reports). Rumph, *Signs*, 131–36, cites a much more recent case of an adult's partly amputated finger gradually growing back after prayer and dreams about restoration, even though this is medically impossible by natural means. Cf. also the claim of restored appendages in Clark, *Impartation*, 166. Other astonishing claims include the survival of someone who had bled to death (though the recovery was not instantaneous; Marszalek, *Miracles*, 45–51), and full recovery of her completely brain-damaged infant within four days (Marszalek, *Miracles*, 50–51); the gradual re-formation of an adult's bones and leg after amputation beneath the knee (Marszalek, *Miracles*, 194–96).

five children.³⁵⁹ A Western minister reports a case in Ghana of a leg severed beneath the knee miraculously growing back.³⁶⁰ An eyewitness who prayed for a twelve-year-old boy in Bogota, Colombia, with a deformed hand reports seeing the half-inch fingers all grow out to three inches over the course of an hour and a half of prayer.³⁶¹ In another case, the morning after prayer for a different need, a nearly bald woman awoke with hair, now a few inches in length.³⁶² Another source reports that a partially severed thumb grew out instantly.³⁶³ Witnesses, including quite reluctant but certain ones, report God filling the teeth of poor persons who could not afford fillings.³⁶⁴ In one report, a misshapen skull was visibly healed.³⁶⁵ Perhaps most dramatically, even a local newspaper reported a boy able to see through his artificial eye!³⁶⁶ Various eyewitnesses claim the instant and visible

359. An account attested both by the preacher and by Mrs. Okafor, now a grandmother, in Numbere, *Vision*, 78 (the photo on 150 attests her breasts and reveals that she was physically small). Alfred Cookey, himself soon converted at one of the crusades, was astonished by the public testimony of an obese woman who claimed she lost her obesity overnight; he knew that she had that weight the day before and no longer had it now (Numbere, *Vision*, 131); both continued as part of the new movement (132).

360. Robertson, *Miracles*, 176–77, providing further details from T. L. Osborn about a man in one of his meetings in Ghana; see also Harrell, *Robertson*, 317. Such reports are not common today and do not appear in the Gospels or Acts.

361. Videotaped interview from August 2007, provided courtesy of Dr. Candy Gunther Brown, who addresses healing claims from a sociological perspective. Salmon, *Heals*, 135–37, reports a basic hand and fingers beginning to form over a two-year period in a child that lacked a hand at age three; unlike the report in Brown's interview, Salmon's might be conceivable naturalistically, but developments even in the first month of growth (137) were remarkable. The healing of the deformed hand in 135 appears to be a different and also remarkable case.

362. Jackson, *Quest*, 85, recounting the experience of his wife's previous roommate after prayer in Calvary Chapel, San Diego. I am convinced of the integrity of both Bill Jackson and his wife, Betsy, whom I met and my brother knows well (hence I am personally inclined to take the informants for this report more seriously than the 1926 "Amputated Fingers" report noted above but for which I have no personal context).

363. Bill Johnson's church website, Oct. 9, 2007.

364. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 175–84 (for the reluctant witness, 176–77, 184); Bonnie Ortiz (interview, Jan. 10, 2009); Kumsook Cho, interview, Jan. 24, 2009; frequent claims in Argentina cited in Marostica, "Learning," 216; the old, unusual report in McGee, *Miracles*, 72. For what appears to be a fake case of such fillings, see Bishop, *Healing*, 199–203 (the healer's use of a dental mirror on 200); in the other accounts with which I am familiar, however, the minister did not touch the healed persons' teeth.

365. Lindsay, *Lake*, 57. Cf. also the gradual reshaping of a child's apparently Down syndrome features noted by Lee Don Coffee, phone interview, July 7, 2009.

366. "Ronnie Coyne," including information from a medical doctor and copies of the optometrist's report and the news article from *Chattanooga News-Free Press* [i.e., *Times Free Press*], which also quotes a doctor: "It's amazing. . . . There's absolutely nothing in the eye except fatty tissue. The organ has been entirely removed." Even *VOH* rarely has material this extraordinary with outside documentation. Among other exceptions, it does include a testimony of severed vocal cords being miraculously healed (Phillips, "Restored"); four years later the girl had even sung on the radio (idem, "Sings"). Mike Finley provided me access to these articles. As we have noted, at Lourdes the functionality of an organ the functionality of which is medically impossible, such as seeing through eyes the optic nerves of which remain atrophied, appears as a special miracle (Cranston, *Miracle*, 136). McGee, *Miracles*, 203, concisely lists Coyne among fraudulent claims, but unfortunately does not provide the reasons; one witness I trust noted what he suspected were spiritual deficiencies in Coyne's later meetings, but that he could not explain Coyne's visual ability (personal correspondence, Dec. 27, 2010).

disappearance of lumps.³⁶⁷ We may deem such reports true or false (or some true and others false), but our usual intuitive response to such claims highlights our modern Western discomfort with them, providing some perspective regarding our presuppositions about how we approach ancient healing claims.³⁶⁸ While some such reports may be false, to reject all eyewitness claims to such extraordinary miracles on the premise that they cannot occur returns to Hume's circular logic.

On the same sort of principle, scholars often *a priori* exclude the possibility of nature miracles, but this exclusion involves content criticism rather than any formal distinction in the Gospels; nature miracles are not *formally* different from others.³⁶⁹ Indeed, the category is not only not formal but also is too arbitrary to function as a content category. As C. F. D. Moule observes, the category is unsatisfactory "because it implies . . . that there is an order of regularity and consistency in it different from that which obtains in the personal realm. It suggests an *a priori* assumption that you could not alter the weather but you might change a personality; and this is an arbitrary assumption."³⁷⁰ Do healing a cancer within a person or restoring life after the brain has died *not* affect the course of nature simply because they involve the human body? (Our body is, after all, part of nature, as all of us who are aging can testify.) Like other miracle claims, those concerning nature miracles have appeared through history and today, as I have noted in chapter 12.³⁷¹ Decisions about their potential historicity depend on one's presuppositions about what is

367. Kim, "Prominent Woman," 205; Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 141; Harris, *Acts Today*, 100–101; Moreland, *Triangle*, 169; Brown, "Awakenings," 363; Zagrans, *Miracles*, 100 (a visible facial tumor disappeared within five minutes of prayer); Bill Twyman, interview, Nov. 11, 2007; Eleanor Sebiano, interview, Jan. 29, 2009; Yusuf Herman, interview, July 10, 2011; Marie Brown (personal correspondence, May 31, 2006).

368. Cf. the convincing nature of such events, if proved, even to firm extreme cessationists, though in principle they would insist on rejecting them (see Ruthven, *Cessation*, 65). Whatever one makes of some of these examples, some even more radical claims reported in Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 93, would strike even the least skeptical readers as implausible.

369. See, e.g., Robinson, "Challenge," 329; for Bultmann's skeptical treatment of nature miracles, see, e.g., Bultmann, *Tradition* (1963 ed.), 227–28. Like many, Carlston, "Question," accepts the healing narratives (where he engages the question of divine activity) as more authentic than the nature miracles. Others have defended the nature miracles (e.g., Fonck, *Wunder*, 1:127–469, as cited in Sabourin, *Miracles*, 247), though some have relegated them only to the past, for theological reasons (Dod, "Healer," 176).

370. Moule, "Classification," 240; cf. similar criticisms in Neil, "Nature Miracles," 370; Best, "Miracles," 548. Collins, *Introduction*, 176, refers to Bultmann's distinction between nature and healing miracles as "a confusion in the categorization of the Gospel material on the basis of form and content." Wright, "Miracles," 190, treats "nature miracles" as a misnomer, since physical healings also involve nature. Eve, *Healer*, 113–16, argues for formal differences between nature miracles and other miracles in Mark but acknowledges that this argument is "cumulative," with no single criterion adequate to distinguish them (115). Eve uses OT echoes (Eve, *Healer*, 150–56) and other features to try to set these miracle stories apart from others historically, but such allusions (e.g., to Jonah in the lake-crossing account) seem inadequate to explain the composition of these full stories, within a generation after Jesus's execution.

371. E.g., Yung, "Integrity," 174; McGee, "Regions Beyond," 70; Hellestad, "Prayer," 16–17; Kinnear, *Tide*, 92–96; Khai, "Pentecostalism," 268; Peckham, *Sounds*, 106, 113; Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, *History*, 223–24; Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 181–83; Dayhoff, "Barros"; Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 54–55, 59, 64, 192; Koch, *Revival*, 143–46, 208–17; Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 285–86, 288; Crawford, *Miracles*, 28, 75; Harris, *Acts Today*, 66–67, 80; Chavda, *Miracle*, 9–10, 128–29; Numere, *Vision*, 130, 206–7, 213, 266; Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 112; Castleberry, "Impact," 111–12; Paul Mokake,

possible and one's verdict on the general historical reliability of the traditions and narratives in which they occur.³⁷²

When healing or other miracle reports are ancient, new complications are added.³⁷³ As one scholar observes, "The task is complicated as well by the simple fact that the historian must work with historical probabilities, while miracle stories are concerned by definition with the occurrence of historical improbabilities."³⁷⁴ With ancient sources, medical documentation in the modern sense is never available, nor can one interrogate the eyewitnesses. One can work only on the basis of normal historiographic method and one's presuppositions about what is possible (formed partly from philosophic a prioris and partly from analogies with subsequent historical and current evidence).

It is important to take into account the observation that signs claims and skeptical studies usually focus on different kinds of examples. Although studies' conclusions vary, some studies suggest no effect when persons (at least those chosen for controlled studies) prayed for hospitalized people whom they did not know, without the hospitalized persons' knowledge, primarily for the purpose of scientific studies.³⁷⁵ Several other studies have yielded more positive results, but all the studies are preliminary.³⁷⁶ For example, one study of 990 coronary care patients showed an 11 percent difference in positive outcomes for those who received intercessory prayer,³⁷⁷ but many have questioned the study. (Larger numbers might be needed to rule out coincidence and bias, but the larger the pool of data, the less obvious the effects of any genuinely supernatural individual cases, if these prove rare in such settings.) There are also significant individual cases of extraordinary, probably natural inexplicable, recoveries during distant intercessory prayer,³⁷⁸ but these have not been identified in the fewer controlled studies.

interviews, June 3, 2006; May 13, 2009; Emmanuel Itapson, interview, April 29, 2008; Sandy Thomas, phone interview, Aug. 26, 2008; Donna Arukua, interview, Jan. 29, 2009; Kay Fountain, interview, Jan. 29, 2009.

372. Stanton, "Message and Miracles," 67; Blomberg, *Gospels*, 130–33.

373. With Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, 95.

374. Williams, *Miracle Stories*, 143.

375. Bishop and Stenger, "Prayer," argue that prayer studies do not demonstrate the efficacy of prayer. Johnson and Butzen, "Prayer," 251–54, also find them inconclusive.

376. For one example, in a masked, random test of the effect of prayer on the success of in vitro fertilization in 219 patients, those who unknowingly received prayer had a 50 percent pregnancy rate as opposed to those who did not (26 percent; Cha, Wirth, and Lobo, "Prayer," esp. 786–87); on theistic premises, results might vary with different persons praying or other factors. When verifiable cures are rare, it "denies science the necessary frequency of occurrence of a phenomenon to warrant the use of statistical methods" (Eya, "Healing," 50; cf. Duffin, *Miracles*, 34–35). But Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 199–200, cite significant effects in Byrd, "Effects" (also noted in Matthews, Larson, and Barry, *Bibliography*, 44–45, as well executed but needing further studies); also in Collipp, "Efficacy" (45 percent higher among leukemia patients prayed for; but Collipp's sample size was too small for safe extrapolation; note Matthews, Larson, and Barry, *Bibliography*, 52); Beutler et al., "Healing."

377. Harris et al., "Trial" (also noted in "Prayer and Outcomes").

378. Note again the case of Matthew Dawson of New Zealand, cited earlier (based on Matthew Dawson, personal correspondence, March 29, 2009; April 3–4, 2009). Other cases of distant intercessory prayer having immediate effects have long been reported (e.g., cases in Glover, "Healings," 15; to his surprise,

Evaluating such studies can prove complicated. In one extensive study of 1,802 coronary patients, those who were notified that they would receive distant prayer fared worse in “post-operative complications” than those who were not (possibly due to performance anxiety),³⁷⁹ and those who received prayer unknowingly fared worse than those who did not receive it.³⁸⁰ No one, including skeptics about prayer’s efficacy, would say that prayer itself made matters worse. But the study reveals the complications in seeking to measure such processes. In such studies, we cannot quantify the results of prayers from those personally committed to patients both inside and outside the control group, who were not among the study’s intercessors.³⁸¹ Since 96 percent of participants in this study acknowledged that people they knew were praying for them (presumably praying more fervently than most strangers would have been), it is not clear that the distant intercessors added significantly to any effect of petitions already occurring.³⁸² Moreover, intercessors chosen for some studies came from various religions and traditions, and prayed in various ways.³⁸³ A number of intercessors from the traditions emphasized in this book, accustomed to laying on hands and praying in particular ways, felt too constricted by the controls to pray in their usual way.³⁸⁴ Nor do most Christians expect God’s intervention to relate to prayer quantitatively, as if God were a mathematical function rather than a personal being.³⁸⁵ Would God favor someone or not because they belonged to a control group?³⁸⁶

Clinical settings differ from the usual setting of both biblical³⁸⁷ and subsequent healing claims, in terms of objectives, interest, and the infirm person’s knowledge.³⁸⁸

Blumhardt found occasions he believed effective through his correspondence, in Ising, *Blumhardt*, 216, 218, 331–33), but even in the Gospels (Matt 8:13//Luke 7:10; John 4:50–53) and Acts (cf. Acts 12:5, not regarding healing) these were a small minority of cases, perhaps requiring special faith (Matt 8:8–10//Luke 7:6–9).

379. Fung and Fung, “Prayer Studies,” 44, note that this is the hypothesis offered by the study’s authors.

380. For this study, see Benson et al., “Study.”

381. Cf. the concerns raised in one study cited in Masters, “Prayer,” 17.

382. Fung and Fung, “Prayer Studies,” 44.

383. E.g., of the distant intercessor groups in the study where patients fared worse, the only Protestant group represented belonged to the New Thought group Unity (Brown, Mory, Williams, and McClymond, “Effects,” 865), although it is not possible to know whether the inclusion of different groups would have made a difference in this case.

384. Johnson and Butzen, “Prayer,” 256–57.

385. For these and other concerns with criteria in prayer studies, including “dosage effects” (what kinds of prayer? what kinds of prayerful people are praying?), see Gorsuch, “Limits,” 288–93. Gorsuch regards the view that God would simply add up the number of prayers as something like a prayer wheel or a magical approach (293–94).

386. Johnson and Butzen, “Prayer,” 257 (citing also Masters, “Disconnect”).

387. E.g., Byrne, “Miracles,” 170: “biblical miracles are not set down as having taken place in scientifically controlled conditions.”

388. While distant prayer has had at best mixed results (Matthews, Marlowe, and MacNutt, “Effects,” 1177, 1180–82; no significant results in Krucoff et al., “Music”; Benson et al., “Study”; few in Koenig et al., “Care Use”; see the survey in Masters, “Prayer,” 14–20), prayer with laying on of hands displays a higher improvement rate, including in a study on rheumatoid arthritis (Matthews, Marlowe, and MacNutt, “Effects”); religious commitment and expectancy did not affect the results (1183–84). Results concerning

For such reasons, many consider the accumulation of evidence from individual healings in their natural settings more compelling than the sorts of group studies so far conducted.³⁸⁹ In such natural settings, in fact, a number of individual cures have been documented that far exceed normal expectations.³⁹⁰ As I noted earlier, anomalies invite a case-study approach. The majority of the healing reports I cited in this book occurred in evangelistic contexts (that is, healings functioning as signs of the gospel) or, somewhat less frequently, pastoral contexts. Granted, the general lack of healing without the prayee's knowledge in controlled studies could suggest that some healings involve psychological factors. Nevertheless, these factors do not readily explain some dramatic healings accounts that I have noted, suggesting that the evangelistic and/or pastoral context also may play a significant role. As C. S. Lewis warned about controlled studies he expected to be conducted someday, "I do not see how any real prayer could go on under such conditions." Mere words need not constitute prayer whether offered by people or parrots; asking people to pray for an experiment, he argued, treats prayer "as if it were magic, or a machine—something that functions automatically."³⁹¹

One wonders whether a deity acting like the God of the Gospels and Acts would be expected to offer "signs" by participating as an actor in a controlled experiment.³⁹² (Although not the agenda of most investigators today, the test of controlled hospital studies regarding prayer was originally designed to challenge faith.³⁹³) While evidence from controlled studies remains ambiguous, therefore, a

joint swelling were comparable to those from some medical treatments and exceeded those of educational approaches, though psychosomatic elements might play a role (1183). Seventy-eight percent "had at least a 20% reduction in the number of tender and swollen joints over the course of the study"; 55 percent "met full ACR20 criteria for clinical improvement" (1182). Some individuals experienced significant benefit (Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 77–79). Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 26–29, recounts his personal knowledge of a woman completely crippled by rheumatoid arthritis whose swelling went down and she was completely cured after prayer; but he claims that rheumatoid arthritis is just a "psychosomatic disorder."

389. See Johnson and Butzen, "Prayer," 255–58.

390. See Brown, Mory, Williams, and McClymond, "Effects," reporting cures among several persons with auditory and visual impairments in rural Mozambique (cf. briefly Brown, "Awakenings," 363–64).

391. C. S. Lewis, as cited in Fung and Fung, "Prayer Studies," 44.

392. Cf. Polkinghorne and Beale, *Questions*, 29: "God is not an object on which one can do experiments." Cf. Mark 8:11–12 (despite Jesus's signs in other contexts); Luke 11:16, 29–30; Matt 12:38–39; 16:1, 4; 24:3, 30; perhaps John 6:30–36; Exod 17:2, 7. Jesus did not perform signs in front of the Sanhedrin or even for the Pharisees, but among the sick who needed them, a principle that coheres with his mission among the humble but in conflict with the elites (and not among those who resisted his claims, Mark 6:5). It is not then surprising that claims of miracles in his name would flourish more in the Majority World and among the poor than among the world's elites today. Still, God might respond to uninformed yet genuine inquirers (cf. 1 Sam 6:9–12 with 4:8–9, in contrast to Pharaoh in Exodus; John 4:48–53).

393. Mullin, *Miracles*, 45–46; Opp, *Lord for Body*, 15. Although one need not conduct such studies with this bias, the Gospels seem to often (not always) link healing with faith and rarely associate it positively with skepticism; see especially Mark 6:5–6. But while some suggest that faith healers often do not want skeptics present (Frohock, *Healing Powers*, 135), apparently only 30 percent of those surveyed in Tilley, "Phenomenology," 546, felt that the presence of nonbelievers was detrimental (recall also the story of onlookers in my accounts from Jeanne Mabiala and Albert and Julienne Bissoouessoue). More detrimental was a rationalistic approach on the part of those needing to exercise faith (Tilley, "Phenomenology," 545–46).

significant number of extranormal, dramatic cures continue to invite our attention. The cumulative pattern of the spiritual context in a significant proportion of these “anomalies” invites more consideration than it has often received.

Conclusion

Although one cannot prove special divine action where natural factors can account for a healing, to assume by contrast that the presence of natural factors must exclude supernatural ones is reductionist. Some critics carry the reductionism so far that they attribute even healings without any currently explainable natural causes to natural causation that may someday be explained. Even when the most obvious common factor in some organic healings is prayer, these cases are often discounted by one means or another to achieve the desired conclusion, and those who postulate supernatural or even merely religious causes may face considerable bias in some academic circles. Many employ criteria specifically designed to screen out any evidence that might support the objectionable conclusion of supernatural causation.

Those who follow such a procedure rigidly will never acknowledge any evidence for supernatural activity, because they employ rules designed from the start to exclude such evidence. But what sort of evidence might open-minded observers count against their antisupernatural thesis? In addition to many examples offered sporadically in recent chapters, including this one, I will suggest some such evidence in the following chapter.

More Extranormal Cases

No one will ever know how much of the cure depends on the patient's desire and expectation that he be healed. But most physicians do recognize that motivation is a powerful force aiding recovery. In spite of this, there are surely few in the field of who have not, on some rare occasion at least, witnessed a recovery so contrary to the usual prognosis, and so apparently complete, that the word "miracle" seemed the only appropriate description of it. —David Robertson, MD¹

In chapter 5 I noted the argument of many thinkers that if theism (a majority premise in our society) is accepted, the possibility of some miracles in particular theistic contexts becomes more probable than not; in that case, evidence from credible witnesses for genuine miracles should be accepted. If one starts from an agnostic position that does not a priori privilege theism, atheism, or deism, one may at least examine the evidence open to the possibility of such events. Only those for whom miracles are philosophically impossible are obligated to rule out this explanation in every case. If we are open to such events and to a supernatural explanation as a possible interpretation for them, is there any evidence that such events occur? Are there events that we would construe as miracles if a theistic premise is granted to a significant degree of probability?

If one allows for many natural causes in unusual recoveries yet avoids reductionism (the subjects of the previous two chapters), one remains free to examine a variety of claims that seem to significantly exceed what we can expect from solely natural causes. In recent chapters (particularly chs. 12 and 14), I have recounted some cases in which supernatural explanations appear to offer better explanatory power than naturalistic ones. Some healing accounts seem more ambiguous, such as partial and gradual healings. As we shall soon see, however, even some of these cases exhibit distinctly extranormal elements. In this chapter, I do not propose

1. Robertson, "Epidauros to Lourdes," 188–89. Admittedly, "few" may be an overstatement, and "miracle" is variously defined.

to rehearse all the plausible miracle reports already given but to survey some of them, to offer some new ones, and to conclude by evaluating a few of the stronger ones, especially among cases with which I have some connection.

Because many conditions improve on their own with or without prayer, anyone who prays for hundreds of people would see many of them recover even if the prayers lacked any efficacy. Yet we have also noted some other recoveries, such as instant cures of blindness, restoration from death, and so forth that do *not* normally simply improve on their own, and a number of cases fit a pattern of following immediately after prayer. After surveying some cases where more concrete medical documentation is available and some cases of partial and gradual healings, I will survey some other kinds of extranormal claims and turn to samples of eyewitness evidence for genuine miracles that I find credible.

Considering Medical Documentation

Anthropologists and sociologists studying beliefs about supernatural and paranormal phenomena only rarely provide medical documentation;² studies of beliefs do not require this sort of evidence, so it is not mandatory for the primary purpose of this book. When we move to the secondary academic question of what stands behind such beliefs, however, it is helpful to provide at least some additional analysis. Others have written and are researching works documenting some medically inexplicable healings. That is not the purpose of this book, and not being a medical doctor I again observe that I must defer discussion of such matters to those qualified to provide it. Roman Catholics have proved most careful about documenting healings, including medical testimony for many hundreds of cases in recent centuries.³ Apart from these circles (and especially Lourdes, treated in ch. 14), few ministries are organized to provide medical documentation for healings; when one cannot predict where miracles will occur, it is difficult to know where to gather documentation of prior illness in advance. As a scholar, I have found myself frequently disappointed by this problem, wanting more *publicly* accessible documentation even when I know the circumstances firsthand or through the firsthand accounts of people I trust.⁴ Meanwhile, in some cases my lack of expertise in medicine undoubtedly hindered access or understanding of records.

2. E.g., Greeley, *Sociology*; Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*; McClenon and Nooney, "Experiences"; Scherberger, "Shaman"; McClenon, *Events*, xiii, 57–74 (with testimonial evidence on 62–63, 64–66, 68–69, 70–72), 131; even in most cases where the writer advocates for the activity of genuine spirits, as in Turner, "Actuality"; idem, *Hands*. The most common exceptions are neurological studies of possession and mystic experiences (see appendix B); for fire walking, cf. also McClenon, *Events*, 121–26.

3. Duffin, *Miracles*, 8, 113–43.

4. Some have suggested that Protestants should establish an agency for certifying miracles analogous to the Medical Bureau at Lourdes ("Miraculous Truth"). That the locations of such cures is unpredictable, however, complicates matters, as does the lack of consensus among Protestants concerning the nature and frequency of miracles (hence the nature of evidence that would be deemed admissible). Surveying some

I noted in the previous chapter that it is unreasonable to reject eyewitness claims simply because we lack access to medical records in many cases, if other factors (such as multiple witnesses or the witness's known reliability) support their claims. I have also repeatedly noted that I will not focus on such material in this book because I am qualified neither to provide nor to evaluate it. Nevertheless, that medical documentation is not always available does not mean that it is never available. Below I mention some sample cases.

Some Medical Documentation

In some notes I have pointed out that some persons supplied medical documentation for their healings; I have also cited works by doctors⁵ or other investigators⁶ who found such documentation. Some researchers have shown how the subjects of some dramatic healing testimonies remained cured many decades later.⁷ These sources are in addition to numerous works cited where the authors claimed to include only cases that they were relatively certain were reliable or where they noted the existence of medical evidence without citing or reproducing it. Nor do I include here many of the interviewees who spoke of medical recognition of their recoveries but, because of distance in time or other factors, could not provide me access to medical documents.

In addition to more publicly known cases of documentation at Lourdes, many others cite support. One of the doctors I have noted has cited cases of cancer that had already metastasized (spread) being healed abruptly after prayer.⁸ Another of these doctors notes a clear case of instant healing of advanced tuberculosis of the spine, where there can be no question of either the diagnosis or the outcome.⁹ Yet another doctor provided in his book more substantial medical documentation, including X-rays and the like, for the following cases of extraordinary healings after prayer, though some of these are more "medically inexplicable" than others:

- Lisa Larios, healed of reticulum cell sarcoma of the right pelvic bone¹⁰
- Elfrieda Stauffer, healed of chronic rheumatoid arthritis with severe disability¹¹
- Marie Rosenberger, healed of malignant brain tumor of the left temporal lobe¹²

difficulties in verifying that inexplicable acts are caused by God, Basinger and Basinger, *Miracle*, 81–100, note lack of consensus among theists.

5. E.g., Gardner, *Healing Miracles*; Casdorph, *Miracles*; Reed, *Surgery*; Speed, *Incurables* (cases she witnessed directly); some material in Frazier, *Healing*; earlier, cf. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 196.

6. E.g., Spraggett, *Kuhlman*; Grazier, *Power Beyond*; Neal, *Reporter*; in an earlier era, see Hickson, *Heal*, 122–23, 129–30, 134–35; Mews, "Revival," 301–4.

7. See here Warner, "Still Healed"; Warner, "Living by Faith."

8. Reed, *Surgery*, 35, 52–53; cf. also 43–48. Prayer and faith also appear very likely to have contributed to recovery of the terminal coma patient in Reed, *Surgery*, 84.

9. White, "Lady," 72–73.

10. Casdorph, *Miracles*, 25–33.

11. *Ibid.*, 37–45.

12. *Ibid.*, 49–57.

- Marion Burgio, healed of multiple sclerosis¹³
- Marvin Bird, healed of arteriosclerotic heart disease¹⁴
- B. Ray Jackson, healed of carcinoma of the kidney (hypernephroma) with diffuse bony metastases¹⁵
- Pearl Bryant, healed of mixed rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis¹⁶
- Anne Soult, healed of probable brain tumor vs. infarction of the brain¹⁷
- Paul Trousdale, instantly healed of massive GI hemorrhage with shock¹⁸
- Delores Winder, healed of osteoporosis of the entire spine with intractable pain requiring bilateral cordotomies¹⁹

The author of that work consulted also at least nine other named doctors and medical researchers to verify the diagnoses noted in his book.²⁰

Such collections offer merely samples of extraordinary restorations that can be medically documented. I noted various examples, many treated more extensively earlier and thus merely summarized here. One was the case of Joy Wahnefried, who provided me clear documentation that her vision, previously so problematic that she suffered lengthy and disabling migraines for several years, suddenly became perfect (20/20) during prayer.²¹ Anna Gulick, tested by both her eye doctor and optometrist, provided evidence for a sudden improvement in her vision after prayer, with physical changes in that eye, reversing years of macular degeneration.²² Other cases with documentation include the Ethiopian couple healed of a condition that made it impossible for the husband to get his wife pregnant,²³ and Yazmin Hommer's recovery from her coma, although her organs had begun shutting down.²⁴ Jonathan Pollard, raised from a wheelchair and cured of what was thought to be Guillain-Barré syndrome, sent me medical evidence.²⁵ Others I knew also sent test results to support their testimony.²⁶

13. Ibid., 61–72.

14. Ibid., 77–86.

15. Ibid., 91–100.

16. Ibid., 105–16.

17. Ibid., 121–32.

18. Ibid., 137–43.

19. Ibid., 147–57.

20. Named in *ibid.*, 9–10.

21. The vision specialist's certification is dated Oct. 16, 2009, based on a test on May 27, 2009; the certification was provided to explain that she no longer requires corrective lenses for driving. She also provided documentation of her previous condition. Cf. another possible case in Prather, *Miracles*, 91.

22. Anna Gulick (personal correspondence, June 10, 12, 2010; Aug. 26, 2010; medical documentation from both doctors, received June 17 and July 6, 2010; more sent Sept. 11, 2010).

23. Tadesse Woldetsadik (closely known to me), with information and medical documentation from Tariku Kebede Woldeyes and Adanech Negash Tesema, personal correspondence, Sept. 28, 2009; follow-up correspondence, Oct. 1, 2009.

24. Yazmin Hommer (personal correspondence, with records, Dec. 1, 2009).

25. Personal correspondence, July 22, 2010.

26. E.g., Byron Klaus (documentation sent July 10, 2009).

I also noted Carl Cocherell's healing from a broken ankle bone. The radiology reports shared with me indicate a diagnosis on March 8, 2006, of "left cuboid avulsion fracture," which required overnight immobilization in the hospital. The radiology report from a different doctor on March 15 both notes that he was examined for a fracture and observed the splint that had been attached to his leg. Nevertheless, it declares that "fracture or dislocation is not suspected." Would a sixty-two-year-old man's bone heal so quickly naturally that in a single week not even a sign of the fracture would remain?²⁷

Among better known testimonies, Ben Godwin's testimony of bone restoration without the planned bone graft surgery includes X-rays and medical reports.²⁸ Lee McDougald cites medical attestation for his total healing from advanced Parkinson's disease.²⁹ Although in much of the Majority World medical documentation is hard to come by, a research team in which I have confidence confirmed a number of cases of extraordinarily significant improvements in hearing and vision after prayer in the ministry surrounding Heidi and Rolland Baker and Global Awakening in Mozambique.³⁰ In another documented case, a middle-aged patient suffering for several years with Sjogren's syndrome, a currently incurable autoimmune disorder, neither produced saliva nor was expected to be able to ever produce it. After prayer, and without medication, her mouth began producing saliva.³¹ Similarly, a doctor attests that due to cancer and surgery, Bob Bruce had no salivary glands. Nevertheless, after two and a half years without saliva, his mouth began spontaneously producing normal saliva, indicating new glands.³² Among recoveries not noted earlier in this book, a woman in the United States was confined to bed most of the day with an incurable, progres-

27. Radiology reports from Skaggs Community Health Center (Branson, Mo.; CT results March 8, 2006); Oakwood Hospital Southshore (Michigan; March 15, 2006). One cannot charge pecuniary motives for an initial misdiagnosis (an unlikely proposal to begin with for a U.S. hospital); the original discharge summary noted that "the patient will followup [sic] with his primary care physician." The March 15 report indicates some unrelated, "minimal early spur formation," but "the osseous, articular, and soft tissue anatomy appears to be basically intact." I retain copies of these documents in my possession.

28. Godwin, *Strategy*, 62–64, 164–67. In personal correspondence dated May 28, 2009, Ben Godwin also provided me an updated report from the original orthopedic surgeon (dated Jan. 9, 2009). As noted earlier, the missing bone included three inches from his tibia.

29. In personal correspondence, May 24, 2009, Lee McDougald directed me to the statement of Dr. William Lightfoot, one of his physicians, at http://www.cbn.com/700club/features/amazing/Lee_McDougald122208.aspx?; accessed June 21, 2009: "Parkinson's is generally a progressive neurological disorder . . . I can only say that I have never seen a Parkinson's patient healed as completely as Lee was." The healing occurred in 2006, after many years of decline.

30. Brown, Mory, Williams, and McClymond, "Effects," in a medical journal; I was in correspondence with Dr. Brown both before and after their investigation, not related to my correspondence with the Bakers. Audiometric and visual acuity measurements of improved function closely matched self-reported improvements after prayer.

31. Documentation from June 2005 through Feb. 2009, in my possession, courtesy of Dr. David Zaritzky (sent in May 2009).

32. I received the doctor's report from him in Aug. 2010. See also Bob Bruce (personal correspondence, July 26, 2010); Bruce, *Care*, 25–29 (for the sickness), 67–68 (for the healing; other cures mentioned on 26). This case was referred to me very confidently by Gwladys Keating, whom I know and who belongs to the same Presbyterian church of which Bob Bruce is a member (personal correspondence, July 25; follow-up, Aug. 16, 2010). Nivedita Ghosh of Kolkata, India, offered another case of apparent regeneration of salivary glands destroyed by treatment (shared with me Oct. 13, 2010).

sive disease. In fall 2004, when friends in Nigeria called during the night and noted that they had prayed and she was healed, she ignored them and simply went back to sleep. The next day, however, she discovered to her astonishment that she was well, as new tests confirmed; tests also ruled out the possibility of initial misdiagnosis.³³

In other kinds of cases, Christian doctors have sometimes expressed their confidence that various cures reflected divine intervention. For example, Dr. Chauncey Crandall reports the raising immediately after prayer of a person who had been dead for forty minutes, noting the presence of other witnesses;³⁴ similarly if less dramatically, Dr. Jenny Lai, a medical doctor who long worked with a healing ministry in Taiwan, sent me a number of cure reports known directly to her about which she felt confident.³⁵ Dr. Jeannie Lindquist notes a patient healed of kidney failure through prayer, and Dr. Raquel Burgos testified of her own medically documented healing as a child.³⁶ I reported earlier accounts regarding cures of severe epilepsy, tumors, and the like, that I received from Dr. Alex Abraham, a neurologist.³⁷ Dr. Mirtha Venero Boza provided her eyewitness report of a burn healing.³⁸ Dr. Tonye Briggs attested as an eyewitness a dramatic closing of a massive wound overnight after prayer in Nigeria.³⁹ Psychiatry professor William Wilson noted the healing after three hours of prayer of a Methodist pastor friend, who had previously had “75% occlusion of his major arteries.”⁴⁰ He also reports a nurse healed of her depression and the asthma she had suffered for thirty years when he prayed;⁴¹ a healing of severe ankylosing spondylitis mentioned earlier;⁴² and other accounts.⁴³

33. Michael McClymond, personal correspondence, unpublished manuscript and phone conversation, Jan. 3, 2011; extensive before-and-after medical documentation (including detailed Mayo Clinic test results) sent to me Jan. 5 (received Jan. 6), 2011 (also confirming trace antibodies confirming the initial diagnosis).

34. See television reports and my interview cited in ch. 12. Other doctors report healings (e.g., McAll, “Deliverance,” 296), and others report the testimonies of still other doctors, such as Charles Woodhouse (ch. 11) and William Reed (see in Bredezen, *Miracle*, 36–38).

35. Sent to me in Aug. 2009, the reports mostly range from 1992 to 1997. At least nine records involve some sort of healing, though these are of varying evidential quality (e.g., a young man paralyzed from a spinal cord injury who began to walk at a healing meeting; chronic foot pain healed after prayer; a university lecturer in mechanical engineering whose heavy, chronic infection declined during prayer; and so forth). These reports are in the cured persons’ own words and signed by them, though some were very soon after the event. Seminarian Renae Hsu initially provided my contact with Dr. Lai. My NT colleague at Palmer, Dr. Diane G. Chen, graciously translated the accounts from Chinese for me as we discussed them together (Aug. 17, 2009).

36. Llewellyn, “Events,” 255, citing interviews with them. Both noted medical documentation, but I lack access to it. Llewellyn also notes a “miraculous” outcome reported by Dr. John T. Dearborn (*ibid.*, 259), and his own healing (*ibid.*, 260).

37. Interview, Oct. 29, 2009.

38. Mirtha Venero Boza (interview, Aug. 6, 2010).

39. Dr. Tonye Briggs, phone interviews, Dec. 14, 16, 2009.

40. Wilson, “Miracle Events,” 269–70 (reporting that X-ray evidence confirmed the healing at this stage). His friend reported that the non-Christian doctor admitted that it was a miracle.

41. *Ibid.*, 270.

42. *Ibid.*, 272–73.

43. A friend he trusts supplied accounts of a man whose heart was found healthy and his bypass surgery canceled after prayer, and a seventy-year-old woman bound in a wheelchair and body braces healed so fully

In one videotaped interview, a neurologist reported observing cures associated with prayer, including a patient's return from brain death.⁴⁴ Even a popular television program hosted by Dr. Oz recently highlighted cases of unusual recovery after prayer and some attendant medical documentation evaluated by his colleagues.⁴⁵ A generation ago, respected doctor Christopher Woodard testified to a number of inexplicable healings after prayer, which he believed to be divine healing.⁴⁶ While most such cure reports are not medical records per se, they at least challenge some critics' skepticism about whether scientifically trained persons could affirm that they have witnessed supernaturally caused cures. As we noted earlier, the interpretation of such evidence involves not only science but the philosophic grids through which scientific evidence is read.

Benedict Heron and other authors cite medical confirmation for their healing reports,⁴⁷ some other healing ministries cite doctors' verification,⁴⁸ and some ministries have indicated medical documentation for some of those claiming healing.⁴⁹ Additionally, a minority of healing evangelists have had physicians working with them to verify the healings; the catch-22 for an external investigator is that a skeptic will view physicians working with an evangelist as biased, but most other physicians will not be present. Nevertheless, as we saw in the case of Kathryn Kuhlman, many of the claims withstood public scrutiny or required a dismissal that would not meet ordinary standards of evidence. The three testimonies noted from Ukraine included medical documentation.⁵⁰

I have also noted medical documentation for a raising from the dead in the Democratic Republic of Congo;⁵¹ a doctor's report of his own healing, in which

that by the fourth day she was dancing (Wilson, "Miracle Events," 271). (She rose from the wheelchair on the first day and was free of all braces by the third.)

44. The testimony of neurologist Karen Garnaas, http://www.globalawakening.com/Articles/1000039117/Global_Awakening/Media/Video_Podcast/Episode_28.aspx; accessed April 3, 2011.

45. Associated with Catholic doctor Issam Nemeh; brought to my attention after *The Dr. Oz Show*, Jan. 31, 2011 (<http://www.doctoroz.com/videos/man-faith-healer>; accessed Feb. 5, 2011). Although this information came to my attention too late in the process of this book for evaluation and follow-up, see the positive reports in Zagrans, *Miracles* (e.g., 5–9, 100, 175, 222–23); earlier and more critically, Harlan Spector at <http://www.religionnewsblog.com/11928/not-everyone-is-believer-in-popular-faith-healer>; Aug. 5, 2005; accessed Feb. 28, 2011.

46. Woodard, *Faith*, passim (esp. some cases in 63–99 passim; though the majority of his cases are not inexplicable, even there the cumulative weight in his immediate circle might be significant). Woodard was Anglo-Catholic, and a retired Anglican bishop wrote his foreword.

47. Heron, *Channels*, passim.

48. E.g., MacNutt, *Healing*, 36.

49. E.g., Hinn, *Miracle*, 12–13, 37, 42, 44, 50, 56, 70, 75, 79, 90, 101–2, 104, 111, 116, 118, 123, 131–32, 139, 142, 146, 157, 159, 161, 173, 175. Despite significant controversy about his ministry and about some claims, Hinn has at least sought to provide documentation where he could obtain it. Others have complained about lack of adequate documentation; some ministries provide none, sometimes because their goal is simply helping individuals and they lack concern to offer public evidence for healing.

50. "Healed from Trauma"; "New Spleen"; "Healed the Scar." My former student Yulia Kolodotchka Bagwell confirmed the relevance of the Russian documentation for me (July 1, 2010).

51. Chavda, *Miracle*, between 78–79.

he supplied me with medical documentation; several other individuals who did supply me documentation; and books that supplied further medical documentation, despite potential danger to the authors' reputation. The reader will again recall reports from (among others) Dr. Rex Gardner, including

- the medical trainee who was not only healed of severe meningitis and its complications but even of eye scarring;⁵²
- the healing of a cardiac invalid;⁵³
- the nine-year-old deaf girl, whose instant healing from severe nerve damage is medically confirmed.⁵⁴

These are samples of the medical documentation that could be offered, although, as I have noted, many cases reported in this book occurred in locations where such documents would not even have been possible to obtain.

One reporter who investigated a range of healing claims observed that they derive independently from various kinds of circles. Moreover,

some cures are of organic as well as functional illness. And some happen instantaneously, in mere minutes or hours. Records are available in many cases, with X-rays, statements of witnesses and hospital reports. Dismissing all of it as medical error, hypnotic suggestion or hysteria which will wear off, does not meet a scientific standard of objectivity. Psychosomatic medicine can explain some of the cures but not all.⁵⁵

Not all doctors take into account any association between anomalous cures and prayer to identify them as miracles,⁵⁶ but some do. Dr. Crandall, a well-trained cardiologist with world-class credentials, explained to me that he initially did not believe in miracles but occasionally saw unexplained miracles in hospitals. At a critical point, he noted, he had to decide whether they were real. Once he decided that they were real, he had to act consistently with that belief, and began to pray for patients in addition to using conventional medicine.⁵⁷

He acknowledges that most people are not immediately healed,⁵⁸ yet the cures he has often witnessed following prayer far exceed his most optimistic expectations based on past medical experience. He offered the example of a man whose lung

52. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 20–21 (cf. also 15).

53. *Ibid.*, 104–6.

54. *Ibid.*, 202–5.

55. Oursler, *Power*, 25.

56. A Humean might reject causal connections between prayer and anomalies, but consistent with skeptical Humean epistemology would also have to reject causal connections more generally. Such an approach would make medical and pharmaceutical research quite difficult. At the least, one can notice patterns between prayer and anomalies (such as raisings from the dead) in a large number of cases.

57. Phone interview (May 30, 2010).

58. He witnessed only three instantaneous, visible miracles out of perhaps a thousand people he prayed for in Nigeria, yet these were not explicable naturally (Crandall, *Raising*, 152–53, esp. 153).

cancer had metastasized to his brain; Crandall prayed with fairly little faith for him, knowing that little could be done for him medically. Months later he learned that after very minimal chemotherapy all the man's tumors had disappeared, and the man's doctors were calling it a miracle.⁵⁹

He shared other recoveries. Thus, for example, he prayed for a man with a tumor on his forehead; the man came back the next day, and the tumor was gone.⁶⁰ I already mentioned his eyewitness accounts of a disabled woman, man, and child each instantly cured during prayer;⁶¹ he also witnessed a child's deafness instantly cured during prayer.⁶² A young woman was dying of an illness from which fewer than 10 percent of persons survive, and her organs had already begun shutting down; she recovered fully.⁶³ Crandall writes of another woman whose large, inoperable tumor disappeared spontaneously after prayer,⁶⁴ and of a man whose inoperable large lung tumor was quickly healed after prayer, as attested by CT scan results.⁶⁵

He has seen the deaf healed (though especially overseas) and those unable to walk suddenly gain that ability.⁶⁶ One Thursday, a gentleman whom he had known for many years came to his office.⁶⁷ He had not seen the man in six months, but this patient had a grapefruit-sized flesh-eating ulcer, with the wound going down to the bone, eating through the calf muscles. Treatments had failed, and he was scheduled to have his leg amputated the next week. The family had come to Dr. Crandall for a second opinion, and he concurred with the other doctors: the wound was incurable. Nevertheless, he would pray. After unwrapping the leg, he placed his hand inside the wound and prayed for the wound to be healed. He then wrapped the leg up, and confessed, "I've done what I can do; the rest is up to God." Four days later the man's wife called, noting that the ulcer was melting away and new skin was forming. Should they amputate it anyway, she wondered? Because a miracle was clearly taking place, he advised against that. By the following week, the man's leg was completely whole.

"Can that happen on its own?" I probed.

"It can't happen on its own," Dr. Crandall replied, sounding astonished at my medical naiveté. "Impossible." As in the case of his own son Chad, who died from leukemia,⁶⁸ not everyone is healed; but he has seen so many miracles since he began

59. Phone interview (May 30, 2010); Crandall, *Raising*, 50–52.

60. Phone interview (May 30, 2010).

61. Crandall, *Raising*, 39, 152.

62. *Ibid.*, 152–53.

63. He provided details in a phone interview (May 30, 2010); the media also interviewed her (available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYNNXsSr9s>; accessed May 9, 2009).

64. Crandall, *Raising*, 176–78.

65. *Ibid.*, 181–82.

66. Phone interview (May 28, 2010).

67. Phone interview (May 28, 2010). The account also appears in Crandall, *Raising*, 171.

68. For Chad's valiant struggle over the years and finally death, see Crandall, *Raising*, 7–131, *passim*. The leukemia did regress at times (35, 45), but ultimately metastasized (81); nevertheless, Chad was healed instantly during prayer from another condition that could have been chronic (101–2). Nearing the end, Chad briefly died and revived as his mother prayed, astonishing the watching nurse and respiratory

praying for patients that he cannot doubt their reality.⁶⁹ For the past year before our interview, he had been keeping notes on the cases.⁷⁰ One could go on, but my point in all this survey is that modernity's simple dismissal of miracles on the basis of "modern knowledge" is in the eye of the beholder; some doctors qualified to evaluate extraordinary cures do contend that they have witnessed some. One should not attribute it to neglect of intellect when some favor what appears to be significant firsthand evidence over others' preferred interpretive grids.

Implications of and Prospects for Medical Documentation

Gardner insists that modern comparative examples can chasten our excessive tendency to skepticism of all ancient accounts. As an example of this approach, he analyzes one report of a missionary doctor in Pakistan where the patient is supposed to have recovered miraculously. Examining it as skeptically as possible based on the lacunae in the information, he concludes that the recovery could have occurred naturally (though not that it was invented). But because the source was a contemporary one, he was then able to obtain all the medical details and to show that the recovery was indeed extranormal (the woman may have "lost more than her total blood volume" in a forty-eight-hour period, with only two pints available to be added). He concludes that whereas "the normal techniques of historical scholarship" would have inclined us to dismiss the story, the availability of medical data in this case demonstrates that something quite unusual did (hence could) happen.⁷¹

That some doctors would testify to miracles is not as surprising as one might suppose if one assumed that all intellectuals accepted Hume's view on miracles. In one 2004 national study of 1,100 physicians, 74 percent responded that they believed "that miracles have occurred in the past," while almost the same number, 73 percent, affirm that they "can occur today." The majority of physicians (59 percent) pray for their patients, and roughly 46 percent encourage patients to pray at least partly for God to answer their prayers. What might be the largest surprise in the survey, however, is that 55 percent of physicians claimed to "have seen treatment results in their patients that they would consider miraculous."⁷² Apparently most

therapist (127). Uncured from leukemia, however, he died again soon afterward; Crandall prayed for an hour and a half to raise him, but he remained dead (130). (This case differs from Markin's in that in the latter Crandall specifically felt God moving him to pray for the raising.) Crandall argues that perfect healing awaited Chad and others in heaven (133–34, 138, 192); others involved with healing also recognize death in Christ as healing (Hickson, *Bridegroom*, 326). (This approach of course involves a theological affirmation and not a belief regarding miracles per se.)

69. Phone interview (May 30, 2010). In our May 28 interview, he pointed out that obvious miracles do not happen every day, but they happen often enough.

70. Phone interview (May 30, 2010); whether due to time constraints or confidentiality concerns, he was not able to provide me access to the notes. For several local (Channel 7) media clips of interviews with Dr. Crandall's patients who experienced cures, including Jeff Markin, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGQmGGWzLQM&feature=related>; accessed June 7, 2010.

71. Gardner, "Miracles," 1930.

72. See "Science or Miracle," summarizing results of a survey by HCD Research and the Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies of The Jewish Theological Seminary. One could argue that

physicians are willing to acknowledge divine activity along with medical treatment, rather than viewing the two spheres as incompatible. Some may be reluctant to try to publicly surmount the Humean standards of proof demanded by colleagues, yet many are willing to acknowledge witnessing results that they personally consider supernaturally beneficial. While in many cases their “miraculous results” would not meet some conventional tests for miracles, I have already noted earlier that some claim to have witnessed cures that would.

One group that has recently sought to provide medical documentation for extranormal healings is the World Christian Doctors Network, with scores of cases from around the world posted at their website and newer ones in their journal.⁷³ Naturally the accounts for which they can provide documentation are limited by the currently narrow circles covered by their network; one could nevertheless fill a chapter with the material they provide. (A number of these cases admittedly involve gradual or partial healings, and the evidence is of varying quality.⁷⁴) Some cases, however, are more substantial. A radiologist who looked through some of the documentation for me found some of it impressive. For example, in a case of calcified tendonitis of the elbow,⁷⁵ the calcification evident in an earlier X-ray had clearly disappeared, and it was not corrected by surgery, which would have left a scar. In another case, chronic tuberculosis had destroyed much of a singer’s lung and led to the collapse of the upper lobe before the healing; this healing, too, exceeded natural recovery. In such cases, the radiologist confirmed from the bone structure that the X-rays involved the same person both before and after the healing.⁷⁶

religious physicians could have been more ready to answer the survey than nonreligious physicians, but the figures are nevertheless revealing and at least give a basic estimate of belief and practice. Definitions of “miraculous” may have also varied among them; but again, most miraculous cures reported in this book are outside the normal range of treatment results, many in locations where medical help was unavailable. (I personally suspect that God typically works through medical means when these are available, though there are many reports of exceptions.) Many do not claim to have seen miracles (e.g., Lesslie, *Angels*, 105, who is not opposed to them); again, some define the term more rigorously than others.

73. Some significant claims seem to include documented healing of disk herniation (Case 1 in *JWCDN* 1 [1, 2009]: 15–18; Case 2 in *JWCDN* 1 [1, 2009]: 19–21); partial healing of deafness (http://www.wcdn.org/wcdn_eng/case/case_content.asp?id=23&page=4; accessed May 6, 2009; http://www.wcdn.org/wcdn_eng/case/case_content.asp?id=38&page=3; accessed May 6, 2009; *JWCDN* 1 [1, 2009]: 24–26); and other ailments. It also claims a thirty-year-old Taiwanese paraplegic finally able to walk without crutches after prayer in May 2004, twenty years after the injury. Those who recover from spinal cord injuries recover most rapidly in the first three months, and most recovery is completed in the first year. The source suggests that although her legs remained weak, she could now walk and live independently, and her gait pattern improved (*JWCDN* 1 [1, 2009]: 52–58, providing medical documentation). Yet I lack means to independently verify the information, to know what information might be missing in some cases; I had some initial concerns, but, lacking knowledge of the Korean language, was limited in pursuing them. I offer a very small number of specified and carefully selected examples elsewhere in the book (in most cases tentatively), but nowhere does my case rest on them.

74. My kind and helpful correspondent there also recognizes this and rightly pointed out that more recent accounts tended to be more rigorously documented.

75. The case involves Deaconess Ahn, a violinist in the Nissi Orchestra, from Jan. 31 to April 12, 2002.

76. David Zaritzky (phone interview, July 24, 2009), noting that the tuberculosis was specifically chronic. He was confident about the cures provided that the X-rays and dates on them (which originate

Not all of the material is this substantive, but some of it is, an observation that could swell the numbers of documented cures available. Unfortunately, the founding organization is quite controversial,⁷⁷ particularly in South Korea.⁷⁸ Without taking a position personally on more cases or questioning whether some genuine cures take place through faith in relation to that organization, I have felt it prudent not to exploit the material prematurely. I am thus not expending more extensive space here on the evidence cited there, pending further exploration by other scholars better acquainted with the evidence.⁷⁹

At the same time, the cases and doctors attending the international conferences (now with more than 250 doctors attending) represent a wide range of denominations and nations. These doctors come not to support the founding organization but simply to bring and examine cases with other doctors. These doctors have the freedom to examine and debate cases, presenting those that the academic committee considers the best cases and coming to their own conclusions;⁸⁰ researchers can examine their evidence case by case. Moreover, whatever approach other doctors take to this particular organization, its model of doctors compiling a database of cases of extranormal healings seems quite useful and will, one hopes, be developed further also by others. (I have already surveyed the Medical Bureau at Lourdes, though documentation there is largely limited to a single site.) Although their work is not complete at the time of this book's writing, other writers I know are currently working to collect medical documentation for a number of healings at an optimum standard. It is good to have multiple and complementary studies on the subject, and all researchers on the subject should highly value such medical contributions.

Nevertheless, as I explained in chapter 14, it is unreasonable to expect medical documentation for most healings that eyewitnesses claim. A high proportion of those reported take place where medical cures are unavailable, perhaps often even occurring this way precisely because no other curative options are available. Are not these settings more analogous to what we find in the Gospels and Acts? Yet in most cases we lack reason to dismiss the reliability of these eyewitnesses any more than we would dismiss different claims by any other eyewitnesses. In a large

at the same time as the X-rays) are authentic, and he does not see how they could be otherwise. Hock, *Miracles*, 33, reports that the doctor believed that torn ribs had collapsed one of his lungs, but (38) after his healing a medical examination revealed his lungs perfectly healthy.

77. In contrast to the Medical Bureau at Lourdes, which is independent of Roman Catholic control, this network appears to include considerable oversight from the founding church.

78. Despite support from some sources and the generosity of WCDN in allowing me access to their material, which is fairly extensive, several trusted Korean friends and scholars discouraged me strongly from using this source, based on widespread views in South Korea. Because I cannot read Korean and have not traveled to South Korea to research these questions, I am not in an authoritative position to speak to the question myself and thus defer the matter to other researchers.

79. If doctors ultimately find the material persuasive, I will have at least erred on the side of caution, and others will have more material to work with. I pursue caution in the event that they might not find it persuasive; I do not rest my case on any one source I cite, but I emphasize in this section sources currently less controversial.

80. Chauncey Crandall (phone interviews, May 28, 30, 2010).

number of cases, in fact, large numbers of people radically changed their traditional beliefs after witnessing such cures, which suggests that these non-Christian witnesses did not view them as merely the sort of natural recoveries that they would know happen occasionally on their own.

Moreover, the majority of healings after prayer, even when medically documented, are of cures that have natural analogies, although this is not always the case (e.g., for the instant healing of eye scarring or broken bones). That is hardly surprising, since most ailments that need to be cured are often curable naturally. But medical documentation is sometimes available, and people's response to it (from eagerly accepting the weakest documentation to stubbornly rejecting the strongest) again tends to reflect the predispositions with which one approaches the data.

In my opinion, some testimonies of matters that the witnesses are qualified to attest firsthand is stronger than some medical documentation, either when the former is strong or the latter is weak. Trustworthy eyewitnesses recount clear miracles, such as the instant and visible disappearance of cataract-covered eyes, now able to see—an observation that requires no particular expertise. Individual cases of testimony cannot be dismissed on the basis of the assumption that miracles do not happen when we have so *many* cases of reliable and substantial testimony; even a few clear cases should remove bias against testimony and allow us to evaluate it on a case-by-case basis. I will return to many cases of eyewitness testimony below. Sometimes, however, as in some cases summarized above, we are fortunate enough to have both testimony and medical documents.

Partial and Gradual Healings

From a NT (especially Pauline) perspective, one might allow a theological distinction between gifts of healings, whose object was simply a person's wellness (cf. 1 Cor 12:9; Jas 5:14), and a more compelling "sign," which was meant to get the attention of outsiders for the message about Jesus, by means of its extraordinary character (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12; Acts 4:29–30; 14:3). That is, believers can find in some recoveries encouraging signs of God's grace without feeling compelled to appeal to them as extraordinary evidence that nonbelievers would necessarily find compelling. Discussions of miracles today usually focus on the extraordinary, but at times we may find extraordinary elements even in cures that have ordinary elements. I shall thus deliberately survey some evidence that can be construed as more ambiguous (such as partial and gradual healings) before turning to less disputable cases.

Although complete and instantaneous healings normally offer more compelling evidence for miracles, and I shall soon turn to more of these,⁸¹ many healing claims involve partial and/or gradual recoveries. These differ in form from most

81. Roman physician Paolo Zacchia (1584–1659) proved influential in his emphasis on cures being instantaneous (Duffin, *Miracles*, 24); that is, this demand too has a historical context. Most recoveries of

healings reported in the Gospels and Acts. Nevertheless, even some partial or gradual cures differ from normal naturalistic expectations. Many people concede that they have failed to procure healing for those for whom they prayed more often than they succeeded, but appeal to the cumulative force of the many who were healed, some too dramatically to be explained as comparable to what might be achieved merely by positive thinking.⁸² Although it may have less “sign” value for outsiders than an instant healing would, a partial or gradual recovery remains beneficial to the person who recovers.

Some cure claims are partial; for example, a healing removing the cause of the illness (cancer) but leaving the damage it had already done to be cured by medical intervention.⁸³ In another case, supposedly irreversible damage reversed, but other treatment remained necessary,⁸⁴ and one could add similar examples.⁸⁵ A Methodist woman was immediately healed at Lourdes from much of her naturally incurable blindness (due to macular degeneration), though she still cannot see perfectly.⁸⁶ (This incident was not among the proclaimed cures at Lourdes.) A four-year-old boy with a severe eye lesion was instantly healed during prayer, so that the astonished ophthalmologist canceled the operation.⁸⁷ Of the hundreds of lesions this ophthalmologist had seen, he had never seen one heal naturally and did not think that it was possible.⁸⁸ Yet the boy’s vision in that eye, while better off than it would have been otherwise, remains only 10 percent due to the factors that were not healed.⁸⁹ After five years in a wheelchair, a woman who was paraplegic due to a spinal cord injury heard God tell her to rise and walk, and she

any sort, medical or otherwise, are not instantaneous, so some reasonably consider “instantaneous and complete” an unrealistic standard (West, *Miracles*, 123). Nevertheless, there are cases of just such healings.

82. White, “Lady,” 84; MacNutt, *Healing*, 31; for an example, Bredesen, *Miracle*, 27, cites the recovery of Episcopal priest John Medaris. MacNutt, *Power*, 165–66, notes that, ironically, his own neck and shoulder problems have not been healed, though those of others for whom he has prayed have been.

83. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 45–46, on a bladder cancer.

84. Gary Best provided me with the written testimony of a person whose body had been severely rejecting a donated kidney, with doctors allowing absolutely no chance of the kidney surviving. Before the doctors could remove it, however, it began improving, the damage reversing itself. Despite this unexpected recovery, she still requires treatment once each week (personal correspondence, July 21, 2008, also listing some other partial recoveries).

85. Note Neal, *Power*, 65, on pain reduction in an illness that was not healed (cf. similarly Schlemon, *Prayer*, 29–30); gradual and partial restoration in DiOrio, *Signs*, 116–20 (esp. 119); partial healing in Salmon, *Heals*, 116. Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 71, note a prayerful patient living much longer than expected: a tumor remained yet became quiescent, in a kind of cancer that normally killed 99 percent of its patients. DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 32, notes that a dying man’s atrophied leg was healed in the sight of witnesses (presumably as a sign) the night before his death.

86. Heron, *Channels*, 143. Charles McDonald was bedridden from certified tuberculosis but began to recover after his visit to Lourdes in 1936, with a medically demonstrable complete cure after a year (Oursler, *Power*, 74–75, noting that this was not, however, declared a miracle at Lourdes).

87. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 104–6.

88. *Ibid.*, 106–7, noting not only the healing of the corneal laceration, but more significantly the healing of the severely prolapsed iris.

89. *Ibid.*, 108. Another healing in a Kuhlman meeting allowed a boy to see colors and shapes through an eye previously unable to do so (Baxter, *Healing*, 243–44).

was immediately healed. A year later, however, she relapsed after another problem, until four months later, during prayer, she was healed again (and remained well as of four years later).⁹⁰

Most of those who pray for healing acknowledge that it sometimes occurs progressively,⁹¹ though they also aver that it can sometimes be instantaneous.⁹² Even some progressive recoveries, however, may be significant. MacNutt, for example, concedes that healings are often partial and gradual,⁹³ yet contends that these healings may nevertheless appear much faster than natural recovery (e.g., eight hours of prayer for an ailment that might require months of medical treatment).⁹⁴ Some claims are dramatic even for gradual healings, for example, leprosy being healed over two days.⁹⁵ At Lourdes, a years-long wound of twelve inches by six inches healed, but over the course of half an hour; another person near death was cured but over the course of two or three hours.⁹⁶

MacNutt offers an eyewitness example of a gradual but dramatic healing where he was present in Colombia.⁹⁷ In this case, the woman's right leg was six inches

90. Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 63. Some reported relapses are associated with returning to a preconversion lifestyle (McClenon, "Miracles," 187; Koch, *Zulus*, 79, 276–77, 279; Salmon, *Heals*, 113–16; probably not the primary sense of John 5:14), but this cannot always be the case.

91. All those surveyed in Tilley, "Phenomenology," 547–48; cf. Marshall, *Helper*, 178–84. John Alexander Dowie differed from most other contemporary leaders in the healing movement by insisting that healing must be instantaneous (Alexander, *Healing*, 60–61). I have one report of what appears to be a progressive healing of a Taiwanese internist's healing of a severe digestive disorder (her own report, with her name and photograph, from June 1997; shared with me by Dr. Jenny Lai).

92. Again, all those surveyed in Tilley, "Phenomenology," 548.

93. MacNutt, *Power*, 27–33, 57–62. For claims of gradual healings elsewhere, see, e.g., Lindsay, *Lake*, 11–12; Lambert, *Millions*, 113–16; Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 47–49; Yun, *Heavenly Man*, 174; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 141–42; Neal, *Power*, 39–46; Chevreau, *Turnings*, 35–36, 166–67; cf. Teresa of Avila in Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 60–61. Some critics dismissed healings in Blumhardt's ministry that were merely gradual and through prayer (rather than commands of faith; Ising, *Blumhardt*, 268) or partial (279).

94. MacNutt, *Power*, 45; cf. Fant, *Miracles*, 149–50 (only a month of the expected two years of treatment); Neal, *Power*, 23–24; Schlemon, *Prayer*, 47–48; Nichols, "Miracles"; physicians' comments in Duffin, *Miracles*, 140, 142. Blumhardt saw answers to prayer in a dangerous throat swelling healed overnight; dropsy in eight days; and a swollen foot about to be amputated, instead healing in a few weeks (Ising, *Blumhardt*, 212). Augustine considered a miracle "chiefly as an unusual acceleration of natural processes" (Clark, "Miracles and Law," 25).

95. Sung, *Diaries*, 52. Some gradual or delayed healings have occurred within a few hours (e.g., Numbere, *Vision*, 130–31). Less dramatically, a case of severe ulcerative colitis requiring almost immediate removal of the colon was progressively healed over several months, allowing repeated postponement of the operation, until the healing was complete (Bennett, *Morning*, 96–97).

96. Nichols, "Miracles," 708, speaking of "a greatly accelerated natural process" that he regards as miraculous. A very serious illness, which included tuberculosis of the lungs and infected wounds of the shoulder, recovered fully within three weeks of bathing at Lourdes (Cranston, *Miracle*, 92). Normally Lourdes counts healings only that begin instantaneously, but full recovery may take weeks; e.g., a cancer may stop immediately, but the bones may recalcify over weeks (Cranston, *Miracle*, 119), something that is impossible by currently known natural processes. Nevertheless, to be counted, a cure must lack a period of convalescence; the organic functions are restored immediately (Cranston, *Miracle*, 131). May, "Miracles," 149, appears to demand a more instantaneous cure, to match the literary accounts in the Gospels. Needless to say, this criterion excludes from consideration many cures that might otherwise well be deemed miraculous.

97. MacNutt, *Power*, 51–54. Flach, *Faith*, 87–88, also alludes to this story.

shorter than the left, making it impossible to walk without crutches. But over the course of a few days of prayers, the leg grew to within half an inch of the other one, and finally—for the first time in fourteen years—she was able to walk again, unaided.⁹⁸ I do not think that anyone will argue that this cure could have occurred naturally. If we wanted to accuse MacNutt of hallucinating or lying,⁹⁹ we might need to accuse plenty of other witnesses of such events as well. Were MacNutt so inclined, however, he could have peppered his book with far more dramatic and instantaneous claims than he does. If we claim that this healing was necessarily psychosomatic, our claim betrays our naturalistic biases, since we lack evidence that mere belief can produce rapid bone growth. If we complain that we lack extensive medical documentation supporting the healing's cause being supernatural, we certainly also lack it for psychosomatic cures of this nature.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, Emily Gardiner Neal noted that a blind woman was merely able to see light when they prayed; they prayed again, and she could see fully.¹⁰¹ While such a recovery may have happened in (two) stages (cf. Mark 8:23–25), it remains extraordinary! Dr. Bennett Hill suffered a totally paralyzing stroke due to occlusion of the basilar artery, a normally terminal condition from which one is not supposed to recover. He began to recover within two days after one evangelist prayed for him, however, with rapid progress thereafter.¹⁰² Although her recovery was gradual and scars remain, a woman in Mexico is said to have survived being shot roughly twenty times, after which she ran through the night, and thereafter recovered.¹⁰³ I have already recounted the story that Yesenia Robinson shared with me about her son; given the sort of brain damage involved, his ability to speak,

98. MacNutt, *Power*, 53. Also, on 52, "In a period of hours her toes on the right foot had nearly doubled in size!" Bill Jackson (interview, Nov. 13, 2007) told me of a woman wearing a lift of about one and a half inches in her shoe; when he prayed and lightly tapped her foot, it grew out, and she removed the lift and walked home without it. The leg of a man with a built-up shoe grew two inches in Neal, *Power*, 56; Bredesen, *Miracle*, 34, cites one report of nine inches; see also Osborn, *Healing*, first photograph between 258 and 259 (four inches); eighth photograph (five and a half inches, also noted in 309). Leg lengthening has often been visually fabricated, deliberately or not, but when doctors have placed lifts in the shoe and the leg visibly grows out, releasing one from years of pain (as also in Venter, *Healing*, 263–64; he offers other testimonies on 52, 188; also DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 100; Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 5; Prather, *Miracles*, 200–201; Seibert, *Church*, 99–100), the healing appears to be a genuine one (the sort that the failed attempts merely imitate). On the charismatic "genre" of "leg-lengthening," see Csordas, *Self*, 58–67 (with some treating it empirically as "spiritualized chiropractic," 61–65, words from 64).

99. While arguing that miracles in themselves do not convey meaning, Phillips, "Miracles," also notes that skeptics lack grounds to accuse witnesses of deception. As noted in ch. 5, Hume's approach, at least according to its ontological rather than epistemological interpretation, presumes that witnesses otherwise assumed to be reliable must be presumed to be lying or themselves deceived if testifying in support of events violating his stricture against miracles.

100. Indeed, I doubt that acupuncture, massage, or drug treatments would have produced this result.

101. Neal, *Power*, 40. Cf. the named person in Osborn, *Healing*, 285–86, cured of deafness one night and muteness the next morning (Jamaica, 1949); an elderly man's blindness cured in two stages on two different nights, 295 (Venezuela, 1952).

102. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 97–103 (on Kuhlman).

103. She was interviewed on videotape by my friend Obed Arango (personal correspondence, Aug. 27, 2008, and ensuing conversation).

swallow, and the like is extraordinary, something that should not happen naturally given our current knowledge of the human brain.

Dr. G. Wayne Brodland, a professor in the University of Waterloo's engineering faculty and a specialist in biomechanics, provided philosophy professor Robert Larmer his account of his medically documented, progressive hearing recovery. Suffering from a substantial hearing deficit in one ear as a child, he became functionally virtually deaf in his late forties, due to auditory nerve degeneration. After prolonged prayer from groups that believed in healing, he insisted that his hearing was beginning to improve, despite his doctor's assurance that "nerve damage does not heal." To the audiologist's astonishment, however, tests verified that his ability to hear had indeed improved substantially. Although it was not perfect, he was no longer functionally deaf, and test results revealed that he could hear as well as he had in much younger years.¹⁰⁴

British Anglican James Moore Hickson reported that most healings in his ministry were gradual¹⁰⁵ and that many others were not healed.¹⁰⁶ But he cites also some extraordinary examples not amenable to purely naturalistic explanations. Thus one "man, whose deep, long-standing wound miraculously filled with flesh during the service, can now walk freely on his formerly lame foot."¹⁰⁷ Likewise in New Zealand, one "calf leg, shrunk, had filled out almost to normal within twelve hours of the service."¹⁰⁸ A few such extraordinary signs like these could prove quite compelling regardless of their comparative rareness (or taking twelve hours rather than twelve seconds). Moreover, such problems and healings cannot be readily attributed to what is purely psychosomatic.¹⁰⁹ Some believers suggest that sometimes progressive healings give time to develop faith and spiritual growth in ways that might not come through instant healings.¹¹⁰ An automatic response, for many of us steeped in skeptical, Western Enlightenment thinking, is to question the witnesses' accuracy regarding these more dramatic sorts of cases. Granted, some reports are undoubtedly inaccurate. But what does our ready assumption about their inaccuracy, when applied automatically even to possibly special contexts, say about our own captivity to particular paradigms?

The Gospels and Acts do not specifically describe any signs as gradual,¹¹¹ although a few texts might allow for such cases.¹¹² (Normally they do not specify

104. Wayne Brodland wrote this account at the request of Robert Larmer, Oct. 13, 2007; I have greatly condensed the account (found in Larmer, "Manuscript") here (from eleven paragraphs to one).

105. Hickson, *Heal*, 50, 114; e.g., idem, *Bridegroom*, 268. Even some gradual healings were so numerous and of conditions considered so incurable that their effect proved dramatic (idem, *Heal*, 77, from a hospital matron in China, 1921).

106. Most who claim some healings note that many others were not healed (e.g., Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 128).

107. Hickson, *Heal*, 85, noting the witness from Japan in an area of many lepers in 1921.

108. Ibid., 218.

109. See again ibid., 72; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 29–31.

110. McKenna, *Miracles*, 51. She provides a nuanced perspective on gradual and medically aided healings (48–54).

111. Noted, e.g., by May, "Miracles," 147; Pullum, "Believe," 141.

112. Though the recovery in Mark 8:23–25 occurs in two stages, it also functions as an acted parable to teach the "half-blind" disciples (Mark 8:17). Perhaps "that hour" in Acts 16:18 allows for it; Acts 20:10–12

the dramatic restoration of missing flesh, as in some examples above, though they do specify restoration of sight, life, and so forth. But many of the mentions of healings we find in the Gospels are bare summaries.) Observers might pose theological, literary, or cultural explanations or a combination thereof to explain differences between those accounts and typical healing reports from our own era. For example, perhaps distinctively Jesus and those with fuller acquaintance with his healing ministry, such as the Twelve, were more prepared to experience dramatic, instant signs than most others are. Or perhaps (on theological grounds) their ministry invited fuller attestation than that of some others in our modern analogies.¹¹³ Other factors in the comparative lack of gradual signs might include the narrative focus of the Gospels and Acts (undoubtedly reporting the most extraordinary cures);¹¹⁴ or perhaps a culture more open to¹¹⁵ extraordinary signs; or less cultural disposition to analyze and remember (or perhaps care about) the length of time for completion (perhaps because they were more prone to believe in miracles than to doubt them). The differences between *many* modern examples and those narrated in the Gospels and Acts are worth noting, but they need not detract from the central point that eyewitnesses can claim extranormal healings, on at least *some* occasions instantaneous and complete ones.

In any case, the cumulative effects of some particularly dramatic healings reported today seem to move beyond conventional naturalistic explanations. Certainly cases such as the healings of infants or claims of people restored from a state of death, when these events occur in the specific context of prayer, challenge purely psychosomatic explanations.¹¹⁶ One could object that sudden recoveries happen

might suggest it; in the OT, 2 Kgs 20:5 probably suggests it. Paul in Phil 2:27 may allow for Epaphroditus's recovery gradually or even construe it as divine grace employing natural means; Jas 5:15–16 does not specify the time frame explicitly. The summaries are not specific; most of the individual stories chosen for inclusion in the Gospels and Acts are more dramatic. Regarding frequency, Van Brenk, "Wagner," 258, while affirming that healings "happen with enough regularity," rightly notes that they seem to happen less often today than in NT accounts (at least in circles we regularly encounter).

113. One could argue that modern healings are on a lesser level than those in the Gospels and Acts or that God would grant them on that level only for extraordinary, strategic moments in history. The former position is a moderate cessationism not easily established exegetically but perhaps plausible empirically outside new evangelistic contexts, but the latter noncessationist approach might better accommodate a common experience in new evangelistic contexts. Either might be helpful for those who conclude (as some do) that Jesus always healed all who came to him, in contrast to less uniform healing claims today. Robertson, *Miracles*, 114, suggests that we do not have the same level of faith that Jesus had.

114. Conciseness is a possible but less likely factor (cf., e.g., Matt 21:19 with Mark 11:14, 20—Matthew makes the miracle more instantaneous by abbreviating the account). One might cautiously compare later hagiography to this degree: a narrative praising its protagonist is less apt to report what might be construed as failures (cf. Goddu, "Failure," 7, on saints' exorcism failures, which [9–10] seem to have clustered in the sixth and seventh, eleventh through fourteenth, and sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). The sociology of paranormal claims favors successes (Charpak and Broch, *Debunked*, 50–51), though this explanation works better for sporadically correct predictions than for multiple cures of blindness and other major ailments through a single person.

115. And/or in need of them, physically and/or spiritually.

116. Many philosophers do accept the raising of the dead as significant evidence, if it occurs (Swinburne, *Miracles*, 32), and most thinkers have long recognized that infants cannot be healed psychosomatically

at times without prayer (certainly a correct observation), but again some of the examples (such as restoration from death hours after being pronounced dead, and at the moment of prayer) do not lend themselves as easily to such explanations. One could regard all such claims as fictitious, but that particular approach, applied indiscriminately, will not carry weight with those (including myself) who know some sincere claimants or have witnessed their changed condition. It is too convenient a tool for dismissing evidence inconvenient to rigidly held presuppositions.

Some Scholars' Testimonies, Explanations

Rather than include all testimonies earlier, I have reserved several new ones for this chapter (where I will also rehearse briefly some earlier examples). These are not all more substantive than all accounts offered earlier, but the sources fit Hume's profile of witnesses with much to lose. Although I cited testimonies of various scholars earlier, I have reserved some testimonies of some philosophers and my own accounts for here.

Philosophers' Interviews

Robert Larmer, professor and chair of the department of philosophy at the University of New Brunswick, generously shared with me some interviews that he conducted with persons who had experienced unusual recoveries.¹¹⁷ One case involves Irene MacDonald of Fredericton, New Brunswick, who had been experiencing rapid deterioration from clearly diagnosed multiple sclerosis. A specialist warned her that her condition was terminal and that she would soon die. Soon bedridden, she needed spinal injections for pain every ten days. As the decline continued, however, one Friday afternoon a friend assured Irene that God was saying that he was going to heal her soon. Given all that she had been through, Irene was understandably skeptical of such an encouragement by this point. Nevertheless, a dream and increased strength encouraged her, and Sunday she asked to be carried into church. During prayer for her there, feeling suddenly returned to

(see the perspective noted in Mullin, *Miracles*, 209). Accounts of healed infants include Duffin, *Miracles*, 60 (noting multiple cases); Ising, *Blumhardt*, 207–8, 211; Koch, *Zulus*, 102–4; I offer many examples elsewhere in the book, including (though not by any means comprehensively) Duffin, *Miracles*, 145 (a raised infant); Llewellyn, "Events," 262; Gibbs, "Miracles," esp. 67–68, 70, 72; Ising, *Blumhardt*, 206–7; Hickson, *Heal*, 76; "Healed from Trauma"; Sabourin, *Miracles*, 165–67; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 25–27; Crandall, *Raising*, 155; Hock, *Miracles*, 47–49; Brown, "Healing Words," 278; Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 76–83; O'Connor, *Movement*, 162–63; Tarango, "Physician," 112; Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 55–56; Montgomery, *Faith*, 109–12; DiOrio, *Signs*, 21–26; Pytches, *Come*, 121–22; DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 43; Harris, *Acts Today*, 100–101; Fant, *Miracles*, 141–44; Rumph, *Signs*, 49–52; Ikin, *Concepts*, 86–87; Jeanne Mabiala, July 29, 2008; Josiah Mataika, Jan. 29, 2009; Chester Allan Tesoro, Jan. 30, 2009; Sarah Speer, Jan. 7, Aug. 20, 2009; James Watson, Nov. 27, 2009; Mirtha Venero Boza, Aug. 6, 2010; Iris Lilia Fonseca Valdés, Aug. 11, 2010.

117. Robert Larmer (personal correspondence, Aug. 4, 2009), sharing the chapter in an unpublished manuscript that he hopes to publish. I have omitted the names of physicians where they occurred because I have not solicited permission to publish their names.

her arm and legs. Instantly she had full “control of her body and fully regained muscular strength.” Although she had long been confined to bed, she walked from the church and returned to all her pre-illness activities. That was more than a quarter of a century ago, and none of the symptoms have ever returned. Dr. Larmer not only interviewed Irene but also knows well many of those who witnessed the original healing.¹¹⁸

Dr. Larmer also notes the healing of missionary Bill Drost, who was diagnosed with stomach cancer and informed by the specialist in New Brunswick that “even if the operation were successful Bill would need a tube in his side the rest of his life.” Bill often fainted from the bleeding but had deferred the operation, against medical advice, to attend a conference. Because nothing had changed after previous occasions of prayer, he acquiesced when people at the conference wanted to pray for him, yet he expected nothing. The next morning, however, he realized that he had slept without pain and now felt hungry; “he had his first normal bowel movement in months.” Although convinced that he was now healed, he kept his surgical appointment. The doctors found “no trace of cancer,” and after nine days of extensive testing, they finally acknowledged his cure and sent him home. He passed away many years later, of unrelated causes.¹¹⁹

Larmer also notes Mary Ellen Fitch, who was hospitalized with hepatitis B. She was warned that she would need to remain in the hospital for a minimum of three months and likelier a year, with permanent liver damage. She turned yellow, and her swollen liver expanded her abdomen. Shortly beyond a week in the hospital, she had a deep experience with God and committed her condition to him to do as he chose. Blood tests the next morning showed that she was normal; the bewildered doctors kept testing her over time, but she continued to test normal. Many years have passed, and she has never had subsequent liver problems.¹²⁰

Dr. Joseph Novak, a professor in the University of Waterloo’s philosophy department, also provided a healing account to Larmer, concerning Novak’s mother, Mary. Her serious leg ulcers over the years had required various treatments, but operation for a broken femur cut off the flow of blood in her right leg, and massive gangrene set in. Doctors wanted to amputate her leg below the knee, though they acknowledged that Mary, at eighty-one, might not survive the surgery. She refused the operation, so the doctors told the family that they could not help her further, and to arrange for her to die in a hospice. Mary’s deterioration continued there, where she dropped to about eighty-six pounds. At this point, Dr. Novak contacted Joan Gieson, known for her ministry to the poor in St. Louis and also for a healing ministry. Joan flew in to pray for Mary personally and even missed

118. Larmer, “Manuscript,” citing interviews with Irene and Norman MacDonald, Oct. 4, 2007, and the witness of “a number of people in the church which I attend.”

119. *Ibid.*, citing interviews with Drost’s widow, Ruth Drost, and son Verner Drost, and the published account of Drost’s healing.

120. *Ibid.*, based on an interview with Mary Ellen Fitch, Oct. 29, 2007. Fitch is now middle-aged; she was nineteen when she fell sick with hepatitis.

her initial flight home due to delays at the nursing home. The day after her prayer, however, the leg was looking better, and soon the black spots turned red, then later disappeared. Gradually all the gangrene disappeared, to the astonishment of the doctors following the case. Mary lived on for nearly six more years before passing away from unrelated causes (a stroke) in 2005.¹²¹

Others report further interviews; for example, philosophy professor Hendrik van der Breggen, in his dissertation regarding the philosophic plausibility of miracle reports, mentions interviews with persons claiming eyewitness experience of miracles, including a university science professor and the former president of the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada.¹²²

One scholar I know, Dr. J. P. Moreland, who had long moved in cessationist circles, was astonished to find himself instantly healed in answer to prayer.¹²³ He and a colleague now also provide reports of instantly healed bones;¹²⁴ an instantly and completely healed knee;¹²⁵ healings of cancers in their own church, including some that were beyond medical help; and the healing of blindness and deafness there.¹²⁶

Some Limited Eyewitness Experience

I have reserved this section for the final chapter not because my own experience is as dramatic as that of many others reported in the book but merely because Hume emphasizes direct experience and denies the likelihood of credible witnesses with much to lose by testifying. Anyone familiar with Western academia will recognize that my academic reputation would be far better served by not challenging conventional assumptions on this issue. It would be even better served by not claiming to have witnessed extranormal cures myself, since some consider more biased those claiming to be witnesses of what the critics do not believe than those who, not having experienced such cures, feel free to dismiss them based on their nonexperience. (One might compare their limitations to the ambit of Hume's circle against those of Pascal or Wesley.) Making claims about some particular subjects violates the current understanding of "neutrality," and violating it seems particularly imprudent for one advocating a minority philosophic position in the academy.¹²⁷

121. Ibid., reproducing verbatim the account provided by Dr. Joseph Novak. Again, I have greatly condensed the account (from nineteen paragraphs to one).

122. Breggen, "Miracle Reports," 383.

123. Moreland, *Triangle*, 164–65. Experience has also reoriented some others previously inclined toward cessationism, such as the cessationist in India reported in Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 150–51 (cf. the effect on the theologian in Hong Kong on 153); or Presbyterian evangelist Don Dunkerley (*Healing Evangelism*, 28–30).

124. Moreland and Issler, *Faith*, 136.

125. Ibid., 138.

126. Ibid., 149. They also note the healing of a case of severe, long-term digestive sickness and insomnia (149–51).

127. Some of us challenge dominant Western academic perspectives not because we are ignorant of them but because we feel compelled to do so by evidence we believe that we have witnessed.

Nevertheless, an honest exploration of truth claims cannot simply dismiss claims merely to perpetuate scholarly consensus. I have noted, for example, an increasing chorus of voices among anthropologists challenging Western assumptions regarding traditional cultures' worldviews regarding extraordinary experience. Most obviously, although she has generally retained respect, Edith Turner potentially risked her reputation in the anthropological community to attest eyewitness experience of phenomena in a traditional African religious context, phenomena that, according to modern Western assumptions, should not have occurred.¹²⁸

Moreover, from another perspective, firsthand stories are particularly credible, because they bring the reader closest to the eyewitness level and demand the greatest care on the part of the eyewitness.¹²⁹ I can also insist that my memories of miraculous events are not different in kind from my other memories: I do not recall, for example, a healing I witnessed three decades ago differently or with greater embellishment than I remember other events from that same time. The images of the setting and persons remain roughly equally clear. The only difference might be that I might remember the healing more clearly when it was such a dramatic event as to be seared into my memory, partly because it so challenged my cultural predispositions.

I began my own quite young philosophic explorations as an atheist, at which time I denied the possibility of miracles; as one who is currently a Christian and sometimes moves in circles where such phenomena are claimed, I would naturally personally affirm the possibility of miracles. At this point, however, I am not simply affirming that I believe that miracles are possible or that I believe that they occur; rather, I am affirming that I have witnessed some events myself that I believe may be most easily explained in such terms. By laying my integrity on the line, I join those who challenge Hume's denial of the existence of credible witnesses with something to lose.¹³⁰

I risk stating this even though extranormal claims have been traditionally ruled out of bounds for discussion in academia, whereas the premise that such claims

128. See Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 149, 159; idem, "Reality." The academy traditionally followed Humean thought here as well; Hume's primary target was apparently Christian apologetic, but he a priori dismissed claims from traditional religions as "ignorant and barbarous."

129. Cf., e.g., Covell, "Foreword," x, noting that they have taken stories "from participants, from close observers," and, at times, even the personal involvement of one of the authors, adding "even further credibility to the stories." On the value placed on eyewitness experience and participation in ancient historiography, see, e.g., Byrskog, *History*, 153–57; Keener, *Historical Jesus*, ch. 7.

130. See Kee, *Miracle*, 11–12. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 11, a physician, notes several doctors who could refute Hume at this point and lays his own medical credibility on the line. Against Hume's a priori exclusion of the value of testimony (even of concrete examples that he himself admits as unimpeachable testimony; Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 42), sufficient testimony should challenge a priori, since our lives regularly depend on others' experience claims (Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 41). Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 9, notes that few NT scholars have wanted to engage supranormal phenomena in the NT; after a century of a priori rejection of the supernatural, "few academics would put their credibility and academic acceptability on the line by publishing on this material. If they did publish on it, it was to debunk it as historically unreliable or as illustrative of precritical thought."

are inauthentic is deemed acceptable. Because of prejudices like those I have noted earlier, it is not surprising that some scholars with much to lose are reticent to challenge the status quo even when they do not agree with it. Their position is understandable, but I feel that my academic integrity would be more at risk if I entirely evade discussing my experience concerning the matters in question.

Hume's epistemology rejects testimony for events that more neutral observers would attribute to miracles (a rejection that I have argued is oversimplified and problematic); yet his epistemology grants much higher credence to one's direct experience. My direct experience is very limited; I have not directly experienced the most dramatic cases (like raisings from the dead) described in the book. Such experience would not be likely for me: given my normal primary professional focus on people who have been dead for two millennia, I do not spend much of my time in settings where I am frequently exposed to major health needs. Nevertheless, after completing my research, my own limited direct experiences seem in retrospect sufficient to incline me to regard many accounts that I have received from others as quite plausible. If this experience is a bias, it seems to me surely a better-grounded one than the nonexperience that some critics use as a basis for explaining away others' experiences.

I offer some more direct accounts in the next section but begin with some preliminary remarks. My wife is a non-Pentecostal, mainstream Congolese Protestant with her PhD from University of Paris 7;¹³¹ she and her family come from a region where Christianity peacefully spread from a relatively small minority to become the dominant professed faith in less than a century.¹³² In that context and elsewhere, we have personally witnessed some events no less extraordinary than those reported in the Gospels and Acts, even if not on a regular basis.¹³³ If we

131. Like her father, who was gifted in healing, she has never yet experienced tongues, though some other family members have. At the time of writing, I have been a minister for about two decades in the National Baptist Convention, USA, and teach in a mostly interdenominational seminary affiliated with the American Baptist Convention (NBC is largely African-American; NBC and ABC are both members of the National Council of Churches). While I appreciate these connections, they arose from specific circumstances. My personal spiritual commitments are unrelated to denominational boundaries; I mention these connections only because readers might wish to know why I have not highlighted these connections the way that I have highlighted my wife's (and to explain how I had access to testimonies in particular circles). This is not the context where I have witnessed most healings, though examples in earlier chapters will show that these occur among various kinds of Baptists as elsewhere; a few were in Pentecostal church contexts, but most were outside church settings altogether.

132. In my wife's nation, Christianity grew from 2.5 percent of the population in 1910 to 89.9 percent in 2010 (Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 120). In Africa as a whole, Christianity grew from 9.2 percent of the population (9.9 million people) in 1900 to 45 percent (360 million) by 2000 (Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 45, 128, following Jaffarian, "Statistical State"; Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, *Encyclopedia*, 5); for Christian growth in Africa from 1910 to 2010, see Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 110–33. "Islam and Christianity," i, estimates seventyfold growth from 7 million to 470 million between 1900 and 2010.

133. Some of our eyewitness accounts (mostly not of healings) may be in the published version of Médine's war testimony (in process), although our original version will be greatly abridged (probably esp. regarding my own accounts). If someone accuses my wife and me of cultural bias for heeding reports from Africa (an accusation many would view as ethnocentric), I would respond that we are not denigrating the

include only phenomena that one of us has witnessed¹³⁴ or those shared with us firsthand by those who claim to have experienced them, there is scarcely a report in the Gospels and Acts that I could not accept as at least potentially the claim of an eyewitness (water walking, turning water into wine, and permanent resurrection being admitted exceptions to our experience).

Thus, for example, I talked with an aged Nigerian evangelist, Baba Tambaya, who was widely known to have survived stoning and being left for dead in earlier years;¹³⁵ a pastor who was wounded in the same war where my wife was a refugee fled unseen past his assailants;¹³⁶ as I have noted, a member of my wife's immediate family (her sister Thérèse) was restored from roughly three hours of apparent death after prayer, among eyewitnesses my wife also knows;¹³⁷ consistent prophecies from people of prayer in different regions accurately foretold what appeared to be impossible details of the future;¹³⁸ both of us have witnessed some healings instantly following prayer and have close relationships with (or have been) the people so healed; and so forth. I also have close, trusted friends who have given eyewitness reports of healing miracles in which they were involved, and (as the reader by now knows) have interviewed a number of other eyewitnesses.¹³⁹ For

insights of eighteenth-century Western philosophy but that knowing multiple cultures provides a greater critical control than knowing only (or uncritically accepting the premises of only) Western culture. An anthropologist supporting a non-Christian worldview complains about the condescension of those who regard her convincing eyewitness experience (visibly witnessing a spirit during an African ritual) as merely "subjective" (Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 160).

134. Our shared type of experience, by the way, reflects the commonness of the experience, not any deliberate matching on our part. Our shared academic background and nonmiraculous elements of shared faith brought us together; apart from a generic comment about her father's healing gift, I began learning most of her miracle-type stories only after we were engaged.

135. I met with Tambaya Jibirin on July 2, 1998. Our interpreter was Emmanuel Itapson, now my colleague in Hebrew Bible at Palmer Theological Seminary; Emmanuel's father had worked closely with Baba Tambaya. Other cases of people being revived after being left for dead are reported (e.g., Numbere, *Vision*, 178; Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 50, shocking the Tibetan witness's persecutors; Acts 14:19–20).

136. Pastor Massamba (told to Médine and others who visited him and recorded in Médine's journal, June 27, 1999).

137. Antoinette Malombé (July 12, 2008); Ngoma Moïse (May 14, 2009); see ch. 12.

138. In spite of some prophecies not being fulfilled, some, especially some from particular individuals, proved accurate in extraordinary details. These include several independent prophecies from different individuals that she would marry a white minister, in settings where barely anyone was white and no one knew even of our friendship (e.g., one on Feb. 27, 1999, when she was a refugee in the forest; and in 1990 and 1997, from a different person who did not know the other). At the time, she had no reason to believe that it was even possible that we would marry.

139. In the course of preparing this section, some people in my immediate circle as well as some who did not know of the project told me about cures, many of which (if they are less documented or distinctive) are not recorded elsewhere in the book. For example, my physicist-trained brother Chris reported to me (June 23, 2007, concerning an earlier event) the sudden, complete, and permanent healing of a friend's long-term pain from a shoulder injury during prayer for healing in which Chris was involved. Similarly during that time, J. P. Moreland, though trained in cessationist circles, also told me that he adopted an entirely different perspective after witnessing several dramatic healings in his church (see now his *Triangle*, 164–65). Such events necessarily appear anecdotal in isolation—but can appear more persuasive to those who know the persons and their integrity, and when they happen on multiple occasions.

what it is worth, because of our own settings, only a minority of these events near us took place in specifically identifiable Pentecostal or charismatic circles. I shall note some more concrete examples in the next section.

I reiterate again my awareness that extranormal healings do not occur every time petitioners seek them. Many are not healed; many others experience only temporary reprieves in remissions; and everyone eventually dies. Even in the Gospels and Acts, healings function as signs of the future kingdom, not as universal guarantees of perpetual health. Moreover, in most Christians' theology, depending on natural medicine no more contravenes faith than does working for one's daily bread in addition to praying for it; in the Gospels, Jesus multiplied food when necessary but expected his followers to use natural means for their next meal (Mark 6:43; John 6:12–13).

I also emphasize here that, like most people with access to medical resources, I resort to these medical resources regularly, and there have been a number of times, such as a series of miscarriages we have experienced, where no cure, medical or otherwise, occurred. The latter disappointments make me sympathetic toward those who, from their own experience, are skeptical of miracles; I have at times been quite tempted by such skepticism. But our own experience is too small a sample size from which to rule out what others may have experienced, and some of the incidents we have experienced, including those experienced by myself or people close to me, were dramatically extranormal, not simply normal recoveries.

Even if apparently extranormal recoveries might sometimes occur naturally, and I have not witnessed such recoveries on a uniformly regular basis, I believe that they occurred immediately after prayer far more frequently in our circles of acquaintance than one might easily attribute to coincidence.¹⁴⁰ Some philosophers note that one need not rule out supernatural claims in the case of "extraordinary coincidence," with an extraordinarily improbable collocation of factors.¹⁴¹ Witnesses cite a large number of such cases.¹⁴²

140. E.g., although Harnack accepted Luke's historical reliability highly (see Johnson, "Miracles and History," 535–37), Harnack reduces the miracles "by a rather free use of the theory of coincidence" (537), until it becomes cumulatively overwhelmingly improbable (538).

141. See Swinburne, *Miracle*, 10; Corduan, "Miracle," 104; as "signs," cf. 1 Sam 10:7; for divine explanations in ancient Greek thought, cf. "Coincidence," 1021–22. This principle might apply to highly unusual cases of prophecy (e.g., Newman, "Prophecy"). Clouds spelling out Scripture do not appear to require a violation of nature, technically, but the natural probability of such an event is so low as to virtually demand a supernatural explanation (cf. Langtry, "Probability," 71).

142. An example of such a "coincidence" would be David Wilkerson feeling led to seek a particular person in precisely the building in all of Spanish Harlem where it turned out that he lived, in Wilkerson, *Cross*, 31; for other leadings or cases of direction, see, e.g., 106, 109–11; Peckham, *Sounds*, 84, 227; Alexander, *Signs*, 1–2; Baxter, *Healing*, 102; Bennett, *Morning*, 106–7; Piper, *Minutes*, 160–62; Tournier, *Casebook*, 213; Numbere, *Vision*, 445–46; McKenna, *Miracles*, 129–30; Lesslie, *Angels*, 152–54; Ten Boom, *Tramp*, 84, 87–88; Koch, *Zulus*, 12–13, 108, 261–63, 279–81 (for coincidence; for guidance, 26, 28, 235–36, 239); Alamino, *Footsteps*, 67–68; Anderson, *Miracles*, 4–6, 15–16, 41–42, 44–46, 76–77, 92–93, 107–8, 232–34 (in this last case, the precise yet unknown phone number where the intended recipient was passing in another state); the unusually fortuitous circumstances in Duffin, *Miracles*, 147; Flint, "Accounts," 147; Sullivan, "Foreword," viii; Carothers, *Prison*, 87–88; Lesslie, *Angels*, 144,

Closer Eyewitness Examples and Alternative Explanations

That eyewitnesses claim to have witnessed extranormal recoveries should be safely beyond dispute; the existence of such claims and recoveries, however, cannot by itself conclusively resolve the question of their interpretation.¹⁴³ Even if we accept the use of modern analogies, scholars might differ concerning the particular analogies from which to draw: charlatans, theologically suspect or (alternatively) naturalistically explainable yet sincere claims, more credible claims, or some other approach to categorizing the reports.

Even when there can be no question that an event occurred, interpreters will differ as to the cause of the event. For example, I watched as a Christian group of college students preparing for a ministry outreach event prayed for the stilling of a heavy storm; the storm, which had continued for a couple hours and was expected to continue for much of the day, stopped within seconds.¹⁴⁴ In the West, the usual secular explanation for such an event would be coincidence¹⁴⁵—though as one person skeptical about undue skepticism pointed out, “All I know is that when I stop praying, the coincidences stop happening!”¹⁴⁶

On another occasion, also in the United States, I saw a sincere man whom I knew take the hand of an elderly woman who had never been able to walk since I had known her. To the horror of the rest of us in that nursing home room, including the woman, Don commanded Barbara to walk in the name of Jesus and lifted her by her hand from her wheelchair. (If skeptics charge that faith is a bias, I may be deemed innocent of that bias in this case: I was terrified that the poor woman would collapse on the floor.) She immediately began to walk, though

146–48 (cf. perhaps 203–4); Wright, *Acts*, 131–33; Yohannan, *Revolution*, 36–38; Robertson, *Miracles*, 18; Anderson, *Miracles*, 23–24, 32–33, 34–36, 40–41; Woodard, *Faith*, 57–58; Braun, *Way*, 80–82, 220, 243; Brian Stewart (interview, Aug. 14, 2010); David Gomero Borges and Yaima Gutiérrez Valdés (interview, Aug. 13, 2010); Marszalek, *Miracles*, 113–14, 184–85; Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 106; the providential circumstances deferring execution in *ibid.*, 70–71. Still, unusual circumstances can accompany both positive and negative occurrences; see Crump, *Knocking*, 13–14. I have also on some occasions experienced precise leadings (a very few are recounted in *Gift*, 37, 44, 51, 57, 121; one from June 14, 1998, corroborated through correspondence with Jeff Power, July 24, 2010); one could fill volumes with claims of this nature.

143. I deliberately take the following two examples from the United States. In the West, such phenomena, which violate standard plausibility structures, seem far less frequent than in many parts of the world, but such claims are made in the West as well. Regarding interpretation, those with paranormal experiences usually interpret them within their own folk religious contexts (McClenon, *Events*, 5), as faith explanations provide contexts for reducing cognitive dissonance (10).

144. Mentioned also in Keener, *Gift*, 62; personal journal, Nov. 6, 1993. For much more dramatic examples of nature miracles, see ch. 12, although I did not witness most of those. The stopping of storms after prayer is not uncommon (for another example, see Bright, “Guest,” 47), though it should be noted that storms eventually stop, and they do not always stop when people pray. I have thus given preference to more unusual cases.

145. One need not rule out supernatural claims in the case of “extraordinary coincidence” (see Swinburne, *Miracle*, 10), but my point here is that competing worldviews produce alternative explanations.

146. Elberta Bennett in Bennett, *Morning*, 101, in the context of prayers regarding the weather. The point is not that all prayers are answered, but that for those who move in this spiritual sphere the “coincidences” often seem extraordinary and large in number (with past or others’ experience as a control).

at first hesitantly, scarcely believing it herself, and after that day began walking regularly and very happily, though initially using a walker for security.¹⁴⁷ At first too shocked to believe what was happening, after she found herself able to walk she regularly expressed appreciation that she had been cured that night. Because I saw her every week I knew that she did not relapse after the excitement of the moment; far from it, she walked from that time on.

Some would explain this recovery as a psychological cure of a psychosomatic illness; I am not qualified to speak to whether or not such factors were at work in this case and cannot deny the possibility. I can say that few in the room at that time, knowing her long-term complaints about her condition, would have doubted the reality of her changed condition, even though we were not prepared to do what Don did. More to the point, she appeared as horrified by his action initially as the rest of us; moreover, if her condition was psychosomatic, he had no natural way to know that. If only a psychosomatic illness could be cured and Don had no way to distinguish it from a physical one, it seems quite a happy coincidence that we witnessed Don's involvement in this public cure but never saw him attempt any cures that failed.

I have witnessed extraordinary events on a number of other occasions. I have not kept track, and am not listing here occasions beyond healings. Nevertheless, the following, all from before I began graduate work in religion and many from within my first two to four years as a Christian, are examples:

- the instant disappearance of a cyst in the ear of a woman I prayed for;¹⁴⁸
- after two of us prayed, the immediate functioning again of a person's kidneys, which had failed;
- the immediate healing of lungs that had been bleeding, where the doctor previously suspected lung cancer;¹⁴⁹
- the healing of my own limping, damaged ankle immediately thereafter able to run well;¹⁵⁰

147. After being confined to a wheelchair so long, her muscles were undoubtedly atrophied in any case. On reading this account, my younger brother Chris reminded me that he was also present on that occasion and witnessed Barbara's rising and walking (personal correspondence, Jan. 30 and Feb. 8, 2009). I have not been able to locate Don, then a Fuller seminarian, who had been part of my church, to secure permission to print his full name.

148. By contrast, a more recent cyst of my own had to be addressed medically.

149. I recount this one, regarding Mabel Cooper, in somewhat more detail in *Gift*, 59.

150. I have always had weak ankles. Within two years of my conversion, I was healed of an injured ankle at the beginning of a cross-country race after a couple weeks of limping in pain; the pain vanished instantly and permanently, and that was (to my embarrassment) the only race in which I ever took first place. A few years later (ca. 1984), I twisted or broke an ankle in an accident, and, unable to afford medical help, for two years could only limp on it painfully if I overexerted it, after the swelling eventually went down. I can testify that for those years I had not been able to run on it more than at most a few meters without intense pain returning and stopping me. In late summer or early fall of 1986, after no change in the condition, my ankle was instantly healed after I sensed special faith for healing while I was praying,

- instant and complete healing of flu at its intense peak;¹⁵¹
- and so forth.¹⁵²

Yet on other occasions of equally intense prayers, no suprahuman cures were forthcoming. No formula allowed one to predict the outcome in a given instance.

Interpreting the Evidence

Cumulatively, I believe that the evidence should be sufficient to challenge any rule based on Hume's denial of adequate eyewitness claims for miracles. The exception must be if one places the bar of adequacy so high that no evidence can meet it, but to do so is simply to restate a presupposition that miracles cannot occur. Is this the conclusion to which an observer neutral on the question would likely come?

Is a Nontheistic Interpretation Necessary?

Lack of a predicting formula does not mean that we lack an observable pattern. If, for example, eyewitnesses or even medical records attest that some persons have been raised from the dead (though this phenomenon is comparatively rare both today and in the Gospels and Acts), one could counter that people who appear to be dead do sometimes (very rarely) return to life, and coincidentally some might return to life when a person is expressing faith for that to happen. Yet this explanation does not easily account for the clustering of such events around those who expect it to occur at times. A person committed to antitheism or committed for some other reason to admitting only nontheistic explanations might counter that faith is itself some active power not yet understood, though this proposal would seem a high price for maintaining thoroughgoing naturalism (some might even view it as another form of supernaturalism).¹⁵³ That is, if one is inclined to doubt

and I tested it right away. The next day I had opportunity for a greater test with six flights of stairs, which I ran up; the pain from that injury never returned.

151. Twice in the first two years after my conversion, afflicted by the flu and ready to disgorge into a toilet basin, I prayed and was cured so instantly that there was suddenly not even anything to disgorge. I had not planned to mention these cures until reading that a doctor was persuaded of the efficacy of prayer when his own flu instantly dissipated after it (Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 62–63), hence thought it could be appropriate to mention it. Accustomed to vomiting during flu in that period of my life, I prayed that God would remove that affliction from me; while I cannot predict the future, I have not vomited for over three decades since that time (though I have been sick plenty of other ways, including a brief period with reflux).

152. When as a young Christian I used to pray in a wooded area, my arms quickly filled up with mosquito bites; after I prayed for the bites (and for those of anyone praying with me, on occasions when anyone did), they vanished within a few minutes (at most half an hour), which had not been my usual experience before my conversion. This happened on numerous occasions and, at that time in my life, without exception.

153. In a Platonic worldview, the world of ideas exerts itself in the world of shadows (hence in later Platonism, matter). Cf. sixteenth-century alternatives to miraculous explanations that appealed instead to "causes almost as wondrous: occult virtues of animals, plants, and humans; astral influences; the power of the imagination on animate and inanimate bodies" (Daston, "Facts," 112). Bacon allowed that rigid

the possibility of divine activity, one can pose an alternative possibility without assurance that one's explanation is itself probable, so long as one deems a supernatural explanation impossible.

Yet is it really intellectually necessary to dismiss as possible the explanation that large numbers of actual observers believe far more consistent with the most relevant evidence—namely, the explanation of divine activity? The majority of those who assume as necessary Hume's argument or antitheism are not themselves professional philosophers. They seem to simply take for granted that philosophy has excluded the possibility of miracles, when in fact, contrary to the belief of some outside academic philosophy, theism remains an acceptable subject of discussion in that discipline.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, as one committed naturalistic philosopher unhappily but fairly points out, the vast *majority* of philosophers of religion addressing theism today write in *support* of it.¹⁵⁵ Appealing to a philosophic *a priori* against the possibility of God as a cause will not work as an *a priori* basis for rejecting supernatural explanations for miracle claims. Atheism is not currently the default philosophic position, so it must be argued for rather than assumed. And if one does not *a priori* rule out the possibility of a supernatural explanation, many will find a supernatural explanation the most compelling one available for some of the incidents that have been recounted.

Normally one places greater trust in hypotheses that make accurate predictions; some would thus attribute unpredictability in these matters to pure coincidence. But historical work and social sciences in general cannot make exact predictions,¹⁵⁶ precisely because intelligent agents are not always predictable.¹⁵⁷ Since too many of the examples above seem implausible to me as pure coincidence, particularly cumulatively, I prefer a different hypothesis: a personal God ready and able to heal,

corpses allegedly bleeding again when their murderers were present might be miraculous but deemed it likely due to mental causes (Daston, "Facts," 112).

154. See, e.g., among many others, Plantinga, *Minds*; Davies, *Physics*; Davis, *Proofs*; Dembski, *Inference*; Denton, *Destiny*; Gale and Pruss, "Argument"; Koons, *Realism*; Oderberg, "Argument"; Gale and Pruss, *Existence*; Manson, *Design* (for both sides); Swinburne, *Existence*; Nowacki, *Argument*; O'Connor, *Theism*; for helpful popular introductions to theistic philosophers, see Craig, "Not Dead"; Clark, *Philosophers*; for a summary of arguments, see also Beck, "Existence." Even the Platonic theistic perspective of some innate knowledge of God might find comfort in the modern suggestion that faith in the divine is a distinctly human, genetic survival instinct (Benson, *Healing*, 196–97, 208–11, though he leaves open the question whether it is divinely planted or projected by need).

155. Smith, "Metaphilosophy," 197 (brought to my attention by Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 110n82; accessed Nov. 28, 2008, and later in hard copy). Smith estimates that theists (mostly "orthodox Christians") compose a quarter to a third of philosophy professors (196), but that perhaps 98 percent of those publishing on philosophy of religion advance theism (197).

156. Popper, *Historicism*, 12–14. Indeed, one cannot predict the outcome of particular surgeries, though one can offer statistical probabilities (Cassell, *Miracles*, 214); the reasons for unpredictability, however, are different in the case of miracles.

157. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 140; cf. Barrow and Tippler, *Principle*, 139. As Ward, "Miracles and Testimony," 137, notes, we do not speak of human actions as violating nature simply because the laws of physics do not predict them. He would apply this principle *a fortiori* to claims about divine action, since he denies that science can formulate laws about God as a nonphysical being (Ward, "Believing," 746–47).

but one who also often allows created nature to take its own course and who is not manipulated by formulas, as perhaps an impersonal or merely psychological force could be.¹⁵⁸ Although miracles are consistent with the character of the biblical God, we cannot always predict a personal deity's future actions, especially when our knowledge about the factors involved in those actions are limited.¹⁵⁹ If miracles happened with absolute regularity, we would view them as part of the course of nature; their occurrence beyond providence in nature allows them to function more specifically as signs revealing God's activity and character.¹⁶⁰

158. Lourdes notes the unpredictability of cures, emphasizing that this places them outside the normal domain of scientific laws (Cranston, *Miracle*, 136, 264). C. S. Lewis, like many others, argued that one should expect the usual course of nature in general, with God intervening only selectively (e.g., Lewis, *Miracles*, 201). Although his book reflects its milieu (an older understanding of natural law and sometimes a Platonic perspective; note the concern in Sharp, "Miracles," 11), many of its considerations remain useful in (or even anticipate) the current discussion (Larmer, "Critique," 167, thinks them "worthy of more attention and respect by professional philosophers"). I think the evidence today suggests more miracles than Lewis expected, but it is true that they seem not to occur evenly or pervasively throughout human experience. In terms of what is *conceivable*, miracles would not even need to be "rare" (Landrum, "Miracle," 56–57; Fitzgerald, "Miracles," 61–62); if they function as signs, they simply need to communicate something from personal suprahuman intelligence.

159. See the discussion in Smart, *Philosophers*, 39–42.

160. Detractors of Christianity sometimes protest that a genuinely good God would provide far more miracles than are claimed (also deists, cf., e.g., Mott, "Science," 66); some consider this a complex problem that challenges the theistic hypothesis (cf., e.g., Weintraub, "Credibility," 372; counting biblical miracles as arbitrary and biased, see Overall, "Miracles," 351–52, but McGrew, "Miracles," 4.1, shows why most philosophers do not follow Overall's argument; cf. Overall, "Larmer"; Larmer, "Apology"). Taliaferro, "Argument," 225–26 (responding to Sobel, *Logic*, 309), posits eschatological justice and asks how far Sobel would push the fairness argument, since skills and so on are also inequitably distributed. Some argue that miracles for a few are unfair (Keller, "Argument," 69–70; he allows that only God might know why, but only *if* one has other reasons for believing this, 73; cf. his process approach in "Power"). (As an analogy regarding complaints about God's limited benefits, one might note a writer's claim about a government leader who expressed concern about foreigners giving out candy if there was not enough for all the children. Resources being limited, however, it is said that the leader sometimes had had to do similar things [Corbett, *Cuba*, 186, 188]. Most theists would appeal not to God's lack of resources but to miracles needing to be distinguishable from usual providence in nature; my point is simply that we ought not to complain about benefits even when they are not universal.) McKenzie responds ("Miracles," 77) that miracles are unmerited, like all grace or election; that (77–78) different benefits may be conferred on others; that (76) their limited occurrence fits the Christian understanding of grace and mystery; and most important, that (82) there is a nonarbitrary pattern as to where miracles are reported, often associated with faith (82) or mission (82–84). Some argue that God could be good and allow suffering to prevent greater harm to the recipient (cf. Stump and Kretzmann, "Being," 312). Some argue for God allowing a measure of chance, so that misfortune generally (more than average incidents of it) serves a purpose (Inwagen, "Chance," 234–35; but while Inwagen allows for miracles [217], the viability of this approach remains contingent on his theological perspective not shared by all). Parker, "Suffering," 215–16, contends that if God *always* did miracles, human self-interest would overwhelm human moral freedom (cf. John 6:26, 30–31). Wei, "Meaning," 254, contends that if miracles always happened in given circumstances, we would see them as divine regularity; but since they are rare, they could be simply anomalies, like a spontaneous recovery. If, however, they were standard, one might subsume them under the ordinary course of nature (specific associations with prayer or the like perhaps constituting the distinguishing factor); Hume (as quoted in Mawson, "Miracles," 33) noted, "Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of nature." From a theistic approach, divine providence in nature is widely distributed, but miracles function more specifically as *signs* of God's activity and character (cf. very similarly O'Grady,

Hume ruled out miracles and thus circularly ruled out the reliability of any witnesses who reported them.¹⁶¹ Hume's line of argument has cast its influence far beyond his discipline and even beyond those who are aware of its intellectual pedigree. Thus, as I noted in an earlier chapter, one professor, when I asked him if he could believe in a genuine miracle if someone were raised from the dead in front of him, unhesitatingly responded, "No." Yet he considered me closed-minded for being a Christian, although I was a convert from atheism who had once myself discounted all Christians' intelligence on grounds no better than his. Why do many academicians consider a theistic explanation biased,¹⁶² yet one that presupposes atheism or deism neutral? I have repeatedly suggested that atheistic or deistic premises are no more neutral than theistic ones and merely pose as such because of their hegemony in academic modernity.

Suprahuman Explanations?

On the subject of miracles, William P. Wilson, professor emeritus of psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center, concludes, "In spite of protestations by some scientists, documented events occur regularly both in this country and in the rest of the world," and many are similar in kind to those reported about Jesus and his early followers.¹⁶³ My primary critique in this book has been directed toward those who deny that credible eyewitnesses can report such events, not against those who simply reduce the question to one of interpretation of the observations (as often in many anthropological accounts that nonjudgmentally report such phenomena). Among Western scholars aware of the many healing claims in the world today, the second approach is far more common than the first.

Yet I also offer a secondary argument in this book regarding the interpretation of such events. I suggested earlier that scholars ought not to close off suprahuman explanations a priori, even if we did lack an overwhelming sample size of relatively dramatic, well-attested, and extraordinarily improbable (from the standpoint of naturalistic assumptions) events to completely establish the degree of burden of proof properly assigned to a particular position.¹⁶⁴ I believe that we have sufficient credible testimonies and other evidence (and that much more could be added) that cumulatively favor the probability that cases of suprahuman causation exist. As in civil law, most historians accept "more probable than not" as the standard for the burden of proof, and I have argued that unless one presupposes from the start that they cannot be valid this is the appropriate standard to apply when evaluating

"Miracles," 373). For a psychological critique of those who reject miracles unless everyone receives them, see Montgomery, *Trusting*, 117–18.

161. See Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 95, 97.

162. Hume denied the credibility of miracle stories recounted in religious contexts, which he deemed irrational (Larmer, *Water*, 105).

163. Wilson, "Miracle Events," 278.

164. Cf. Licona, "Historicity of Resurrection," 135, who notes that he would believe his wife's testimony even about a highly unusual event, such as meeting the president of the United States, because he trusts the integrity of her testimony.

miracle claims.¹⁶⁵ As I noted earlier, *hundreds of millions* of people claim to have witnessed miracles, and as I have also illustrated, a number of these claims (though not by any means all of them) are significant and multiply attested.

The radical Enlightenment (as opposed to the early Enlightenment thinkers) excluded even the hypothesis of divine intervention from consideration in explaining the data of even the best-attested miracle claims. Yet could it not be culturally elitist to simply dismiss from consideration the credibility of traditions stemming from most cultures and eras in history, based on a presupposition for which those who hold it rarely seek to even offer evidence? Granted, as I have noted, many individual claims, especially those far removed from the eyewitnesses, are inauthentic or misinterpreted. But does critical thinking always support an all-or-nothing mentality on other matters of debate?¹⁶⁶ Science and history address whether some people genuinely recovered; they do not need to rule out the question of why they recovered or the option of divine causation, although this question has usually been assigned only to theologians.

Those who start from theistic assumptions may view all recoveries as divine grace, whether demonstrably supernatural (i.e., not readily admitting naturalistic explanations) or not. By contrast, as I have noted, those who start from antisupernaturalist assumptions sometimes rule out all supernaturalist explanations even if no purely natural explanation is readily available, by merely postulating that a naturalistic explanation may be possible when more is known about nature or about the particulars of the recovery. Antisupernaturalists and antitheists should be clear, however, that they are filtering information through an interpretive grid no less than the theist is.¹⁶⁷ Those who do not a priori rule out supernatural factors, awaiting some evidence, will neither dismiss nor endorse all cases. They will find some cases more compelling than others and thus need to critically evaluate claims on a case-by-case basis.

Dramatic Recoveries

Although most people do not experience recoveries inexplicable in view of what is known of natural processes, the numbers of such reports may give skeptics pause, and some of these reports have strong claim to authenticity. I believe that some dramatic recoveries in the context of prayer do suggest evidence of divine activity. Some include medical documentation; a much larger number are, like claims in the Gospels and Acts, just eyewitness claims.

165. Ibid., 134, and idem, *Resurrection*, 193–94, noting that the different standard in criminal cases, “beyond reasonable doubt,” would make witnesses for Jesus’s resurrection even more difficult to challenge, rather than less.

166. With regard to claims of angelic experiences, Moolenburgh, *Meetings*, 203, notes that even if one explains away some stories as natural phenomena, hallucinations, hypnosis, or fabrication, too many remain to explain away all of them. Moolenburgh refers to his own collection of roughly one hundred accounts; the principle obtains far more when one addresses millions of claims.

167. What I earlier called a naturalism-of-the-gaps approach, in these cases without the gaps.

Although not all of the following claims share equal attestation, I wish to recall here some claims of dramatic recoveries that cannot be easily explained (if accurate) without supernatural explanations. Examples include reports of complete healings of severely broken bones and bone chips.¹⁶⁸ Other reports include someone who was said to have been brain-dead for months yet was restored through prayer;¹⁶⁹ healings from AIDS or HIV infection;¹⁷⁰ and a huge number of immediate healings of long-paralyzed limbs or inability to walk, even though genuine, long-term paralysis (the case in some of these instances) is not normally reversible.¹⁷¹ I noted independent researchers who marveled at someone wheelchair-bound for twenty years who rose and walked even before his muscles should have been able to permit this activity.¹⁷² A midwife reportedly gave birth to two sets of twins in years following a hysterectomy;¹⁷³ that this claim is impossible on natural terms goes without saying, but that is the point. In a similar report, a young woman was healed in Canada in 1922 and, though the doctor insisted that he had removed her reproductive organs, she bore two sons.¹⁷⁴ Others claim teeth instantly and miraculously filled.¹⁷⁵ Pastor Raju Mathew prayed for a woman expected to die the next day, who was completely healed;¹⁷⁶ a person dying of kidney failure was healed and then lived another quarter century, to the age of eighty-nine.¹⁷⁷

Although cancers sometimes do go into remission, for which reason I have not offered as many of those accounts here, even some of these accounts are dramatic, such as the lady healed of throat cancer, without an operation, who now sings daily.¹⁷⁸ In another case an esophagus eaten by cancer is said to have been restored when the cancer was healed.¹⁷⁹ In another account (by the healed person's daughter, an eyewitness), a woman who had died from throat cancer that had destroyed her

168. Carl Cocherell (phone interview, May 2, 2009; medical documentation received, June 17, 2009); claiming X-ray support, Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 12–13 (bones), 31 (virtually new hip joints, after twenty years' deterioration); cf. *ibid.*, 30–31.

169. Baker, *Enough*, 65.

170. *Ibid.*, 160; Jeanne Mabiala, interview, July 29, 2008; Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 27–28.

171. E.g., Augustine *City of God* 22.8; De Wet, "Signs," 103–4; Ma, "Encounter," 137; *idem*, "Vanderbout," 129, 132; Castleberry, "Impact," 112; Daniel, "Labour," 160; Filson, "Study," 154; Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 56; Khai, "Pentecostalism," 270; Green, *Thirty Years*, 104; Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 18–20; Harris, *Acts Today*, 104–5; Marie Brown, correspondence, May 31, 2006; Bernard Luvutse, personal correspondence, Aug. 17, 2006; Shelley Hollis, phone interview, Jan. 10, 2009; Mina KC, interview by John Lathrop, March 2, 2010.

172. Hirschberg and Barasch, *Recovery*, 113–15.

173. Jeanne Mabiala, interview, July 29, 2008. For other testimonies of childbearing after a hysterectomy, see Lindsay, *Lake*, 56; Antoinette Malombé, interview, July 13, 2008.

174. Cadwalder, "Healings," testifying of his personal knowledge of the event, more than four decades earlier.

175. E.g., Castleberry, "Impact," 112 (from his interview with Benjamin LaFon), 143 (an interview with the mother, a physician); Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 175–84; Bonnie Ortiz, interview, Jan. 10, 2009.

176. Raju Mathew, interview, Aug. 29, 2008.

177. Harris, *Acts Today*, 70–71.

178. Lambert, *Millions*, 114. Cf. also the woman raised from the dead and healed after cancer had eaten away her voice box, in Barachias Irons, personal correspondence, Sept. 13, 2009.

179. Johnson, *Heaven*, 53–54; *idem*, *Mind*, 36.

voice box was both raised and healed, thereafter able to speak.¹⁸⁰ I will not rehearse here the claims where the cancer had spread and was inoperable.¹⁸¹

Some have claimed instant healings of afflictions that were clearly visible, such as a misshapen skull becoming normal.¹⁸² Hickson cites a case of organic troubles caused by an accident, including a crooked face, the removal of part of the tongue, and inability to speak articulately; instantly healed, the woman's "face was straightened and her speech restored."¹⁸³ One evangelist claims that he saw with his "own eyes" advanced cancer disappear instantly after prayer: the wound ran from the chest to the intestines, but he saw the color and texture suddenly change and the wound begin to close.¹⁸⁴ At Lourdes, the abdominal swelling of a woman with tuberculosis "immediately disappeared before the eyes of the examining doctors."¹⁸⁵

More often, witnesses, including some I know, have described lumps instantly disappearing on various occasions.¹⁸⁶ A number of others cite the instant, public disappearance of goiters during prayer.¹⁸⁷ For example, Julie Ma recounts how she

180. Barachias Irons (personal correspondence, Sept. 13, 2009), passing on the information for me directly from her mother, from whom she had it and whom she consulted, Mother Katherine Taylor. Robertson, *Miracles*, 145–48, 156–58, reports nonmedical healings of cancer that had already spread throughout the body.

181. E.g., Reed, *Surgery*, 35, 52–53; Oursler, *Power*, 135, 231; Baxter, *Healing*, 184, 194–206; DiOrion, *Miracle*, 37–43, 97–105. Healings of cancers and tumors are common in Roman Catholic canonization records (Duffin, *Miracles*, 87).

182. Lindsay, *Lake*, 57.

183. Hickson, *Bridegroom*, 301.

184. Stewart, *Only Believe*, 75, portraying a cure of this character as highly unusual. He recounts also how two members of their team felt the place where a hole had been in someone's side before prayer and now found it gone (175), X-rays afterward confirming that removed ribs had been restored (176; it is not clear from the account whether Stewart himself saw the X-rays, though it sounds like it).

185. Woodard, *Faith*, 57, noting that she had been suffering for eight years "from tuberculosis peritonitis and also tuberculosis of the bones"; now she was spontaneously recovering.

186. Kim, "Prominent Woman," 205; Brown, "Awakenings," 363; Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 141 (a probably cancerous growth on the ear, disappearing instantly); Harris, *Acts Today*, 100–101; Huyssen, *Saw*, 146–48; Llewellyn, "Events," 257 (cf. the visible, immediate disappearance of scars in *ibid.*, 256); Osborn, *Healing*, 281, 293, 301 (a hunchbacked person instantly healed); Iris Lilia Fonseca Valdés (interview, Aug. 11, 2010); Zagrans, *Miracles*, 100; Moreland, *Triangle*, 169; Bill Twyman, interview, Nov. 11, 2007; Eleanor Sebbiano, interview, Jan. 29, 2009; Yusuf Herman, July 10, 2011; Marie Brown, personal correspondence, May 31, 2006 (on Tanzania); earlier, Duffin, *Miracles*, 37 (a cancerous breast lump the size of an egg disappearing overnight, 1844); cf. Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 43–44, 47; Tari, *Wind*, 113–15 (a boil breaking); Koch, *Zulus*, 115 (a visible tumor healing—perhaps he means a boil—but the speed of full healing is not as clear). Anna Gulick (correspondence, Jan. 14, 2010; June 6, 2011; interview, March 11, 2011) recounts that after being bitten, one parishioner's wrist swelled to "the size of a small football"; Anna felt led to simply touch the wrist, saying something like, "In the name of Jesus," "and immediately the edema collapsed."

187. Sung, *Diaries*, 58; Yeomans, *Healing*, 123; Jamieson, "Healings"; Frodsham, "Victories" (a particularly severe goiter substantially reduced, though in this case apparently over a few days); "Healings at Victoria," 15; Tari, *Breeze*, 160 (a cantaloupe-sized goiter vanishing during prayer in his presence); Gebru Woldu (interview, May 20, 2010: "plenty of goiters" disappearing before his eyes); Blackman, "Miracles," 9; Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 139; Osborn, *Healing*, 281; in the Philippines, Stewart, *Only Believe*, 143–44, 153; Gervacio Tovera, interviewed by Rose Engcoy, July 6, 2001; Bruce Kinabrew, personal correspondence, June 24, 2008; Dwight Palmquist, personal correspondence, Feb. 2, 2009; Osborn, *Healing*, 307; cf. Ma, "Encounter," 136; elsewhere in Asia, Jones, *Wonders*, 107. In Ma, "Vanderbout," 130, and *idem*, *Mission*,

and her husband, Wonsuk, who are both scholars, prayed for a woman who had been dying from a toxic goiter. Neither doctors nor local cultic practices had been able to cure it; it had simply grown worse over the past year. “While we were praying,” Ma attests, “she felt something in her neck and was able to swallow her saliva, which she could not do before. The goiter disappeared in the sight of many witnesses.”¹⁸⁸

Similarly, Gail Randolph, one of my coworkers at Palmer Seminary, found a raised welt on her calf about four inches long and two or three inches wide, and as hard as wood. She and her husband, concerned about the obvious abnormality, prayed immediately for healing, and when she checked in less than an hour, she found that it had vanished.¹⁸⁹ From the basic description, Dr. Nicole Matthews explained to me that this was probably cellulitis, but that it would not naturally vanish so quickly. In fact, it usually spreads quickly and requires antibiotics; its sudden disappearance is therefore not normal based on purely natural causes.¹⁹⁰

Some have claimed instant spinal or neck healings so that a mandatory brace was suddenly rendered superfluous.¹⁹¹ A teenager was instantly healed of a deadly condition, and testing revealed that even her bones had been healed—clearly an organic rather than merely “functional” healing.¹⁹² Other reports of instant or unnaturally rapid bone healings also appear.¹⁹³ In other reports, a young man’s severely broken leg, with no expectation of ever walking normally, was instantly healed, after which he went to college on a basketball scholarship.¹⁹⁴ A man long disabled with Parkinson’s disease reports instant healing when prayed for, with complete and continuing mobility thereafter.¹⁹⁵ A child’s broken neck, with the prognosis of permanent paralysis, was fully healed during prayer.¹⁹⁶ Severe burns were healed.¹⁹⁷ Some skeptics about healing argue (beyond the evidence) that almost anything can be psychosomatic, whereas clearly organic restorations of limbs are never reported.

64, a large goiter started shrinking when they prayed and disappeared overnight. Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 36, lists goiters among psychosomatic ailments, but it seems unimaginable that purely psychological factors account for these visible features disappearing instantly.

188. Ma, *Mission*, 65–66 (quotation from 66). During several following weeks of continued prayer, the woman, Edna, recovered her strength fully; Edna and many others became Christians.

189. Gail Randolph, personal correspondence, Oct. 9, 2009, following up personal conversation, narrating events of the evening of Oct. 4, 2009; my “less than an hour” allows for a margin of error, but her description is more precisely “some minutes.” The incident is not spiritually isolated in this period of Gail’s life. Although very competent doctors were essential to the process, her son’s survival and complete recovery after a life-threatening injury exceeded optimum prior medical expectations.

190. Nicole Matthews, personal discussion, Oct. 10, 2009.

191. Opp, *Lord for Body*, 193–94, including a photograph of the woman holding her brace; O’Connor, *Movement*, 162; Johnson, *Heaven*, 32.

192. Casdorff, *Miracles*, 30–32.

193. Williams, *Signs*, 140–41; Godwin, *Strategy*, 16–66; idem, personal correspondence, May 23, 2009; Grazier, *Power Beyond*, 95–97, 125–27; Moreland and Issler, *Faith*, 136; Jackson, *Quest*, 256; Bill Johnson’s church website, Nov. 7, 2006.

194. Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 149–51.

195. Lee McDougald, at <http://www.thehealedguy.com>, and personal correspondence, Aug. 28, 2008.

196. Rumph, *Signs*, 119–24.

197. Harris, *Acts Today*, 71–74; less immediately, Joshua Obeng, interview, Jan. 28, 2009; Chevreau, *Turnings*, 143–44.

Certainly there are not many such reports (including in the Bible), but they do appear occasionally; in one extraordinary report, for example, a leg severed beneath the knee grew back.¹⁹⁸ Elsewhere, useless or shriveled limbs have become functional and filled out miraculously quickly.¹⁹⁹ Those committed to disbelief that such miracles can happen will, of course, dismiss such claims;²⁰⁰ but while the rareness of such claims (hence limited possible analogies) does invite caution, one might also get the impression that some skeptics' demands for particular kinds of evidence become stricter whenever evidence of the demanded sort appears.

I have noted a huge number of eyewitness claims of immediate healings from deafness (often long-term deafness) during prayer, in Africa,²⁰¹ Asia,²⁰² Latin America,²⁰³ and the West.²⁰⁴ I will not rehearse all the cases of the healings of deafness I have noted, but healing of this affliction is a common *pattern* in one ministry that we surveyed in Mozambique.²⁰⁵ People who visited there specifically

198. Robertson, *Miracles*, 176–77, providing further details from T. L. Osborn about a man in one of his meetings in Ghana. (He does not specify details such as whether the entire restoration occurred immediately, but it appears to have at least begun immediately and visibly.) Such reports are not common today and do not appear in the Gospels or Acts. Clark, *Impartation*, 166, speaks of other “missing parts” being restored.

199. Osborn, *Healing*, 300, on a meeting in Ibadan, Nigeria (Jan. 1957): “a man, who had dragged his body on the ground with his hands for over thirty years. . . . His legs looked like poles; but as he walked, they developed.” Because all Ibadan knew him, “It took over an hour to calm the multitude” (301); he reports other useless legs becoming functional (e.g., 298). Tari, *Breeze*, 44–45, notes shriveled and useless legs healed enough to walk within a few minutes, and filling out within a few days (with himself as eyewitness). Cf. Rumph, *Signs*, 110–11; other accounts above.

200. Hume, *Miracles*, 42–43, notes the abundant local witnesses for such a cure in Aragon and praises Cardinal de Retz for dismissing them. Hume's point, which we have earlier challenged, is that miracle claims should not be accepted no matter how many witnesses claim to attest them.

201. Hickson, *Heal*, 121, 122–24, 129–30, 134–35; Salmon, *Heals*, 75–76; Koch, *Zulus*, 80–84; Numbere, *Vision*, 210; Baker, *Enough*, 157, 169, 173; idem, *Miracles*, 7–8, 39, 43, 78, 108, 114, 163, 172, 180, 183, 192–93; Chevreau, *Turnings*, 142, 145, 174, 182; Marie Brown, personal correspondence, May 31, 2006; Kathy Evans, personal correspondence, Nov. 10, 2008; Shelley Hollis, phone interview, Jan. 10, 2009; *Finger of God*.

202. Sung, *Diaries*, 40, 91, 109, 111, 116, 155, 161; Khai, “Pentecostalism,” 268; Daniel, “Signs and Wonders,” 105; Ma, “Encounter,” 137; idem, “Vanderbout,” 132; idem, *Mission*, 63–64; Marie Brown, personal correspondence, May 31, 2006 (on Papua New Guinea); cf. the summary statement in Pospisil, “Deliverances.”

203. Castleberry, “Impact,” 108, 112; Steve and Sheila Heneise, correspondence, Aug. 20–21, 2008; Doleshal, “Healings”; among U.S. Latinos, Espinosa, “Healing in Borderlands,” 136. In the Caribbean, note the Jamaican example in Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 94.

204. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 202–4 (noting significant medical documentation); Ising, *Blumhardt*, 210 (partial deafness; from eyewitnesses); “Miracle Woman,” 62; Buckingham, *Daughter*, 128, 132; Best, *Supernatural*, 88; Wagner, “World,” 81; Reiff, “Los Angeles Campmeeting,” 13; idem, “Later Healings”; “Revival in England”; “Healings in Australia”; Miller, *Miracle of Healing*, 48 (who knows the healed person), 49–50; DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 99 (involving a permanently damaged ear bone); cf. Tallman, *Shakarian*, 76 (apparently partial); Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 15–16, 21; Zagrans, *Miracles*, 5, 57. More generally, Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 51–52; for the Osborns' ministry around the world, see, e.g., Osborn, *Evangelism*, 1:938; 21:368–69; 22:536, 782; 23:440–41, 593, 720–21; Osborn, *Healing*, 280, 281 (“hundreds,” with “as many as 125” in one campaign), 285–86, 290, 293, 294, 296, 298, 300 (seven), 304, 308, 309, 310, 312, 319, 327 (multiple cases).

205. E.g., Shelley Hollis, phone interview, Jan. 10, 2009; *Finger of God*; Kathy Evans, personal correspondence, Nov. 10, 2008; Baker, *Enough*, *passim*.

yet independently told me about witnessing this phenomenon, and one team of researchers has now gathered some medical documentation that supports the eyewitness accounts.²⁰⁶ Lest we be tempted to dismiss the healings as psychological recoveries of psychosomatic ailments, most of those healed were being personally exposed to Christianity for the first time. Some were healed without even being specifically prayed for or promised healing; they simply were present as the new message was being preached. Their fellow villagers knew their deafness, recognized that they could now hear, and were sufficiently persuaded that many permanently changed their lifelong beliefs and practice immediately. Is it possible that this pattern of healing tells us something?

Recall also the number of cures of blindness during prayer that I have noted, most of them immediate, many reported in the early twentieth century²⁰⁷ as well as today. A vast number of recent reports of healed blindness involve the Majority World,²⁰⁸ including Africa,²⁰⁹ Asia,²¹⁰ and Latin America,²¹¹ and in the West.²¹² In the modern period, I have come across claims of perhaps four hundred healings of blindness through prayer, the majority of them from sources that I trust (some of them from eyewitnesses I personally interviewed or know personally),²¹³ and

206. Brown, Mory, Williams, and McClymond, "Effects," noted earlier.

207. Cf., e.g., Sung, *Diaries*, 28, 36, 56, 111 (multiple cases), 116 (multiple cases), 153, 158 (multiple cases), 161; Hickson, *Heal*, 29, 31–32, 37–38, 53, 54, 62, 65–66, 74, 76, 78, 85, 87, 118, 124, 126, 128–29, 135, 141 (noting thirty-six cases), 151, 162, 180–82, 191, 196, 205–6, 213; Rabey, "Prophet"; Lindsay, *Lake*, 32, 40.

208. E.g., Chavda, *Miracle*, 122–23; Osborn, *Evangelism*, 1:930, 938, 941–42; 21:370, 400; 22:65; 22:67 (two cases); 22:783; 23:592; 23:713–15 (twenty-five cases, with photos of five testifying of restored sight); 23:722; Osborn, *Healing*, 281 (as many as ninety in one crusade), 287–88, 291, 293, 295, 296 (the sister of a worker), 298 (two), 300 (multiple cases), 301, 302 (two), 304, 306 (two), 308, 310, 313, 316, 317, 326; crossed eyes on 296, 297, 300.

209. Protus, "Latunde"; idem, "Chukwu"; Menberu, "Mekonnen Negera"; Negash, "Demelash"; Numbere, *Vision*, 121, 186, 210; Baker, *Enough*, 76, 145, 169, 171–74, 182 (with further accounts of eyes white with blindness changing color as they were being healed, 76, 171–72, 173; idem, *Miracles*, 189); idem, *Miracles*, 8, 39–40, 68, 78 (often), 108, 113, 159, 160, 192; De Wet, "Signs," 93–96; Jackson, *Quest*, 254; Bruce Collins, phone interview, April 11, 2009; Shelley Hollis, phone interview, Jan. 10, 2009; Daniel Kolenda in a Nigeria crusade, Oct. 9, 2008; Yolanda McCain, personal correspondence, Oct. 3, 2008; Paul Mokake, interview, May 13, 2009; and others.

210. E.g., Ma, "Encounter," 137; idem, "Vanderbout," 130, 132; idem, *Mission*, 64; Khai, "Pentecostalism," 268; Daniel, "Labour," 160; C&C 37 (5, May 2008): 9; Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 61; Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 286; Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 274; De Wet, "Signs," 121–23; Stewart, *Only Believe*, 139–41, 151; Angela Salazar Aragona, interview by Rosanny D. Engcoy, April 14, 2002; Chester Allan Tesoro, interview, Jan. 30, 2009; Flint McGlaughlin, personal correspondence, Feb. 6–7, 2009; Robin Shields, personal correspondence, Feb. 7, 2009; Jacob Beera, personal correspondence, Nov. 2, 2009.

211. De Wet, "Signs," 103–4; Castleberry, "Impact," 108, 112; Ramirez, "Faiths," 94–95; Doleshal, "Healings," 7; Harris, *Acts Today*, 22–23.

212. E.g., Parker, "Suffering," 216; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 31–35; Spraggett, *Kuhlman*, 26; Harris, *Acts Today*, 8, 18; Neal, *Power*, 40, 57; Best, *Supernatural*, 125; Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, 103–4; Jackson, *Quest*, 255; Stewart, *Only Believe*, 1–2, 43.

213. E.g., Yolanda McCain, personal correspondence, Oct. 3, 2008; Shelley Hollis, phone interview, Jan. 10, 2009; Bungishabaku Katho, interview, March 12, 2009; Flint McGlaughlin, personal correspondence, Feb. 6–7, 2009; Paul Mokake, interview, May 13, 2009.

these can be regarded as merely a representative sample. Certainly a vastly larger number of blind persons are not healed, but the healings of blindness nevertheless remain significant. Some of these healings have included medical documentation of organic problems, including, as noted earlier, scarring of the eye tissue, which disappeared during the healing.²¹⁴ In some cases of healings from blindness, the eyewitness reporters have observed eyes white from cataracts immediately change as the cataracts have disappeared.²¹⁵ As noted earlier, cataracts can normally be removed medically only by surgery.²¹⁶

Again, recall the accounts of raisings from death surveyed earlier, which I will recall but not elaborate again here. A number of claims date from the early twentieth century,²¹⁷ but again I focus on the far more numerous more recent ones.²¹⁸ These accounts also involve Africa,²¹⁹ Asia,²²⁰ Latin America,²²¹ and the

214. E.g., Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 15, 20–21; Warner, *Kuhlman*, 132–34. Although not supplying medical documentation, Peterman, *Healing*, 2–3, cites a case where a specialist could do nothing for a scratched cornea. The woman knelt at the altar at Philadelphia's St. Stephen's Episcopal Church for prayer for healing, and "arose with a healed eye"; the specialist acknowledged it as a miracle.

215. Baker, *Enough*, 76, 171–72, 173; Brown, "Awakenings," 363 (on one eye, citing the testimony of a retired radiologist); Chester Allan Tesoro, interview, Jan. 30, 2009; Gebru Woldu (interview, May 20, 2010); cf. the "flat and clouded" eyes restored in Robin Shields, personal correspondence, Feb. 7, 2009; cf. the claim in Ogilbee and Riess, *Pilgrimage*, 43.

216. Dr. Nicole Matthews, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009.

217. Maddocks, *Ministry*, 101–2; Tarango, "Physician," 112; "Saw God"; Fant, *Miracles*, 143; Woodworth-Etter, *Diary*, 156–57; Lindsay, *Lake*, 12–13, 32–33; Pytches, "Anglican," 194; cf. Yeomans, *Healing*, 120–21; and numerous other cases noted in ch. 12.

218. E.g., Lewis, *Healing*, 64–65; Osborn, *Evangelism*, 1:940–41; Wagner, *Acts*, 476–77 (and less dramatically, 321–22); Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 14–21, 25–32 (esp. 32), 47–54 (esp. 53), 56–58, 89–97 (esp. 94–95), 97–104 (esp. 101–3; his father-in-law's story), 105–6, 107–9 (esp. 108), 109–14 (esp. 113–14); Clark, *Impartation*, 203; Rutz, *Megashift*, 3–14, 21–22, 29–34, 79, 104–5; Rumph, *Signs*, 155–73 (including a small number of North American examples); Smith, "Baby"; Conn, "Visit to Heaven"; Carpenter, "Death"; Harris, *Acts Today*, 98–99, 101–3.

219. E.g., Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 52 (about raisings being common in Ethiopia); Chevreau, *Turnings*, 53–56; Baker, *Enough*, 74–76; idem, *Miracles*, 89 (at least fifty-three by 2007), 169; Chavda, *Miracle*, 9, 13–15, 131–41; Numbere, *Vision*, 136–37, 140–42; Tarr, *Foolishness*, 329–30; Pytches, *Come*, 241; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 114–15; Venter, *Healing*, 294–95; Antoinette Malombé, interview, July 12, 2008; Jeanne Mabiala, interview, July 29, 2008; Albert Bissouessou, interview, July 29, 2008; Sarah Speer, phone interview, Jan. 7, 2009; Leo Bawa, personal correspondence, Aug. 10, 2009, p. 5; Gebru Woldu, interview, May 20, 2010; personal correspondence, May 21, 2010; June 3, 2010. Earlier, Anderson, *Pelendo*, 69–70; Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 123–24; Daneel, *Zionism*, 15–16.

220. Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 138; Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 152; Jenkins, *New Faces*, 114; Ma, "Encounter," 137; Khai, "Pentecostalism," 270; Zhaoming, "Chinese Denominations," 451; Kim, "Pentecostalism," 32; Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 57–58, 59, 60; De Wet, "Signs," 110–11; Koch, *Zulus*, 167; Crawford, *Miracles*, 26–28; Lambert, *Millions*, 109, 118–19; Venter, *Healing*, 294–95; Pytches, *Come*, 242–44; Cagle, "Power"; Thollander, *Mathews*, 88; Tari, *Wind*, 76–78; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 77, 81–83; Pullinger, *Dragon*, 224–25; Elaine Panelo, interview, Jan. 30, 2009; Mervin Ascabano, correspondence, Jan. 9, 2009; Feb. 6, 2009; Chester Allan Tesoro, interview, Jan. 30, 2009; Willie Soans, personal correspondence, Nov. 3, 2010.

221. Sánchez Walsh, *Identity*, 44; Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 86; Bomann, "Salve," 195–96; Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 139–40; Pytches, *Come*, 245; Alamino, *Footsteps*, 63–65; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 84–88; Iris Lilia Fonseca Valdés, interview, Aug. 11, 2010. Earlier, Sánchez Walsh, *Identity*, 43–44.

West.²²² A number of these accounts involve persons who have been dead for many hours²²³ or sometimes even more than a day.²²⁴ Some are from people I not only interviewed but also knew personally, or met through my wife's family knowing them personally;²²⁵ where possible I cross-checked interviewees' testimony with other witnesses. Witnesses range from those participating in the prayers to a person raised herself. While writing this book I have come across claims of nearly three hundred raisings, from well over 150 different sources. Again, these are merely a representative sample; some others have discovered far more reports that I have not included in this count,²²⁶ and I found some of my own sources by randomly interviewing persons with healing accounts in a few sample locations in the Majority World. Because their stories have never before been printed, I presume that I would have found numerous other accounts had I traveled and interviewed more widely.

These sources may vary in their reliability, but a high proportion reflect reports from eyewitnesses that one would normally deem reliable. I am particularly impressed with reports from individuals whose character I know and trust. I do not include in the count cases of which I was informed (in some instances with accompanying names, dates, and locations) yet not permitted by my sources to use because of the security situation in their countries. I am also not including at this point claims of nature miracles apart from human bodies (which are, I have noted, also part of nature), but in chapter 12 I have noted such claims as well.²²⁷ This chapter would of course be much longer had I included much of chapter 12 and some other earlier material in it. I have offered merely a summary of some

222. E.g., Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 45; Stegeman, "Faith"; Koch, *Zulus*, 169–70; Piper, *Minutes*, 44–45; Pytches, *Come*, 239, 244–45; Johnson, *Mind*, 122; Chauncey Crandall's account (in ch. 12); Barachias Irons, personal correspondence, Sept. 13, 2009; Dick and Debbie Riffe, personal correspondence, Dec. 13, 2007.

223. E.g., Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 105–6; Antoinette Malombé, interview, July 12, 2008.

224. E.g., Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 118–19; Chevreau, *Turnings*, 54–56; Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 81; cf. Tari, *Wind*, 76–78; Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 151–52; about twenty-four hours in Shelley Hollis, phone interview, Jan. 10, 2009.

225. Especially (in order of my knowing them) Leo Bawa; Antoinette Malombé; Jeanne Mabiala; Albert Bissouessou.

226. Mike Finley, whose book is forthcoming, has spent years collecting reports; he knows of some five hundred to a thousand reports from the twentieth century alone. While he is not able to verify all of them, he is confident of many of them (phone interview, Oct. 2, 2010); in more than forty cases, "medically trained personnel (doctors, nurses, EMTs) were present when the individual was determined dead, and then came back to life" (personal correspondence, Sept. 23, 2010). Hebert, *Raised*, cites four hundred accounts (few overlapping with my count), though only a minority are both from modern times and have strong attestation (those with weakest attestation he assigns to an appendix, 319–29).

227. E.g., Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, *History*, 223–24; Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 181–83; Castleberry, "Impact," 111–12; Daniel, "Labour," 157; Sung, *Diaries*, 143, 158, 161; Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 54–55, 59, 64, 192; Kinnear, *Tide*, 92–96; Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 112; Dayhoff, "Barros"; Khai, "Pentecostalism," 268–69; Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 288; Harris, *Acts Today*, 66–67, 80; Lindsay, *Lake*, 48–49; Emmanuel Itapson, interview, April 29, 2008; Sandy Thomas, phone interview, Aug. 26, 2008; Donna Arukua, interview, Jan. 29, 2009; Kay Fountain, interview, Jan. 29, 2009.

material here to challenge the notion that all healing claims must involve only psychosomatic ailments.

Examples Nearer the Author

I list below some further examples used earlier in the book. Although I could have recalled many more, these should be sufficient to illustrate that many claims warrant serious attention. I limit the number employed here, because the reader can readily pick out some other examples from the earlier material, and repetition is not a virtue in a book of this length. I have selected these particular cases from among interviews with people whom I know on some level and have good reason to trust (e.g., they are intelligent observers without financial or other incentive to deceive),²²⁸ to reduce the need for the additional criterion of evaluating the claimant's integrity. I personally have no doubts about the integrity of many of my other informants—to name just a few, the Bonillas, Marie Brown, Bruce Collins, Matthew Dawson, Bonnie Ortiz, the several Vineyard interviewees I noted, and Ed and Brad Wilkinson. In fact, there are far more of those whom I interviewed whom I have good reason to trust than any reason to question. Some that I have not cited below yet trust are some long-term friends; most lacked anything possible to gain by telling their stories; some, especially those who ministered in cessationist circles, like Bungishabaku Katho, risked possible things to lose; and most whom I did not know initially were referred to me by trustworthy persons or were part of a larger community of witnesses to whom they had to be accountable.

Again I could have chosen more such examples, but I have selected for the samples below mainly a limited number of examples from persons I know on some level in person. I exclude here most strong cases that I interviewed, for example, only by phone or had contact with exclusively for discussion of healing claims (i.e., did not know or get to know outside that context); I also exclude those with well-known ministries who might be discussed by others; and I include only a sample of those who remain. While I thus apply the following grid only to some sample claims, a reader could use the same sort of grid to evaluate healing claims cited by others in the book. Not all of those claims carry equal evidential weight, but a number of them appear strong. Theists need not apply these tests with equal rigor, since some of the caveats I applied earlier will exclude many recoveries that those customarily allowing for divine activity would admit as divine activity. Those who need to be persuaded, however, and remain open to persuasion, may find at least some of the following cases persuasive. Some may quibble with some of my decisions below, and those with varying presuppositions will approach them with

228. In many cases, like Jeanne Mabiala, the person does not live in an Anglophone nation, thus would not likely gain even publicity from the places of this book's circulation (even if it is translated, which they have no reason to expect).

various degrees of openness, but I personally believe that most of the following cases are best explained by supernatural activity.

Healing claim	How do I know the witness?	Psychosomatic element possible?	How frequent are such events normally (given an accurate description by the witness)?	Supernatural explanation seems more plausible than not, if not a priori ruled out? [†]
I witnessed: A woman whom I knew previously unable to walk began walking after commanded to rise in Jesus's name	I am the witness, and there were other witnesses present in the room (including my younger brother, who also recalls the occasion); I continued to see the woman walking (initially with a walker) in following weeks	Possible but not probable (she lacked any expectation of healing and the man who prayed lacked any reason to believe that her condition was not organic)	Rare	Plausible to (in my view) very probable (depending on one's starting assumptions)
I was present: a woman's cyst was instantly healed when I prayed; failed kidneys healed when I prayed	The healed person was a friend and member of my church; she claimed medical verification [†]	No	At best, quite rare	Very probably yes
Flint McGlaughlin and Robin Shields witnessed a blind man whose eyes were clouded with cataracts instantly healed, his eyes visibly changing	Extensive personal conversation with Flint McGlaughlin on other issues; Robin Shields also independently provided post-healing photographs	No	Medically impossible	Yes
Bungishabaku Katho witnessed the immediate and permanent healing of a blind woman's eyes	Long-term correspondence, friendship, and meetings around other issues; supernatural claims also are not in his interest	Not at all likely	Unless the entire village conspired to deceive Katho and his associates over a period of years about her initial blindness, this is probably medically inexplicable	Very probably
Professor J. Ayodeji Adewuya witnessed his baby son being restored to life through prayer after twenty minutes with no vital signs; the son has now completed a master's degree	A friend and colleague with whom I converse regularly at biblical studies meetings	No	Should be impossible (the midwife certified that the baby was dead the entire time)	Yes

Healing claim	How do I know the witness? ^a	Psychosomatic element possible?	How frequent are such events normally (given an accurate description by the witness)?	Supernatural explanation seems more plausible than not, if not a priori ruled out? [†]
Elaine Panelo, pronounced dead from liver cancer, was raised nearly two hours later, simultaneously healed, immediately and permanently, of liver cancer	Working together regularly during my time in the Philippines; recommendation from a long-term friend with whom she works regularly; she was personally reticent to share so much of her private life, but agreed to do so (and to allow use of her name) only out of gratitude to God	No (she was initially not even convinced that she was healed)	If she was truly dead (as in her report the hospital staff certainly believed), the raising is impossible by natural means; conjoined with the immediate disappearance of symptoms, and eventual confirmation that the cancer was gone, virtually impossible	Yes
Eleanor Sebbiano, witnessed a sizable lump disappear instantly during prayer	Interviews, conversation on other issues, correspondence, recommendation from a trusted source	No	Impossible	Yes
Danny McCain witnessed a baby's severe burns from the previous day suddenly disappear during prayer, leaving no scar	Correspondence from a trusted friend with whom I lived for some eighteen weeks; in a divided country, he is widely respected by all peoples and religions	No	Impossible (given the severity of burns described and the instant, rather than merely quick, healing)	Yes
Gail Randolph, my coworker, witnessed a sizable, hard mass disappear from her leg in less than an hour ("some minutes")	Conversation, follow-up correspondence, with a trusted coworker	No	Not normal	Probable (in a theistic context)
Melesse Woldetsadik prayed for the disappearance of an as-yet untreated pulmonary mass; tests confirmed its disappearance	A long-term, close friend; medical documentation provided by the doctor who was healed	No	Proportionately rare	More probable than not (though one's verdict will depend on one's openness to supernatural phenomena)
Leo Bawa prayed for a dead child for a few hours, and the boy returned to life	A long-term friend; he offered this account, along with some others, only when I specifically asked about healings	No	Extremely rare (with close contact for hours, it is unlikely the child had merely <i>apparently</i> stopped breathing)	Yes
Yolanda McCain and Paul Mokake independently attested a blind man receiving sight when Paul prayed, and his sight remaining thereafter	Both have been my students with whom we have had close contact (Yolanda is also a close friend of our family)	Not likely	Barely conceivable	Almost certainly yes

Healing claim	How do I know the witness? ^a	Psychosomatic element possible?	How frequent are such events normally (given an accurate description by the witness)?	Supernatural explanation seems more plausible than not, if not a priori ruled out? ^f
Mama Jeanne Mabilia: Marie was dead when brought, was raised after prayer (though she remained weak) and recovered fully	Interviews; close and continuing friend of family; my brother-in-law attests that such accounts about her are known to others; a confirming eyewitness	Very unlikely	Very rare (impossible, if she had been genuinely dead for some time, as appears likely)	Very probably yes
Mama Jeanne Mabilia: another woman believed to be dead raised in a prayer meeting	Interviews; close friend of family; my brother-in-law knows the woman said to be raised	No	Very rare (impossible, if she had been genuinely dead for some time, as appears likely)	Very probably yes
Mama Jeanne Mabilia: baby born dead and already white, fully restored during prayer and remains healthy	Interviews; close friend of family; noted continuing contact with the family involved	No	Medically impossible; the baby had already turned white, and, Mama Jeanne, with midwife experience and training, recognized that she had been dead for some time	Very probably yes
Mama Jeanne Mabilia: a midwife who had had a hysterectomy bore children	Interviews; close friend of family	No	Medically impossible (if she is correct that a hysterectomy had occurred; she seemed quite sure, and had had extensive contact with the woman and her situation)	Yes
Mama Jeanne Mabilia: a young woman convulsing and apparently dying was completely healed during prayer	Interviews; close friend of family; my brother-in-law was an eyewitness to the event	Not likely	Not probable	Probably yes
Mama Jeanne Mabilia: a couple was healed of a positive HIV status	Interviews; close friend of family; my brother-in-law knows the family in question and had heard the story	No	No (unless we might speculate that the first test results were inaccurate)	Very probably yes
Albert Bissoouessoue reported the raising of a child clearly dead for about eight hours	Interviews; close friend of family; a humble couple with no reason to deceive	No	No	Yes
Julienne Bissoouessoue reported the raising of another person	Interviews; close friend of family; a humble couple with no reason to deceive	No	No (at least everyone present, including the hospital's dispensary manager, believed her dead)	Yes

Healing claim	How do I know the witness? [*]	Psychosomatic element possible?	How frequent are such events normally (given an accurate description by the witness)?	Supernatural explanation seems more plausible than not, if not a priori ruled out? [†]
Douglas Norwood's paralyzed wife able to walk despite a severed spinal cord	Interviews, conversation on other issues, correspondence, recommendation from a trustworthy source, readiness to supply all requested information	No	Medically impossible	Yes
Douglas Norwood: aged skeptic from completely non-Christian background, with almost lifelong arm paralysis, suddenly healed when confronting Christians	Interviews, correspondence, recommendation from a trustworthy source, readiness to supply all requested information	Extremely unlikely (given lifelong condition and hostility)	At best <i>extremely</i> rare	Yes
Bruce Kinabrew: healing of the lame, the blind, and the instant disappearance of a goiter	One of my closest friends from college, with whom I have maintained contact	Not at all likely (especially in conjunction with one another); the goiter seems impossible	Not at all likely (especially in conjunction with one another); the goiter seems impossible	Yes
Antoinette Malombé, on the raising and full recovery of her daughter after perhaps three hours without breathing	Interview with my mother-in-law, others who had already known the story; confirmed the story with another eyewitness; the raised daughter (Thérèse) is my sister-in-law	No	Impossible if (as we have every reason to believe) no respiration occurred for some three hours (after six minutes without air, the brain begins to die)	Yes
Jacques Moussounga: after twenty-one years with mouth abscesses, was healed after Suzanne Makounou (without prior knowledge of the condition) dreamed of and prayed for his problem	Personal correspondence from my father-in-law; the story is known to others close to him, and Suzanne Makounou remains a close friend of the family	Not likely	Improbable (not so much because the abscesses went away, but because they did so in connection with Suzanne Makounou's dream)	Probably yes
Jacques Moussounga and Antoinette Malombé: after a night of prayer, an infant daughter survived cerebral meningitis when strongly expected to die; she recovered fully (albeit gradually)	Personal correspondence with my father-in-law, interview with mother-in-law, conversation with grown daughter (Gracia)	No	Not usual for an infant in this setting (though enough unexpected recoveries occur)	Debatable, but in the context of a number of such unexpected recoveries, plausible (in a theistic context, more probable than not)

Healing claim	How do I know the witness? [*]	Psychosomatic element possible?	How frequent are such events normally (given an accurate description by the witness)?	Supernatural explanation seems more plausible than not, if not a priori ruled out? [†]
Stephen and Sheila Heneise: permanent healing during prayers of congenital deafness and limp	Personal acquaintance; we know their children (continuing relationship with their son); supernatural claims also are not in their interest [§]	No (birth defects)	No (a leg genuinely lengthened over the course of several minutes)	Yes
Several of my students healed of serious conditions in childhood (especially, Melaina Marshall, of a bone disease; Danielle Moffatt; Jonathan Turner)	My students (also confirmed in two cases with their relatives, who were witnesses; too long ago for medical records, but long enough to confirm the cures' durability)	Very unlikely in some cases	Quite unusual to extraordinary	Very probably yes
Joy Wahnefried: healed of lifelong debilitating migraines and light sensitivity, and accompanying eyesight problem with a documented organic cause, instantly during prayer	Referred by a long-term friend, Dr. Bill Heth, who also (with another source) attested the change, having been present during the healing and known her condition both before and after it; continued correspondence	No (medically documented improvement of vision)	No natural analogies known to us	Yes

^{*}Admittedly my report of the claim adds another layer of distance for the reader, who in the vast majority of cases will not know the person in question. I also know some of the witnesses better than others, and even when the witness is my own wife (or myself), another person may consider my attribution of reliability to be subjective. Nevertheless, such decisions are necessary when dealing with any historical or contemporary sources, and (as we noted in ch. 5) only inflexibly antisupernatural presuppositions will rule out all testimony, since historical inquiry would become nearly impossible without the use of testimony.

[†]Note that these cases are not simply claims that the extranormal happened, but each is linked with a specific occasion of prayer or "power encounter" (which could constitute another criterion had I space for further columns). That such extranormal events happen so much more often in connection with prayer, even when psychosomatic elements are ruled out, raises the plausibility of a supernatural explanation.

[‡]This was when I had been a Christian for less than three years; not expecting to write a book on miracles until recently, I never asked Jeannie to let me see the medical verification. Without grounds to infer that she was lying, however (in which case she would have been lying about her pre-prayer condition), I accept her claim. She had no motive to deceive me on the matter, and in principle I *could* have asked to see the documentation for myself.

[§]Most of their supporting circles in the United States are not accustomed to such reports.

I could have also added eyewitness reports of significant nature miracles from people I know from other settings, such as Sandy Thomas, Emmanuel Itapson, Ayo Adewuya, Benjamin Ahanonu, or Donna Arukua (whom I met more briefly; see ch. 12). In some cases, like the one reported by Emmanuel Itapson, the events so convinced non-Christian observers that large numbers of them abandoned centuries of religious tradition and became followers of the new faith they believed confirmed by these events. Perhaps I could have added the healing of blindness attested by Gary Dickinson, reports of blindness and death healed from Gebru Woldu, and so forth.

Had I chosen to include more interviewees or other testimonies here, and had I traveled to collect more international eyewitness claims, I could have

continued with such information virtually indefinitely. In the case of many of the circles where such recoveries occurred, a larger pattern lends weight to individual testimonies, though for many of these witnesses I have offered only a single account. One may note also that the accumulation of some events, normally rare in themselves, around particular persons reduces the likelihood of coincidence as an explanation.²²⁹

For example, someone might object that a person deemed dead (somehow wrongly) more than ten minutes occasionally returns to life without prayer or medical intervention, say (to simply make up a number) in one out of five hundred thousand cases. Yet I asked the one Pentecostal minister with whom I happened to remain in contact from my earlier visits to Nigeria if he had any healing stories, and he happened to have a case of a resuscitation “after a few hours.”²³⁰ This would appear an extraordinary coincidence by itself; as a control, think how few people are eyewitnesses of the hypothetical situation above (someone returning to life without medical intervention or prayer). Of the fifteen or so people in the Philippines that I got to know best during my time there, one had a firsthand account of a raising (her own; after being dead more than one hundred minutes). One must then compound the improbability of the first “coincidence” by this next one. Of those who volunteered stories in Cuba, one, a nurse and eyewitness, recounted the raising of her own baby after more than an hour. One of my handful of friends from Ethiopia shared an eyewitness account of a raising.

Even more improbably as coincidence, my wife’s family had a firsthand account of a raising (her sister, after about three hours), and their immediate circle of acquaintances offered six others (with perhaps still others from other acquaintances that we did not interview). Even in the United States, I asked my brother if he had any healing accounts; he put me in touch with a family from his former church who had experienced what they understood as a raising. Moreover, even one of my seminary students shared a raising account, although we were not able to get together officially afterward so I could obtain explicit permission to use her story. Admittedly, none of the several Chinese pastors who shared healing stories with me volunteered a raising (despite some other extraordinary cures),²³¹ but the numbers remain extraordinary.

229. One could object that such particular persons are simply good storytellers. But while some of my sources are good at recounting their stories, in many of these cases, including persons I interviewed in Congo, other eyewitnesses were available to confirm their accounts and that a pattern of healings surrounded their prayers.

230. Leo Bawa, personal correspondence, Aug. 10, 2009. This was one of only two dead persons that Leo prayed for, the other being a friend (personal correspondence, Oct. 13, 2010); it should go without saying that 50 percent is higher than we would expect by coincidence. I knew Ayo Adewuya from biblical scholars meetings in the United States, but as probably the one Nigerian present at my paper addressing miracles at an SBL seminar, he also ended up recounting as an eyewitness the raising of his son twenty minutes after he had been pronounced dead, and with no subsequent impairment (Nov. 22, 2009; follow-up phone interview, Dec. 14, 2009).

231. I am not counting for this argument the Chinese accounts in published sources. In my earlier travels, no one (including Leo at that time) had reasons to share accounts with me; I was not researching or talking about the question, and other issues of discussion were more relevant at that time.

A philosopher might seek to quantify the likelihood of such coincidences mathematically.²³² By estimating how rarely such events happen or could be expected to happen in the course of nature, one might estimate their natural improbability. Whatever the improbability of the events occurring in a given circle, that improbability is compounded exponentially when such events occur multiple times in the same circle. That is, if coincidence appears a plausible explanation for a single case, the plausibility declines with the next level of coincidence, the accumulation of statistically improbable coincidences in a single sample. Multiple extraordinary events like raisings in the same circle seem massively improbable as pure coincidences.²³³ Given such considerations, it seems hardly irrational for me or others in my circle to believe that more than coincidence is at work.²³⁴

Is coincidence the most compelling explanation for my circle of experience? Or is the cumulative evidence that raisings occur sufficient that I should accept that as a likelier explanation than Hume's belief from "uniform human experience" against miracles? Again, one could argue that my immediate circle of friends and family include a disproportionate number of liars, but I would regard this charge as too high a price to defend Hume's generalization from his own circle, which essentially argues from silence about the far more vast circles he did not know.²³⁵ After all, I know these people and believe I have good reason for confidence in their testimony; the critic excludes their testimony circularly, on the grounds that he or she does not agree with the content of their testimony (perhaps because he or she does not similarly know such witnesses).

It is my point here only to address unusual healings, not what appears to be in most settings the more common lack thereof. Some critics raise understandable theological objections such as, "If God/a supernatural force were involved, why allow the death/sickness in the first place?" or similar objections. These are,

232. Such estimates would need to include upper and lower ranges for most of the figures; most of the figures involved cannot be precisely known, which is why I do not attempt to calculate them here. Nevertheless, even the lower figures would prove cumulatively significant. On the limiting side, one would need to take into account the likelihood that the witnesses report true information insofar as they know it; one cannot however fairly rule them out on the presupposition that such events can never happen, since that is the premise under dispute. The cumulative impact of reliable claims, however, would prove significant.

233. If one's starting estimate were as high as one chance in ten that one would come across a particular event in one's circle, one might think of one chance in ten billion for ten such claims. This approach oversimplifies, but then again, an estimate of one chance in ten seems impossibly high for claims like raisings (Hume presumably had none in his circle). One might claim that one has merely happened across a circle that by itself is an improbable sample; yet there are multiple such circles where such extraordinary reports cluster, and they share some common spiritual characteristics.

234. Hume allowed that his fictional prince was right to believe his own (limited) experience; if no one else believes the experiences of our circle, at least we may do so. Hume mistrusted causal explanations for events, but most thinkers today allow that some hypotheses provide better explanations than others.

235. One might also add other such coincidences: when visited for other reasons by a university president from Congo-Kinshasa, I asked if he had eyewitness accounts of healings, and he offered an account of instantly healed blindness. Other accounts of healed blindness in my circle seem too many for coincidence. Though I personally know more blind persons not healed, it is healing rather than nonhealing that is extraordinary and the point under consideration.

however, at root theological objections that would need to be addressed theologically. Such questions may well have persuasive answers from within a specific theistic framework (e.g., a Christian biblical perspective), but those are questions for a different book, by a different kind of author.

By contrast, I am asking especially historical questions in this book—whether healings happen and what can be their plausible causes, not why they sometimes do or do not happen. My point here is that there are a significant number of instant, nonpsychosomatic healings after prayer, with prayer being a common factor. In these cases, supernatural explanations should be respected as one viable interpretive option among genuinely open-minded academics.

Conclusion

I am not claiming that all recoveries demonstrate extraordinary supernatural activity. Some claims of supernatural healing are clearly false; many others are not clearly false, but normal natural factors cannot be ruled out. Biblically informed Christians, as well as members of some other faiths, affirm that God often works through natural factors, but the greater the likelihood of natural factors, the less one can cite such recoveries as distinctive evidence for special divine activity, especially to those not predisposed to accept such claims.

Some other miracle claims, however, are dramatically extranormal (such as the instant disappearance of cataracts on blind eyes or the raising of someone dead without medical intervention) and are more simply explained by their frequent connection with prayer or faith than by the usual course of natural events. Rather than pursuing a reductionist, one-size-fits-all explanation, we should explore which explanations are most useful in particular sorts of cases. Given differing presuppositions, including those formed by prior experiences with religiously associated recoveries or failures to recover, different observers will understand some cases differently. What I do hope that most readers find persuasive is that there are many cases where a purely naturalistic explanation is not the only or even the most easily intellectually defensible one if supernatural explanations are not ruled out. Many may be persuaded, as I am, that a supernatural explanation in some cases makes better sense than any explanation that omits the likelihood of supernatural causation.

Conclusion

Miracle claims, especially regarding healings, are by Western standards surprisingly common (though by no means universal) in regions of the world where such events are expected. These claims include, as in the Gospels and Acts, the healing of the blind, those unable to walk, and the raising of the dead, among many others. To acknowledge the frequency of such claims is not to pass judgment on their accuracy or to prejudge their theological meaning. Their frequency does, however, at least bring into question some traditional critics' suppositions that any such claims must reflect a lengthy period of legendary accretion. That eyewitnesses can cite dramatic cures does not mean that all other claims of dramatic cures stem from eyewitnesses; but it should remove the persistent prejudice that such claims cannot stem from eyewitnesses. Most of the claims I have cited are from sources claiming to represent eyewitnesses or voices at most one remove from eyewitnesses. There therefore seems no reason, based on the principle of historical analogy, to deny that first-century eyewitnesses could have believed that they saw Jesus heal blind eyes, make paralytics walk, or raise the dead, all of which cures eyewitnesses also claim today.

The frequency of such cures also challenges some scholars' working hermeneutical assumption that no one in the modern world believes in miracles. That assumption has always rested on an elitist exclusion from the "modern world" of the voices of the Majority World, as well as a sizable proportion of Western voices outside of a traditional academic and cultural elite. This observation does not by itself prove that miracles exist; it does show that the assumption that modern people cannot believe in miracles is plainly false. In today's postmodern climate, those who would deny the possibility of miracles need to provide supporting arguments more effective than an appeal to a nonexistent consensus or an appeal to the "uniformity" of human experience (the traditional basis for rejecting miracles).

The Western intellectual tendency is to regard most cultures in history and in today's world as precritical, without so much as undertaking a critical analysis of

any of their claims.¹ Yet it seems to me that such disdain for vast numbers of claims (apparently hundreds of millions of them) from other cultures, purely on the basis of unproved presuppositions inherited from the radical wing of the Enlightenment, risks the charge of ethnocentric elitism. Even on the level of interpretation, the radical Enlightenment is not a certain guide. Scientific endeavor by virtue of its nature must work with the concept of an orderly and predictable universe, but it is both reductionist and reflects a logical fallacy to leap from a normally effective method applied to purely natural phenomena to the epistemological and ontological conclusion that no intelligence exists, whether human or nonhuman, that cannot be addressed solely on the basis of known physical laws.

When we have not an isolated instance but a pattern of a number of highly extraordinary events accompanying prayer that do not normally occur without it, it may seem logical to explore prayer as a factor in the anomalous events. I think of circumstances like a number of persons apparently dead for hours abruptly recovering; cataracts immediately disappearing; long-term impaired hearing becoming normal; or the more unusual of the nature miracles I have mentioned. Some of these cases are strongly attested to by reliable eyewitnesses. Because some witnesses inevitably prove unreliable, some readers may be prepared to dismiss all eyewitness claimants as liars. I know many of the eyewitnesses personally, however, and am ready to depend on their integrity—far more than I would be willing to dismiss them as liars because some people’s philosophic assumptions require them to dismiss witnesses who arouse for them cognitive dissonance. At the very least, must not arguments based on the “uniformity of human experience” be reconsidered?

Of course, many recoveries claimed as miracles have ready natural explanations. Others, however, are far more difficult on these terms. Even if cases as surely extra-normal as those just mentioned are a small proportion of the total claims, I believe that they are cumulatively too numerous to be simply dismissed. (One should keep in mind that I have not necessarily collected the strongest cases—simply the ones that were available without me taking time off for extensive world travels.) I believe that the evidence is sometimes compelling enough to warrant the suggestion of supernatural causation as the simpler explanation, and I hope that most readers will share my opinion that a number of miracle claims press far enough beyond currently plausible naturalistic explanations to invite at least consideration of the possibility of supernatural causation.

Even if some readers committed to the Humean paradigm are not persuaded by my secondary argument supporting divine or at least supernatural activity, is the evidence not compelling enough to allow at least the verdict that, in view of the inadequacy of current naturalistic explanations for a number of miracle claims, we should leave other possibilities open? Is a scholar who is unwilling to grant even that possibility at least willing to grant that fellow scholars who do allow

1. As noted in ch. 10, Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:62–65, cite various eyewitness claims through history and today and contend that such claims cannot be dismissed as merely “antique naïveté.”

for supernatural explanations may indeed be genuine scholars with a respectable case for their position? The primary philosophic arguments against supernatural causation, often accepted *a priori* and uncritically, were formulated mostly in the absence of our current abundant testimony regarding such claims.

Admittedly, those who are committed to an antisupernatural worldview may propose alternate explanations for virtually any purportedly suprahuman phenomenon (certainly the limited sort that appear in the Gospels and Acts). And as I have already conceded, in a number of instances natural explanations are preferable, though in others I believe that such attempts become strained. If one's worldview disallows a miraculous interpretation of all claims, one must, and therefore will, come up with purely natural explanations. Yet I have argued, following many others, that the philosophic foundation for this less charitable reading of miracle claims rests on an argument that is circular; certainly it is too disputed in philosophy today to provide a simple basis for all evaluations. A Humean approach is not neutral, and no examination of miracle claims undertaken with these presuppositions can arrive at its conclusions genuinely open-mindedly. Since almost anything can have a *possible* natural explanation (for example, for whatever reason, someone apparently dead has on *occasion* revived), one need not accept any proposed evidence for miracles; but a possible explanation is not always the most plausible or probable explanation. For example, multiple raisings following prayer in the same circles would seem to defy any reasonable probability of mere accident.

What if, instead of *a priori* ruling them in or out as a class of claims, one examines individual supernatural claims, using the same criteria we use for other claimed events? I believe that a reader without Humean premises, who allows for the possibility of supernatural explanations among others, would find sufficient cases to render the hypothesis of a supernatural explanation probable in those cases, hence challenging prejudice against such a possibility.

Again, I recognize that some genuine scholars will demur from my secondary argument that some cases of supernatural causation are likely, as I myself once did. What I do not believe is intellectually legitimate is to simply dismiss on the basis of preexisting assumptions the sincerity of all the millions of persons who claim to have witnessed such phenomena, or to insist that such claims could arise only gradually in legend or through a writer's imagination. Such insistence flies in the face of an extraordinary amount of evidence, denying voluminous and cross-cultural testimony merely on the basis of a dogmatic theory forged in a very different era and context (one dependent, in fact, on a much narrower range of evidence). In view of even the very limited number of cases I have offered above, I would consider such sweeping claims (or the claim that no one in the modern world believes in miracles) to be impossibly naive and misinformed. At the very least, then, we need not attribute the key aspects of miracle accounts in the Gospels and Acts to legend.

Any finite number of firsthand observations may be technically anecdotal, but the witnesses are surely no more biased for believing that they have *seen* some

unusual dramatic recoveries immediately following prayer than are those who, not having seen them, deny that anyone else could have seen them either. Their *a priori* skepticism appears plausible when forged in contexts where such phenomena are not observed; but it seems less than charitable when they presuppose universal nonexperience on the basis of their own. Most important, it is no longer plausible to tout “uniform human experience” as a basis for denying miracles, as in the traditional modern argument. Hundreds of millions of claims would have to be satisfactorily explained in nonsupernatural terms for this appeal to succeed; while many may be so explained, one cannot adopt the conclusion of uniformity as a premise without investigating all of them.²

In the climate of current scholarship, one might do well to write merely like Josephus, urging caution with particular miracle claims while leaving open the possibility that some could occur. Several statements, however, are possible and, I hope, widely agreeable:

1. Most people in Mediterranean antiquity believed that miracles occurred, and the Gospels and Acts include a relatively high proportion of such claims.
2. Modern scholars may question the interpretations of such ancient reports, yet regard some of them as genuine experiences for those who claim them. (That many other reports were fraudulent, of course, no scholar in antiquity or today would deny.)
3. The *a priori* modernist assumption that genuine miracles are impossible is a historically and culturally conditioned premise. This premise is not shared by all intelligent or critical thinkers, and notably not by many people in non-Western cultures. The assumption is an interpretive grid, not a demonstrated fact; contrary to what appeared to be the case to many Western intellectuals one or two centuries ago, history does not support a linear evolution of all cultures toward this position.
4. Even the vast majority of those who always reject suprahuman interpretations of ancient miracle reports do not uncritically otherwise reject the value of ancient historians who include them.
5. Without prejudice based on one's views regarding the possibility of divine causation, we must recognize that enormous numbers of eyewitnesses claim to have witnessed such phenomena. We should therefore acknowledge that many such claims (certainly regarding cures during prayer) can belong even to the eyewitness level of our sources and need not be attributed to a long process of oral development.

In view of such conclusions, one should not *a priori* reject the possibility of eyewitness testimony behind reports of cures in the Gospels and Acts; whatever one's

2. One might argue for a probable premise based on what one deemed a representative sample, but that sample should include an impartial investigation of the strongest and not simply the weakest cases (e.g., should include medical evidence from Lourdes and elsewhere).

explanation for eyewitness testimony of cures, this phenomenon is too common to merely dismiss. Whatever one's other tools for evaluating these reports, skepticism that eyewitnesses could offer them should not be among them. Further, I would also argue that scholars need not rule out the possibility of divine activity in all such claims, although this argument technically involves a philosophic and theological question rather than a historical one in the narrow sense. Finally, given the presence of such claims in ancient historical sources, even if one were to remain skeptical about miracle claims one would not need to reject the rest of the testimony of the Gospels and Acts regarding other events.

Whether in the end one shares the early Christian worldview concerning signs, it is ethnocentric simply to despise it. And whether in the end one despises it, one cannot objectively expunge from the record the clear evidence that early Christians (and many people since then) believed that they witnessed these phenomena.

Oxford scholar G. B. Caird long ago remarked regarding Luke, the first Christian historian:

Luke has often been accused of credulity because he has packed his narrative with signs and wonders, but it would be more in keeping with the evidence to commend him for his faithful reproduction of one of the major constituents of early Christianity. For the Epistles bear their concurrent witness that the preaching of the Gospel was everywhere accompanied by exorcisms and healing and by other forms of miracle.³

3. Caird, *Apostolic Age*, 64, citing Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 12:9–10, 28–30; 2 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:5; and (I believe less clearly) Heb 2:4.

Concluding Unscientific Postscript

In Brazzaville and Kinshasa, in July 2008, I saw a number of men using their arms to pedal themselves in the roads on something like tricycles, an improvement over the means of locomotion available to them in the past. In one particular case, as I noticed the man's legs hanging down like shriveled sticks, I longed to be able to follow the example of Jesus in the Gospels, or some of the miracle claims collected for this book.

When I started writing the book, I felt some competition between my theistic theological sympathies (favoring and even articulating the possibility of miracles in principle) and the intellectual skepticism and reservations characteristic of my academic training (reluctant to credit most particular examples, especially those not susceptible to naturalistic explanations). My earlier background as an atheist who valued only naturalistic empiricism probably reinforced some of the latter predilections. Despite having witnessed some healings in conjunction with prayer, especially in earlier years, more recent disappointments and (in my academic work, especially recently) imbibing an Enlightenment hermeneutic of suspicion had me primed for a significant degree of skepticism. (Sometimes we academicians use the hermeneutic of suspicion as a surrogate for faith: doubt all that you can, and if anything is left at the end, you may tentatively accept it.)

As a Christian I believed in miracles in principle but wondered about the veracity of many claims today. In a number of cases, further research reinforced my suspicion about particular claims (though not, of course, about the fact that people make them). Enough other cases, however, have rendered untenable for me personally my initial, knee-jerk predisposition to doubt any given claim to supernatural activity at the outset. My training makes it easier to evaluate critically than to trust, but at some point the intellectual honesty valued in my training also compelled me to go back and critically evaluate the reasons why I found it so much easier to exercise skepticism than to exercise faith, even in the face of enormous evidence in favor of faith. While I may question or reject particular claims, I ought to be

free to acknowledge other occasions that I find quite persuasive, even if they are not my own regular experience and even if they do not appeal to the conclusions that the academy expects one to find.

My personal questions today are not whether God heals people, sometimes in demonstrable ways. My struggles now are for the vast numbers of people in the world—probably the majority—who need healing of some sort or another and do not have it, most of whom have little access to medical help. In the week before I saw this man in Brazzaville, I prayed for my sick father-in-law and arthritic mother-in-law in Dolisie, Congo, and for the deaf ears of a happy little girl there. I did not see any immediate changes, and my heart broke for their need. (Happily, by God's mercy, my father-in-law did not die as we expected, and gradually he regained much of his health, though he died a year later from an unrelated infection.) Nevertheless, as a Christian, I believe that the Jesus of the Gospels is alive and still has compassion for the suffering. I yearn to watch God touch the broken today.

Witnessing suffering in parts of the Majority World has increased my gratitude for doctors and medical science, which are helping to meet these heartbreaking needs on an impressive scale. In many parts of the Majority World, however, scarcity or expense of resources means that many or most people do not have access to doctors. Even when doctors sacrificially seek to help (I have heard grateful accounts about Doctors without Borders, the International Red Cross, and medical missionaries), they may face unusual obstacles. While I was in Congo, corrupt local officials in one region shut down a mission hospital under the threat of violence, leading to a large number of needless deaths (but the corrupt officials' profit—unless they happen to fall sick). We learned that in another town, a corrupt American had absconded with Congolese government funds designated for rebuilding a hospital. That sizable town to this day has only inadequate medical resources.

The universality of human mortality demonstrates that even the most optimistic construal of miracles will not eradicate human suffering; miracles do not always occur. The physical benefits that they confer when they do occur are necessarily temporary; but in the context of the Gospels' theology, they are also signs of a better, eschatological kingdom for all who hope in Jesus. In the full context of Jesus's ministry, such signs reveal a kingdom that also involves suffering and is currently overshadowed by the cross, the necessary gateway to the resurrection. They function as promises of a better future, of ideal wholeness, because they reveal the God of the cross, who understands and embraces suffering and can be trusted to be found even there. As signs of kingdom power, however, the miracles foreshadow the hope that lies beyond the cross. While Jesus's unjust execution unveils the world's injustice, his ministry to the broken summons his followers to address the same concerns on which Jesus acted.

People are hurting and are in tremendous need. Like Elisha, I want to cry out, "Where is the God of Elijah?" The point of this book has been to demonstrate the plausibility of miracle claims in the Gospels and Acts, with a secondary purpose of

suggesting that these claims need not all be explained solely by recourse to natural causation. My starting concerns involved a matter of biblical interpretation rather than practical theology. But for me personally as a convert to the Christian faith, work on this book has also brought afresh to my attention the dramatic, moving character of human need, as well as the desire of a compassionate and living God to meet those needs. It has reminded me how the Gospel accounts' emphasis on healings is consistent with a God of compassion who cares about real issues of human life and death, issues that theology, philosophy, and exegesis in their most academic forms sometimes forget. I know that miracles often do not happen and that not every prayer is answered affirmatively. But whether through using medicine, prayer, or both, I now long more than ever to see those desperate human needs met.

Appendix A

Demons and Exorcism in Antiquity

One category of healing story that I have largely excluded from the main body of the book is exorcism, since it involves a distinct set of problems for modern interpreters. Nevertheless, exorcism narratives in the Gospels fit the form of other miracle narratives.¹ This appendix summarizes ancient demonology and exorcisms, minus the early Christian sources, many of which I have treated at relevant points in my commentaries on Matthew and Acts. It is intended mostly as a concise prolegomenon to the following appendix, which introduces modern anthropological literature for a point of comparison.

Ancient Views of Demons

The Greek term δαιμόνιον had a wide range of meaning, but the negative aspects of that range made it one of the most suitable terms for hostile spirits in early Judaism. A wide range of opinions about demons existed in early Judaism, a repertoire that expanded as centuries passed. Demonology became increasingly prominent in late antiquity.

1. Guillemette, "Forme" (persuasively, *pace* Bultmann). One cannot distinguish between historical information and legend based on form (see Rüsch, "Dämonen- und -Treibung"). Mark is the dominant extant source for our knowledge of Jesus's exorcisms, with Matthew and Luke usually following Mark (Robinson, "Challenge," 326; Best, "Exorcism," 2; cf. Finger and Swartley, "Bondage," 18–20). Nevertheless, a summary of Jesus's exorcism ministry also appears in Q, indicating that Jesus was known for casting out demons, obviously on multiple occasions (Matt 12:27–28/Luke 11:19–20).

Demons' most direct attack on an individual was through possession.² Various prophylactic methods were meant to ward off demonic attacks of diverse kinds, but in the case of possession a cure took the form of exorcism. Although those practicing exorcism sometimes employed commands, as Jesus did, even their commands usually belonged to a larger context of incantations and often accompanied various rituals (such as fumigation).

Daimones

Greeks could picture gods³ or other spirits⁴ entering a person. The Greek term translated "demon" is not in itself necessarily negative,⁵ and the meaning of the term evolved over time.⁶ It could refer to the spirits of the deceased,⁷ including prominent heroes of the past;⁸ it could involve good or ill fortune;⁹ it could denote a particular

2. Our English terminology of "possession" is potentially misleading, because of the term's semantic range (Johnson and Keller, "Possession"), because it fails to allow degrees of effects, and because it subsumes so many diverse human actions or experiences. I employ the term "possession" because of its common usage, but its nuances are very imprecise (cf. Theron, "Beste"; Carter, "Demon Possession"; idem, "Possession"; Gildea, "Possession"); it assumes "ownership," hence implies no variation among degrees and types of control, in contrast to the more general Greek term δαιμονίζομαι in the NT. Arguing for degrees of demonization, see, e.g., Warner, "Position," 84–86; Davies, "Exorcism," 25–28.

3. Homer *Il.* 17.210–11.

4. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.14.14.

5. For a survey of Greek views on demonology and *daimones*, see especially Ferguson, *Demonology*, 33–67 (beginning on 33–35 with the three views in Plutarch *Obsol.* 10–15, *Mor.* 415A–418D); Barrett-Lennard, *Healing*, 337–44; cf. more briefly Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 184–86; Alexander, *Possession*, 259–65; Finger and Swartley, "Bondage," 10; for the ancient Near East, see, e.g., sources cited in Carpenter, "Deuteronomy," 518, 542. On the Greek term, see further Sánchez, "Daimones"; Burkert, *Religion*, 179–81; Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*, 365.

6. See Rives, *Religion*, 18 (citing Apuleius *De deo Socr.* 13–16). In Heraclitus, the *daimon* shapes the person's character (Darcus, "Daimon") or generates one's ordered speech (Darcus, "Logos"); for Empedocles, the divine mind parallels the human *daimon* (Darcus, "*Phren*"). Following Plato more closely than Neoplatonists did, Plutarch viewed *daimon* as a higher component of the soul (Brenk, "Doctrine"); Von Franz, "Daimons," shows how Stoic and Middle Platonic views of spirits developed and how spirits related to "self." For a collection of relevant texts, see Cotter, *Miracles*, 75–105.

7. E.g., Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 3.54; Maximus of Tyre 9.6; Menander Rhetor 2.9, 414.25–27 (when consoling the bereaved); *PGM* 4.1965–69; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 3.38; perhaps Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 25 (but this appears more novel and may be a rhetorical exercise); see further discussion in Bolt, "Daimons," 76–96. Even many intellectuals believed stories of ghosts (Pliny *Ep.* 7.27.1–14), though others lampooned them (Lucian *Lover of Lies* 29–32). Lucian doubts spirit stories generally (*Lover of Lies* 16–20, 29–31), including those explicitly involving *daimones* (*Lover of Lies* 13, 16, 29). Although the Furies often appear (e.g., Ovid *Tristia* 4.4.70), Cicero attributes them to one's feelings of guilt (Cicero *Pis.* 20.46–47) or employs them figuratively (*Att.* 10.18).

8. Pythagoras was thus a *daimon* (Philostratus *Ep. Apoll.* 50), as were Achilles (Maximus of Tyre 9.7) and Proteusilaos (Philostratus *Hrk.* 43.3). The deceased golden race had become benevolent *daimones* (Hesiod *Op.* 121–23).

9. Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 23.6; Chariton *Chaer.* 6.2.9; Philostratus *Hrk.* 12.1 (cf. Burkert, *Religion*, 180). The application to ill fortune (e.g., Menander Rhetor 2.11; 419.18, 32) lent itself to the increasingly pejorative sense of the term (Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 134).

deity,¹⁰ or even deity more generally.¹¹ One could even pun on multiple senses of the term.¹² On a popular level, Greeks close to the early Christian period applied the term increasingly often to the many forces intermediate in character between deities and nature.¹³ These spirits were thus highly useful for magic,¹⁴ and even some Jewish texts mention protagonists exploiting the usefulness of “demons.”¹⁵

Greeks often applied the term to deities like the Olympians,¹⁶ but more commonly to lower, superhuman spirits and demigods or deified mortals.¹⁷ Sometimes they even used it as the equivalent of the Roman *genius*.¹⁸ Not everyone concurred with the appropriateness of this intermediary category between deities and mortals, but it was widely held.¹⁹ Probably reflecting Diaspora Judaism’s common adap-

10. E.g., *I. Eph.* 1255 (ἀγαθοῦ δαίμονος, the “good *daimon*,” linked here with Artemis); Menander Rhetor 1.1.342.6–9 (personified jealousy).

11. E.g., Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 76.5; Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.22.53; for “supernatural,” see, e.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* 25.4; 48.19; 55.4. Socrates was accused of having introduced new “divinities” to Athens (e.g., Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 7.11, δαιμόνια καινα; see comment on Acts 17:18 in my commentary on Acts); his own spirit-guide is also called a *daimon* (Plutarch *Alc.* 17.4; *Sign Soc.* 10, *Mor.* 580C; Socrates *Ep.* 1; for modern views on this, see, e.g., Kleve, “Daimon”; cf. Brickhouse and Smith, “Sign”), which was a deity (Xenophon *Mem.* 1.1.2; 1.4.2, 10, 13; 4.8.1, 5–6).

12. Lucian *Lover of Lies*, 32 (meaning “supernatural,” but in the context of a ghost story).

13. See Nilsson, *Piety*, 170–72; Sánchez, “Daimones.”

14. E.g., *PGM* 4.1965–69; Ps.-Callisth. *Alex.* 1.5; Aune, *Prophecy*, 45; Nilsson, *Piety*, 171; Smith, *Magician*, 97–99; Yamauchi, “Magic,” 140–41; perhaps Philostratus *Hrk.* 25.13. From a (hostile) Jewish perspective, see *1 En.* 9:6–7; *L.A.B.* 34:2–3; *T. Jud.* 23:1; *b. Sanh.* 67b; cf. Gaster, *Scriptures*, 85 (on CD XII, 2–3, if we take the Hebrew term as “ghost”; cf. Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 21). Those who used demons magically sometimes had trouble getting rid of them afterward (Klauck, *Context*, 229).

15. See Solomon in *T. Sol.* 22; *b. Git.* 68ab; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:8, §1. It was said that a demon helped God’s people (*b. Meil.* 17b, if, as is very likely, this is a demon; *Gen. Rab.* 63:8) and that one spirit sought local people’s help driving away an evil spirit (*Lev. Rab.* 24:3); later rabbis sometimes learned from and cited demons (e.g., *b. Pes.* 110a), and some considered particular categories of spirits, whether in the house or field, to be benevolent (*Gen. Rab.* 24:6). Cf. the Watchers coming, like the Greek Prometheus (cf. Achilles Tatius 3.8), to teach (*Jub.* 4:15). Jewish magical texts (or syncretistic texts employing Jewish motifs?) appealed to angels and deities (Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:153–295).

16. E.g., Homer *Il.* 1.561 (Hera); *Orph. H.* 17.8 (Poseidon); *S0.2* (Dionysus); 73.1–2 (Zeus). Nilsson, *Piety*, 172, notes that the definition shifted between Homer and Plato.

17. E.g., Ps.-Plato *Epin.* 984DE; Isaeus *Menec.* 47; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 1.31.1; Plutarch *Isis* 26, *Mor.* 361A; *Obsol.* 10–22, *Mor.* 415B–422C (e.g., 13, *Mor.* 416E); *Sign Soc.* 24, *Mor.* 593D; Arius Didymus 2.7.11s, pp. 98–99.18–19; Artemidorus *Onir.* 2.40; Pausanias 9.22.7; Maximus of Tyre 8.6; 9.2; Menander Rhetor 1.1.333.21–24; 1.1.341.1–4; Achilles Tatius 3.10.1; Diogenes Laertius 8.1.32; Philostratus *Hrk.* 48.15; Iamblichus *Myst.* 1.5, 20; Libanius *Narration* 7.1 (see deities). Sometimes one could translate the term in more than one manner, e.g., in Chariton *Chaer.* 3.1.4; 6.2.9; cf. Circe in Philostratus *Hrk.* 25.13; a sea *daimon* who loved a mortal in *Hrk.* 45.2 (on uses in Philostratus, see Puiggali, “Démonologie”).

18. Epictetus *Diatr.* 1.14.12, 14; Plut *Mor.* 564F (in Betz, Dirkse, and Smith, “Numinis,” 225); the LCL translation of Diogenes Laertius 8.1.32; cf. the popular view of everyone having either a good or a bad *daimon* (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 23.6; in 23.9, he notes that this is not his own view; cf. again *Or.* 4.79–80, 83). A *daimon* could be a beneficial guardian spirit (as in Iamblichus *V.P.* 2.10). On the *genius* (often as an individual’s tutelary deity), see Maharam, “Genius”; the view was widespread (as noted in Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 110.1).

19. Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 1.77.3. Such intermediate powers contributed to the “demonizing of religion” (Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 134).

tation of broader religious vocabulary, Josephus freely employs this Hellenistic language for the divine.²⁰

In Middle Platonism, humans could become heroes, *daimones*, and finally divine; or the *daimones* could also regress back into mortal bodies and eventually face death.²¹ They were intermediaries connecting and communicating between the divine and human realms.²² As in other sources, *daimones* were associated with oracles, filling, for example, the Delphic priestess before she would speak.²³ Because these intermediary spirits could be either good or bad, however, the semantic range includes a negative usage. Thus at times,²⁴ and increasingly in a later period,²⁵ the term could refer to an evil spirit.²⁶

In the early empire, such views seem to have flourished already around Palestine and among Arabs.²⁷ These views may well have come from farther east. Persian demonology, involving massive numbers of evil demons, bears some resemblance to the common Jewish and Christian perspective,²⁸ though none of the relevant extant sources come from the Parthian period (250 B.C.E.–250 C.E.).²⁹ Many Jewish people believed that the gods of the pagans were demons in any case;³⁰ some Middle Eastern religions demonized the deities of those they supplanted.³¹ Such demons could prove hostile to mortals.³²

20. Isaacs, *Spirit*, 33–34 (though noting that he also applies it to demons more strictly in *War* 7.185).

21. Klauck, *Context*, 424; see categories of *daimones* in Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 317–19. Some Stoics also allowed that the soul rose to the heavens (Seneca *Dial.* 11.9.3) before its ultimate resolution back into the primeval fire (Marcus Aurelius 4.21).

22. Maximus of Tyre 8.8; 9.2 (see further Trapp, *Maximus*, 67, on 9.1–7); Aelius Aristides *Def. Or.* 424, §144D (citing Plato). Maximus believed there were many of them (8.8, citing Hesiod *W.D.* 252–53 for thirty thousand). Iamblichus believed that all apparitions were *daimones* (*Myst.* 2.10).

23. Maximus of Tyre 8.1 (Trapp, *Maximus*, 69n1, cites also Plato *Symp.* 202e; Apuleius *De Deo Socr.* 6.133; Plutarch *Face* 944cd and esp. *Obsoles.* 415a ff.).

24. E.g., Valerius Maximus 1.7.7 (switching here from Latin to the Greek “κακὸν δαίμονα”; it tormented one at night as a portent of impending death).

25. E.g., *P. Grenf.* 2.76.3–4 (from 305–6 C.E.); Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 3.38; 4.20; Porphyry *Marc.* 11.201–2; 19.322; 21.331–33, 336–39; Xenophon *Eph.* 1.5.

26. Much later, Iamblichus *Myst.* 2.3, classifies angels as benevolent, demons as unpleasant, and heroes as kinder than demons.

27. Lucian *Lover of Lies* 16–17 (not using the term but depicting possession and exorcism); for Egypt and exorcism, 31 (cf. 33).

28. Olmstead, *Persian Empire*, 18, 96, 195, 232. Many have assumed that Judaism simply adopted the Persian perspective (e.g., Foakes Jackson and Lake, “Teaching,” 287); as I note here and in appendix B, however, the experiences are fairly transcultural.

29. Yamauchi, “Magic,” 118. Among the Persians, a “demon” could involve one touched by madness (cf. Olmstead, *Persian Empire*, 53). Our demonstrably datable, extant Jewish sources appear earlier, but we cannot be sure whether or not this is simply because more Jewish sources from the period survive.

30. Ps 106:37 (esp. LXX); Bar 4:7; 1 *En.* 19:1; *Jub.* 1:11; 22:17; 4Q243–245, line 18; *Sib. Or.* 8.43–47; *T. Job* 3:3; *T. Sol.* 5:5; 6:4; *Sipre Deut.* 318.2.1–2; cf. perhaps 4Q560 1 I, 5; 4Q491 A, 15 8–10; 2 *Bar.* 10:8. In the early Christian movement, e.g., 1 Cor 10:20 (cf. Deut 32:17); 2 Pet 2:4 (if it associates fallen angels with Titans); Rev 9:20; Justin 1 *Apol.* 5; Athenagoras 26; Tertullian *Apol.* 23.5–6. The attribution of the pagan to the demonic also served a useful social demarcation to maintain the small Christian sect’s boundaries against paganism (Leeper, “Exorcism,” 59–60).

31. Gordon, *Civilizations*, 246–47; Alexander, *Possession*, 19; for fallen angels, cf. the fallen gods of Enuma Elish, the Greek Titanomachy (see, e.g., West, “Introduction,” 27), and the Hittite account in Gurney, *Aspects*, 15.

32. Cf. Chariton *Chaer.* 3.1.4; 6.2.9, though these may be divine.

*Jewish Demonology*³³

Demonology is rare in the OT,³⁴ and a renewed focus on demons, which appeared in surrounding cultures, may have been occasioned by the experience of the exile.³⁵ A variety of Jewish conceptions of demonology developed, probably most of them overlapping at the level of popular religion, although it is difficult to know at what period various strands originated. In Josephus, some deadly demons are spirits of wicked persons that enter and kill the living.³⁶ In *1 Enoch*, many evil spirits are spirits of the deceased giants;³⁷ later rabbis thought that such spirits became more powerful after the flood generation.³⁸ For some later rabbis, demons impassioned by Adam and Eve used them to reproduce more demons.³⁹

Some Jewish traditions may have adapted Greek concepts, such as reference to avenging spirits resembling the Greek Furies (Sir 39:28);⁴⁰ in some other early texts, however, angels of destruction appear to be spirits serving the evil prince

33. For a fuller survey of early Jewish demonology, see Ferguson, *Demonology*, 69–104, who treats especially intertestamental texts on 74–81; Philo and Josephus (who employ the full range of the Greek *daimon*) on 81–86; and rabbinic sources on 86–93; also Barrett-Lennard, *Healing*, 331–36. Briefly, e.g., Ford, “Response”; Finger and Swartley, “Bondage,” 10–12; Kotansky, “Demonology,” 270–71. Naturally the conceptions are more diverse than this summary allows me to detail; even the Qumran scrolls and *Jubilees*, which reflect a similar worldview, may have some differences (Noack, “Qumran and Jubilees,” 200; for similarities, see Fröhlich, “Invoke”; Ibba, “Spirits”), though *Jubilees* was probably authoritative at Qumran (see Hopkins, “Status”). Given the summary nature of this appendix, I have not distinguished the different periods involved, but those familiar with the sources will recognize the sources in the endnotes and the respective periods to which they belong.

34. Akkadian and Arabic cognates do confirm the LXX interpretation of Lev 17:7 (cf. Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37) as referring to demons (as my colleague Emmanuel Itapson persuaded me, in addition to his Nigerian perspective on the evidence). Possession by a hostile spirit may appear in 1 Sam 16:14 (e.g., Oesterreich, *Possession*, 168–69; the meaning is debated—see, e.g., discussion in Ma, “Presence,” 21–22; Arnold, *Samuel*, 239–42). But such references are rare. Note the survey of themes in Finger and Swartley, “Bondage,” 12–17.

35. Cf. Propp, “Demons” (attributing it to disillusionment with the covenant’s control over ill fortune; it could also be attributed, however, to a wider acquaintance with alternative paradigms). Hittites and other peoples employed some purity rituals resembling ancient Israel’s, applying them prophylactically against demons.

36. Josephus *War* 7.185. In Josephus they are usually souls of the dead (Ferguson, *Demonology*, 85). Traditional paganism expected netherworld spirits to plague or possess tomb robbers (Trombley, “Paganism,” 204). For associations of tombs with spirits, see PGM 101.1–3; Nineham, *Mark*, 153; Alexander, *Possession*, 29; cf. *Jub.* 22:17; *Ab. R. Nat.* 3A; *T. Sol.* 8:9; Lewis, *Life*, 96; for use of corpses in witchcraft, e.g., Apuleius *Metam.* 2.20.

37. *1 En.* 15:9; 16:1; cf. the spirits that impregnated their mothers in Philo *Giants* 6, 16; the Greek Titanomachy (e.g., Hesiod *Theog.* 717–19; Menander Rhetor 2.17, 438.31–32), of which various Jewish sources show awareness (e.g., *Sib. Or.* 3.121, 155; cf. *Jdt* 16:7). For demons in Jewish apocalyptic sources, see the collection of material in Cotter, *Miracles*, 106–19 (also noting the absence of exorcisms in these texts, probably due to their genre, 119).

38. *Lev. Rab.* 5:1; their idolatry rendered them susceptible to demons (*Gen. Rab.* 23:6).

39. So *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:3; *b. Erub.* 18b; *Gen. Rab.* 24:6.

40. God also sends demons as agents of destruction in later texts, e.g., *Tg. Onq.* to Deut 32:24; *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* to Deut 28:24.

of darkness.⁴¹ A few texts may also reflect the later Platonic notion⁴² of demons as disembodied souls.⁴³ Magical texts reflecting some folk religion specify among other types of demons groups such as “liliths.”⁴⁴ Some texts also call demons “unclean spirits.”⁴⁵

People associated demons with various afflictions, from which deliverance could be sought.⁴⁶ People also occasionally associated them with particular or specialized sins,⁴⁷ like demons of deceit associated with witchcraft and divination,⁴⁸ jealousy,⁴⁹ promiscuity,⁵⁰ arrogance,⁵¹ lying,⁵² and anger.⁵³ “The spirit of error” seems a more pervasive title, found in Qumran dualism and elsewhere in early Judaism.⁵⁴ Named demons

41. 1QM XIII, 11–12; perhaps *p. Shebu.* 6:6, §3. On the angelology of 1QM, see Yadin, *Scroll of War*, 229–42.

42. Cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 317–19.

43. Philo *Giants* 6, 16; *Gen. Rab.* 7:5 (in this case, nonembodied, because the Sabbath prevented God from completing creation). But angels, too, could be viewed as bodiless (*T. Ab.* 3:6; 4:9; 9:2; 15:4, 6; 16:2 A).

44. E.g., 4Q510 1 5 (singular, but listing various kinds of demons); Aramaic incantation texts 1.6, 8; 3.14; 6.11; 10.2; 11.1–3, 9; 12.2, 8; cf. *Isa* 34:14; 2 *Bar.* 10:8 (among the desert spirits); a modern Yemenite amulet in Hes, “Role,” 376; in older Canaanite religion, see Kaiser, “Pantheon,” 131. For headless demons, cf., e.g., *PGM* 2.11; 5.98, 125, 145–46; 7.233, 243, 442; 8.91; 102.5; *T. Sol.* 9:1; Dickie, “Headless Demons.” For satyrs (cf. *Lev* 17:7; 2 *Chr* 11:15), see *Sipra* A.M. pq. 9.188.3.6 (demythologized). Modern cults also sometimes delineate types of spirits, e.g., in Umbanda (Pressel, “Possession,” 335) or others (Colson, “Possession,” 70–72).

45. *T. Sol.* 3:7 (later); cf. *Jub.* 10:1 (“polluted demons”); 4Q230 1 1 (but this is reconstructed); and, differently, “unclean spirit” in 1QS IV, 22 (vs. the “spirit of truth in IV, 21”); 4Q444 1 4i + 5.8 (possibly the human spirit); clearly 11QS XIX, 15 (and the reconstructed text in 11Q6 4 V, 16; here an unclean spirit acts like Satan); *Mark* 1:23; *Luke* 8:29; cf. Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 134–38 (citing esp. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 4:7). “Unclean” could sometimes represent “sinful” (1QpHab VIII, 13); Klawans (“Impurity”; idem, “Idolatry”) emphasizes the links between sin and impurity in the Scrolls; Himmelfarb, “Impurity and Sin,” warns against overgeneralizing this link (while conceding that 1QS and 4Q512 exceed OT perspectives). Those dominated by Belial’s spirits also are more apt to defile the temple (*CD* XII, 1–2; 4Q271 5 I, 17–18).

46. See Eve, *Miracles*, 174–216. In other cultures, see discussion below.

47. Most prominently in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, e.g., *T. Reu.* 2:1–2; 3:3ff.; *T. Jud.* 16:1–4; earlier, in the Qumran scrolls, see Tigchelaar, “Names of Spirits.” Cf. specializing spirits in the Middle Platonic tradition in Maximus of Tyre 8.8; 9.7; πνεῦμα can, however, include psychological dispositions (Chevallier, *Souffle*, 39). Angels, too, could specialize (e.g., the angel over repentance in 1 *En.* 40:9). In one modern discussion, see Instone-Brewer, “Psychiatrists,” 142. They appear in the Zoroastrian Denkard (Yamauchi, *Persia*, 439–40), but this was probably not compiled before the ninth century C.E. (ibid., 410). The association appears in both Hinduism and contemporary Indian charismatic Christianity (Bergunder, “Miracle Healing,” 290). This is probably *not* the point of 1 *Cor* 2:12; 2 *Tim* 1:7.

48. *T. Jud.* 23:1. The association of demons with witchcraft might stand behind accusations against Jesus (see Keener, *Spirit*, 104; idem, *Matthew*, 361–62; idem, *John*, 714–15, and many sources cited there); for “possession” in deviance labeling there, see the discussion in Guijarro, “Politics,” 118, 122–23.

49. *T. Sim.* 2:7; *T. Dan* 1:6.

50. *T. Dan* 5:6.

51. *T. Dan* 5:6.

52. *T. Dan* 2:1; 5:5.

53. *T. Dan* 2:1; cf. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:3. Cf. also destroying demons against Israel, “Wrath,” “Anger,” etc. (*Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on *Deut* 9:19).

54. 1QS III, 18–19; IV, 21–23 (see Charlesworth, “Comparison,” 418; Keener, *John*, 970); *T. Jud.* 14:8; 20:1 (cf. *T. Sim.* 3:1; contrast the seven spirits of deception in *T. Reu.* 2:1; cf. *T. Iss.* 4:4; *T. Sol.* 8:3, 9).

appear early;⁵⁵ one persistent name in Jewish texts is Lilith.⁵⁶ Demons also could cause physical afflictions, as at times in the Gospels,⁵⁷ or even kill people.⁵⁸ Demons could specialize in oil, in causing headaches, or in imbibing excessive alcohol.⁵⁹ Some sources suggest a special unleashing of demons in the eschatological time before the end.⁶⁰

One kind of evil spirit dwelled in reed stalks,⁶¹ and others might be found in palm and other trees;⁶² various trees and bushes harbored various sorts of demons,⁶³ as did most vegetables.⁶⁴ Demons might be found in ruins,⁶⁵ in bathhouses,⁶⁶ in graveyards,⁶⁷ and elsewhere. Apparently they could not attack anyone in the holy city of Jerusalem, however.⁶⁸ Rabbis reportedly learned some of these traditions from reports offered by demons themselves,⁶⁹ a source, one might think, of dubitable veracity, however firsthand its information.⁷⁰

55. 4Q560 1 I, 4; Penney and Wise, "Beelzebub"; Penney, "Devils," 41–51; cf. Mark 5:9. See the possible incantation against Resheph (pestilence?) in 11Q11 V, 5, but the Hebrew may read "heavens." On the origin of many demon names, see, e.g., Barton, "Origin" (though he omits Mastema). Other traditional religions also may have named demons, spirits, or malevolent forces (e.g., Umeh, *Dibia*, 197–200; in *bori*, see Echard, "Possession Cult," 71–80), though in some cultures most are not known by name (Shorter, "Spirit Possession," 117).

56. See 4Q510 1 S, and some identify with her the evil figure in 4Q184 (Baumgarten, "Seductress"; White Crawford, "Folly"). In late talmudic and especially medieval texts, "Lilith" becomes a frequently mentioned demon, eventually queen of the female demons (see Morel-Vergniol, "Ève et Lilith"; Gaines, "Lilith"; *lilin* were night spirits). Cf. the demoness Agrath in *b. Pes.* 112b (Eve, *Miracles*, 290–91).

57. *T. Sol.* 1:1–4; 18; *Midr.* Ps 17:8; Luke 13:11; Kotansky, "Demonology," 271–72. Schwab, "Psychosomatic medicine," suggests that the demonological explanation for sickness in medieval times reduced psychosomatic treatments; still, one would expect exorcism, at least, to have worked in many of these cases. Curses invite sicknesses in various societies, later cured by exorcism (see MacNutt, *Power*, 74–75, in this case a Christian exorcism in Colombia). Many traditional South American societies affirm possession illness (without possession trance), which is thought to be cured only by exorcism (Bourguignon, "Spirit Possession Belief," 20–21); see also discussion at Acts 10:38 in my Acts commentary.

58. Tob 3:8 (Sara's first seven husbands); Josephus *War* 7.185; *Num. Rab.* 12:3; for regular demonic attacks against humans, not necessarily lethal, see *1 En.* 69:12; cf. *Tr. Shem* 2:9. Satan is an "angel of destruction" in *p. Shebuot* 6:6, §3.

59. Alexander, *Possession*, 32.

60. *2 Bar.* 27:9; perhaps relevant to their prevalence in the Gospels as the kingdom is at hand (cf. Alexander, *Possession*, 249; Hultgren, "Stories," 133). For the possible linking of exorcism with eschatology, cf. perhaps *T. Sim.* 6:6; with the kingdom, 4Q510 1 4 (Vermes, *Religion*, 130).

61. *Gen. Rab.* 56:6.

62. *B. Pes.* 111a, bar.; 111ab.

63. *B. Pes.* 111b.

64. *B. Sanh.* 101a, bar.

65. *B. Ber.* 3ab. For views concerning spirits haunting abandoned places, cf. also Lewis, "Possession," 191.

66. *Tos. Ber.* 6:25 (by implication); *b. Ber.* 62a; *Kid.* 39b–40a; *Shab.* 67a; *Eccl. Rab.* 2:8, §1 (Solomon heating his baths with demons); *Song Rab.* 3:7, §5.

67. See, e.g., sources in Alexander, *Possession*, 29; cf. Mark 5:2–3; this may refer merely to madness in *b. Hag.* 3b. One could hear spirits of the dead talking there at night (*b. Ber.* 18b). Because of their association with the dead, spirits remain associated with burial grounds even in some cultures today (Schmidt, "Psychiatry," 147; Edwards, "Possession," 211).

68. *Ab. R. Nat.* 35 A, if the translator has correctly construed the original. The tradition probably idealizes Jerusalem after its destruction.

69. *B. Pes.* 110ab.

70. Perhaps obtained by interrogation, as in some modern examples; cf. Fuchs, "Techniques," 135–36.

Later rabbis thought that some kinds of demons could look like people.⁷¹ Some opined that demons could see people but not the reverse, and angels could see demons but not the reverse.⁷² Some felt that particular demons might prove helpful.⁷³ But of course such spirits were subject to and recognized God's sovereignty; God was sovereign over all spirits in the vast majority of early Jewish literary sources.⁷⁴ Demons could also be arranged in ranks or legions.⁷⁵ (I am leaving aside here Jewish teaching about angels of nations.⁷⁶)

Possession

Greeks and Romans believed that mantic ecstasy often involved possession by a deity.⁷⁷ The presence of the numinous could generate dread and trembling.⁷⁸ Such madness might be sent by a deity and result in killing of loved ones;⁷⁹ after a bout of madness, one might have no recollection of the mad behavior.⁸⁰ Madness was

71. *B. Git.* 66a; Satan in *T. Job* 23:2. Others resembled Greeks' monsters (e.g., the late *Apoc. Zeph.* 4:2–4; for pagan monsters, see, e.g., one of the Furies in Statius *Theb.* 1.103–9).

72. *Pesiq. Rab.* 6:5; cf. *Ab. R. Nat.* 40A.

73. *B. Meil.* 17b; *Gen. Rab.* 24:6; 63:8.

74. *Jub.* 49:2; CD VIII, 2–3; 1Qap Gen^a XX, 16–17; 1QM XIV, 9–10; *T. Adam* 1:1; *Num. Rab.* 14:3; cf. VanderKam, "Traditions," 245; *Pr. Jos.* 7. Cf. Islamic Somali tradition in Lewis, "Possession," 192.

75. *T. Sol.* 11:3 (if not modeled after Mark 5:9 or Eph 6:12, this may be modeled after angelic ranks; *1 En.* 69:3; 75:1; *2 En.* 21:1; 22:2, 6, J; 33:10; *3 En.* 5:2; *3 Bar.* 11:4, 6, 8; *Gr. Apoc. Ezra* 1:4, 7; perhaps *2 Kgs* 6:15; 4Q529 II–III). One could host multiple spirits (Mark 5:9; Luke 8:2; four in Lewis, "Possession," 212; seventeen in Abdalla, "Friend," 38; multiple spirits in Rahim, "Zar," 144; Last, "Bori," 51; a medium could host multiple spirits in succession in Firth, *Ritual*, 306). For hierarchies of spirits in some Islamic cults, see Abdalla, "Friend," 41–42.

76. Briefly, cf. *Deut* 32:8 LXX; *Dan* 10:13–12:1; *Jub.* 15:30–32; *1 En.* 89:59–90:19; later *1 En.* 40:9 (Knibb; contrast Isaacs); 61:10; *2 En.* 20:1 (longer version); *T. Levi* 3:8; *T. Job* 49:2; *3 Bar.* 12:3; *Ascen. Isa.* 1:3; 2:2 (but probably Christian material; cf. 1:4); *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on *Gen* 11:8; in early gnostic texts, e.g., *Apoc. Adam* 1:4; *Hyp. Arch.* The Daniel and early Enoch material shows that the language precedes Christianity (Stuckenbruck, "Angels of Nations"; cf. Caragounis, *Mysterion*, 157–61; Cullmann, *State*, 68; *pace* the concerns of Carr, *Angels*, 40); Paul's source may be apocalyptic tradition (Lee, "Powers"; cf. Benoit, "Angelology"). For the LXX of Deuteronomy, see Russell, *Apocalyptic*, 244–49; Peake, "Colossians," 479; Dodd, *Bible and Greeks*, 18–19. Jewish sources usually treat them as angelic authorities appointed by God (*Jub.* 15:31–32; 35:17; *Mek. Shir.* 2:112ff.; *b. Ber.* 16b–17a; *Yoma* 77a; *Exod. Rab.* 32:3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 17:4; *3 En.* 29:1; 30:1–2), but in some sources, God appointed them to lead the nations astray (*Jub.* 15:31), or they had become malevolent powers and would be judged at the end of the age (e.g., 1QM XIV, 15–16; XV, 13–14; XVII, 5–8; Kobelski, "Melchizedek," 123; cf. *3 En.* 26:12; *Sipre Deut.* 315.2.1; *Gen. Rab.* 77:3; 78:3).

77. Graf, "Ecstasy," 800 (citing, e.g., Virgil *Aen.* 6.77–80); Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 1.31.1; the state is negative but probably faked, in Menander *Theophrouroumene* (cf. discussion in 20–25). Thus one might think Dio mad, but he warns that it may be (prophetically) inspired by a *daimon* (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 34.4).

78. Suetonius *Aug.* 6.

79. Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 103, citing Diodorus Siculus 4.11.1; see Euripides *Herc. Fur.* *passim*.

80. Achilles Tatius 4.17.4; but contrast *Dan* 4:36. Lack of recollection also characterizes many of those described as "possessed" today (e.g., Gelfand, *Religion*, 166, 169; Field, "Possession," 3, 6).

routinely associated with *daimones*.⁸¹ A ghost might be thought to impart epilepsy, which was often viewed as a form of divine possession.⁸²

Possession trance often appeared to outsiders as madness when witnessed outside the cultic context.⁸³ A cultic context, however, could make such possession appear more positive. Plato envisioned four kinds of ecstasy, one of the most important being prophetic, associated with Apollo;⁸⁴ although also linked with the unattached Sibyl and Bacis, prophetic ecstasy was primarily linked to oracle locations, especially Delphi, Didyma, and Claros.⁸⁵ Virgil associates this prophetic ecstasy with divine possession.⁸⁶

Some thinkers claimed that the sort of “madness” that came from the gods was superior to sanity.⁸⁷ Being prophetically seized by the divine was periodic rather than continuous.⁸⁸ The δαίμονες spoke “through human bodies, just as the pipe player Ismenias used his skill to produce notes from his pipe.”⁸⁹ (Some Christian writers argued that Christian prophecy, unlike “possession,” was controllable.⁹⁰) Josephus might presuppose the idea of such δαίμονες possessing persons with fury or passionate zeal.⁹¹

One may compare, for example, ancient accounts of the Pythia’s possession.⁹² In most sources, the Pythian priestess would prophesy from a tripod seat.⁹³ Plutarch claims that she went into mad ecstasy but returned to calm sobriety after leaving “her tripod and its exhalations.”⁹⁴ Plutarch described the Pythian spirits by a term that came to mean “ventriloquist,” making one’s voice seem to come from elsewhere, but probably

81. Nilsson, *Piety*, 172. Chrysostom *Hom. Acts* 17, also cited similarities between the possessed and the intoxicated (referring to their eyes, but perhaps also alluding to a lack of personal motor control).

82. Xenophon *Eph.* 5.7. Many ancients believed that epilepsy involved (divine) possession (though Hippocratics ascribed it to physical causes; see Capps, *Village Psychiatrist*, 92). Epilepsy is now understood to be neurologically based (and distinguished from demonization in Matt 4:24); for one African query about the relation between the two, cf. Ikeobi, “Healing,” 67–70.

83. E.g., Alexander, *Possession*, 98–99 (citing Euripides *Bacch.* 241; Plato *Phaedr.* 47), 115 (specifically on the Pythia); cf. Mbiti, *Religions*, 227. A few people opined that deities were not localized in their temples and thus need not be approached there (Lucian *Dem.* 27).

84. Plato *Phaedr.* 265B.

85. Graf, “Ecstasy,” 800. Alexander the false prophet seems to imply that his own prophecies are more accurate than these more famous cult centers (Lucian *Alex.* 43); Lucian himself, our main source for this figure, was unimpressed with any of them (*Dial. G.* 244 [18/16, *Hera and Leto* 1]).

86. Virgil *Aen.* 6.77–80. Graf, “Ecstasy,” 800.

87. Aelius Aristides *Def. Or.* 53, §17D, perhaps employing the rhetorical technique of shocking speech.

88. E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 4.13.5–6.

89. Maximus of Tyre 9.1 (trans. Trapp, 77).

90. 1 Cor 14:32; Chrysostom *Hom. Cor.* 29.2 (ACCS-Cor, 118); Severian of Gabala *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church* (NTA 15:262; ACCS-Cor, 118; again, NTA 15:270; ACCS-Cor, 144).

91. Twelftree, *Triumphant*, 34, cites Josephus *War* 3.485; 7.389.

92. See also Keener, “Possession,” 233–35.

93. E.g., Callimachus *Hymn* 4 (to Delos), 89–90; Lucian *Z. Rants* 30 (jesting that Apollo cannot prophesy without his tripod); some people in Iamblichus *Myst.* 3.11 (others claimed a four-footed stool); for a figurative allusion, Lucian *Critic* 10. Aune, *Prophecy*, 28, thinks that the tripod probably represented Apollo’s throne.

94. *Dial. L.* 16, *Mor.* 759B (LCL 9:367).

it originally meant “pregnant” with the deity, perhaps at least implying speech with a strange voice.⁹⁵ Plutarch, however, elsewhere reports the view that the inspiration came only to her mind, so that the voice and all physical features stemmed from the woman.⁹⁶ Valerius Maximus claims that Appius forced the Pythia to descend to the

innermost part of the sacred cave, from which, while definite answers are sought for those who consult, the breath of the divine spirit is deadly to those who give the replies. So, driven by the impulse of the power she had seized, the girl prophesied the fate of Appius in a terrifying sounding voice and obscure riddles.⁹⁷

Others also described this inspiration. Apollo’s power “impregnated” and then inspired the Pythia.⁹⁸ The priestess would prophesy when ἐκσταῶσιν, “ecstatic,” and afterward remembered nothing.⁹⁹ Seated on the tripod, she was filled with the divine breath.¹⁰⁰ She was possessed by a divine spirit and the divine fire from the cavern.¹⁰¹ Some claimed that there were different kinds of prophetic inspiration, with the Pythian priestess at Delphi being inspired (*incitabat*) by the power of the earth as the Sibyl was by nature’s power.¹⁰² A δαίμων filled her before she prophesied; these spirits were associated with other important oracles, including Dodona, Ammon, and Claros as well.¹⁰³ A Jewish source also speaks of the Pythia’s frenzy.¹⁰⁴

Lucan paints this frenzy most graphically, although he certainly exaggerates;¹⁰⁵ he depicts full possession, controlling the virgin priestess’s soul and lips.¹⁰⁶ Without signs

95. *De defect. Orac.* 9, *Mor.* 414E. Lake and Cadbury, *Commentary*, 192; Aune, *Prophecy*, 40–41; cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 131; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 586; Witherington, *Acts*, 494. Apollo’s voice comes from the cavern in Valerius Maximus 7.1.2. For strange voices in possession accounts today, see appendix B; for a spirit speaking from the belly, see, e.g., Ising, *Blumhardt*, 104.

96. Plutarch *Or. Delphi* 7, *Mor.* 397C; for Apollo using the priestess’s body to reveal his thoughts, see *Or. Delphi* 21, *Mor.* 404E. Plutarch has some specialized knowledge of Delphi because of his priesthood there (see Jaillard, “Plutarque et divination,” esp. on *Mor.* 438AB).

97. Valerius Maximus 1.8.10 (trans. Wardle, 60). Other sites also provided subterranean encounters with a *daimonion* (e.g., Maximus of Tyre 8.2); cf. the oracular chasm for Orpheus in Philostratus *Hrk.* 28.9.

98. Longinus *Subl.* 13.2.

99. Aelius Aristides *Def. Or.* 34–35, §11D.

100. Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 79.12 (LCL 5:187).

101. Iamblichus *Myst.* 3.11.

102. Cicero *Div.* 1.36.79 (cf. Iamblichus *Myst.* 3.11: at Colophon, the prophetess drinks water from a sacred fountain). Some believed that the subterranean exhalations that once inspired the Pythia no longer worked (Cicero *Div.* 2.57.117), though in the first century C.E. Pliny the Elder compares them with other unusual vapors supposed to arise from the earth (Pliny *Nat.* 2.95.207–8). Most today doubt the claims of “mephitic vapours” (Cary and Haerhoff, *Life*, 317); cf. Pytho’s association with the “earth” (Menander Rhetor 2.17, 441.16–17).

103. Maximus of Tyre 8.1. For δαίμονες and other oracles, see, e.g., Plato *Symp.* 202E; Apuleius *De deo Socr.* 6.133 (Trapp, *Maximus*, 69n1). On Claros, see Robert, *Claros*; Potter, “Claros”; Klauck, *Context*, 193; archaeological reports summarized in Mitchell, “Archaeology,” 148–49; note also the Apollo oracle at Korope in Thessaly (Klauck, *Context*, 193–95).

104. *Sib. Or.* 11.315, 318.

105. This is Lucan’s dramatization, and Lucan himself claims that this was an unusual event (*Bell. civ.* 5.166–67; see Klauck, *Context*, 187–88).

106. Lucan *Bell. civ.* 5.97–101.

of stirring and divine frenzy, she could be faking her inspiration; when genuinely possessed, however, her voice would fill the whole cavern; her hair would bristle, and the wreath would rise from her head.¹⁰⁷ Apollo “forced his way into her body,” banishing her thoughts as he seizes possession of her; her head tosses, her hair bristles, things are overturned, and the fire of Apollo’s wrath burns inside her. This possession tortures her from within, yielding frenzy and foaming lips, inarticulate panting and groans, wailing, and finally articulate speech.¹⁰⁸

We should not read too much into Lucan’s epic poetry. Archaeology shows that despite literary references, no “mephitic vapors” beneath the Delphic tripod inspired the Pythian priestess.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, neither should we attribute the depiction of her possession behavior altogether to Lucan.¹¹⁰ Although lacking Lucan’s elaborate description, both earlier and later sources indicate that she was possessed by a spirit¹¹¹ and went into mad ecstasy.¹¹² Jewish people believed that demons would enter people, forcing them to do what the demons desired.¹¹³ Nevertheless, against the assumptions of some scholars, the speech of Apollo’s priestess at Delphi was intelligible, not gibberish.¹¹⁴ That her utterances were obscure allowed for professional interpretation. This practice was useful for the temple’s cultic staff, who could benefit from the fee involved.¹¹⁵ Interpreters have long compared such ancient depictions of possession with those in more recent eyewitness sources.¹¹⁶

Prophylaxis against Demons

In popular culture, people sought various means of protection from hostile spirits; though much of our documentation comes from one or more centuries after the first century (the heyday of emphasis on demonology is the third century and later), enough evidence attests that demons were a matter of practical concern to popular folk religion already by the first century. A foul-smelling fish product

107. Lucan *Bell. civ.* 5.148–57. Firth, “Foreword,” xii, notes cases of faked trances but that genuine trances (those that the “possessed” person genuinely believes) are common (cf. also Verger, “Trance,” 64–65; Beattie, “Mediumship,” 166–67).

108. Lucan *Bell. civ.* 5.165–93.

109. Cary and Haahrhoff, *Life*, 317; Klauck, *Context*, 187.

110. As some appear to do: Klauck, *Context*, 187–88, noting that it depends solely on Lucan *Bell. civ.* 5.116–20, 161–74, 190–97, and that Lucan himself claims that this possession was more powerful than ever before (*Bell. civ.* 5.166–67). Also others (e.g., Witherington, *Corinthians*, 278–79).

111. Valerius Maximus 1.8.10; Maximus of Tyre 8.1.

112. Plutarch *Dial. L.* 16, *Mor.* 759B (regaining tranquility afterward); Aelius Aristides *Def. Or.* 34–35, §11D.

113. *Sipre Deut.* 318.2.1–2.

114. See Aune, “Magic,” 1551; Witherington, *Corinthians*, 54–55 (following Fontenrose, *Oracle*); cf. Maurizio, “Pythia’s role.”

115. Klauck, *Context*, 189–90.

116. E.g., Oesterreich, *Possession*, 153–60, 383–89 (allowing some genuine parapsychic abilities for the Pythoness).

could drive off a demon in Tobit (6:17; 8:3);¹¹⁷ in Josephus, a particular root was useful for driving off deadly demons from an afflicted person.¹¹⁸

Amulets were widespread.¹¹⁹ Common enough in the republic,¹²⁰ they became even more widespread under the empire.¹²¹ Magical practices designed to protect against the influence of demons in Sassanian Babylonia (third to seventh centuries C.E.) crossed religious boundaries, as popular syncretism naturally does.¹²² Superstition readily crossed folk boundaries and from there would eventually permeate more sophisticated systems as well; for example, Mesopotamian rabbis' fears about even numbers rendering one susceptible to demons¹²³ reflect a broader ancient superstition.¹²⁴

A Jewish charm might mention hostile demons from which a person needed exorcism.¹²⁵ Later magical amulets in Israel¹²⁶ and incantation texts guaranteeing protection from specific demons¹²⁷ indicate how widespread such views became: beginning no later than the third century, many rabbis thought that the very air around them was crowded with demons,¹²⁸ a view more widely shared in the culture.¹²⁹ Demons were thought to attack people,¹³⁰ but later rabbis often viewed them as mortal.¹³¹ Before the first century, some Jews believed that particular medicines could protect people from evil spirits,¹³² and later rabbis used various folk remedies to ward off such spirits;¹³³ some might even hope that warriors could protect them.¹³⁴

117. For Tobit, see the discussion in Eve, *Miracles*, 218–32; Twelftree, *Triumphant*, 28–30. Foul odors against demons (Tob 6:17; 8:3) also appear in some traditional cures of more recent times (e.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 196, though this is not exorcism). Cf. also fumigation in Ferdinando, “Demonology,” 118; Colson, “Possession,” 71; Lewis, “Possession,” 199; striking the possessed in an old Russian Jewish account in Oesterreich, *Possession*, 209.

118. Josephus *War* 7.180, 185. For medicines to protect against demons, see also *Jub.* 10:1–14.

119. MacMullen, *Enemies*, 103–4; in pre-Hellenistic Egypt, Frankfurter, *Religion in Egypt*, 275; for numerous examples of Jewish spiritual prophylaxis, see, e.g., Alexander, *Possession*, 34.

120. Varro *Lat. Lang.* 7.6.107.

121. Nilsson, *Piety*, 167; cf. Greek magic against demons in Betz, “Fragments.”

122. Gordon, “Incantations,” 231.

123. *B. B.M.* 86a; *Kid.* 29b; *Pes.* 110a, bar.

124. Virgil *Ecl.* 8.75; Plutarch *R.Q.* 102, *Mor.* 288D.

125. PGM 4.3007–86 (e.g., 4.3039–40).

126. E.g., Rahmani, “Amulet.”

127. *Incant. Texts* 17.1–2; 19.2; 34.1, 6; 47.1; earlier, see 4Q510 1 4–7; 11Q11.

128. *B. Ber.* 6a; *Num. Rab.* 11:5; 12:3; *Deut. Rab.* 4:4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 5:10; *Midr. Ps* 17:8. Demons could sometimes fly (*b. Git.* 68b; *Num. Rab.* 12:3; *Deut. Rab.* 6:6).

129. Earlier, Pythagoras (Diogenes Laertius 8.1.32) and Heraclitus (Diogenes Laertius 9.1.7) both reportedly believed that the air was filled with *daimones* and souls of the deceased (not necessarily hostile); so also Philo *Giants* 9; the powers in *Conf.* 174; angels in Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:366–85. In Middle Platonism generally, see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 288. Cf. spirits in the air in PGM 1.179–81; 4.3043–44; 12.67.

130. *1 En.* 69:12; *Tr. Shem* 2:9.

131. *Ab. R. Nat.* 37A; *b. Pes.* 110a; 111b; *Lev. Rab.* 24:3; perhaps *Jub.* 10:5; cf. Alexander, *Possession*, 33. Cf. the Titans in *Sib. Or.* 3.156–58, but here they were just humans anyway (cf. *Sib. Or.* 1.307–23; 2.231).

132. *Jub.* 10:10–13.

133. *B. Ber.* 6a.

134. *Song Rab.* 3:7, §5; *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:3.

Various sages came to urge proper precautions against demonic assaults. Drinking water at night rendered one susceptible to demons;¹³⁵ going out on particular nights of the week was dangerous;¹³⁶ different demons exercised their dangers during different times of the year.¹³⁷

Rabbinic piety suggested that prayer could render many demons impotent or destroy them, though dealing with them was never pleasant.¹³⁸ Other pious acts, like the erection of the tabernacle, could destroy demons;¹³⁹ fear of God could protect one from them.¹⁴⁰ As early as Qumran, Jewish people prayed for protection against demonic activity;¹⁴¹ in later sources, the protection sought in the Aaronic benediction included protection from demons.¹⁴² Paul's sample extant letters do not articulate a full demonology, but what they do include probably presupposes one, although the extent of its overlap with contemporary understandings is not specified (see, e.g., 1 Cor 10:20; Rom 8:38).¹⁴³

Exorcism

Although there are many significant exceptions,¹⁴⁴ most texts about exorcism come from after the first, and often even after the second, century C.E. Although to some extent this reflects the proliferation of the demonic worldview in a later period,¹⁴⁵ it also likely reflects the slowness of the elite (sources of most of our literature) to address phenomena that were already concerning the masses more widely.¹⁴⁶ Examples in Tobit and 1QapGen XX, 16–17, 28–29 are clearly pre-Christian, and Josephus's example probably presupposes that these practices had been circulating

135. B. A.Z. 12b, bar. For special dangers at night, see, e.g., Lewis, "Possession," 191.

136. B. Pes. 112b, bar.; other peoples also recognized unlucky days, e.g., Aulus Gellius 5.17; Ovid *Fast.* 1.8, 45–48; Plutarch *Alc.* 34.1; *Cam.* 19.1; Dionysius *Epideictic* 3.266–67; Iamblichus *V.P.* 28.152 (see further Keener, *John*, 496).

137. *Num. Rab.* 12:3.

138. B. *Kid.* 29b.

139. *Num. Rab.* 12:3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 5:10.

140. *Gen. Rab.* 36:1.

141. 11Q5 XIX, 13–16; cf. songs for warding off demons in 11Q11 II–V; cf. *Jub.* 19:28. God was protecting his people, who kept his covenant, against such demons (1QM XIV, 9–10).

142. E.g., *Sipre Num.* 40.1.5; *Num. Rab.* 11:5; *Tg. Ps.-Jon.* on Num 6:24. This is an intertextual reading employing Ps 91:11.

143. Cf. Eph 1:20–2:3; 6:12; Col 2:15; discussion in, e.g., Adeyemi, "Θέσεις"; Paige, "Demons," esp. 211.

144. See much earlier Egyptian models in Twelftree, *Triumphant*, 21–22 (who, however, notes on 22 that the temporal and geographic distance from Jesus's day is too great to assume dependence); Hull, *Magic*, 63 (following Franz Cumont).

145. The majority of magical papyri do stem from the later period.

146. Cf., e.g., Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 6. Thus Abrahams, *Studies* 1, 110, doubts that possession and exorcism were common in first-century Palestine, based on Tannaitic literature, despite acknowledging the demonology of 1 *Enoch* (which is much earlier).

well before his own time.¹⁴⁷ In addition to the importance of expelling demons from people, spirits also had to be removed from haunted houses, often by appeasing a ghost or burying its bones there.¹⁴⁸

One of the earliest pagan reports of wonder workers casting out demons is placed in second-century Palestine. In this satirical account, the victims “fall down and roll their eyes and fill their mouths with foam,” but then the wonder worker heals them and takes a good bit of their money.¹⁴⁹ The exorcist asks the demon through which body part it entered, and it answers either in Greek or another language; he then adjures the spirit (cf. the Legion’s attempt in Mark 5:7) and threatens it, thus compelling it to leave; the unreliable narrator claims to have seen one smoke-colored *daimon* emerge.¹⁵⁰ Origen’s Celsus (in the late second century) attacks Jesus as nothing more than a cheap magician of the Egyptian sort in the market, who for a few obols would drive away people’s demons, cure diseases, and teach esoteric doctrines.¹⁵¹

Beyond this, few extant stories of pagan wonder workers offer much in the way of exorcisms apart from Philostratus’s *Life of Apollonius*, which probably draws on Christian as well as other widespread miracle stories of the day.¹⁵² Apollonius confronts a youth scoffing at his teaching by identifying the demon in him and ordering it out.¹⁵³ Quite different from the early Christian accounts, he identifies a blind beggar as a demon and orders it stoned, despite the beggar’s pleas; but once it is dead, it turns into a giant dog.¹⁵⁴ A homosexual demon, the ghost of a man betrayed by his wife, was pursuing and possessing an attractive boy, threatening to kill him if exorcism was attempted. Apollonius, however, sent a threatening letter, after which the demon desisted.¹⁵⁵ (Other texts also speak of sexually interested

147. On 1QapGen, see, e.g., Twelftree, *Triumphant*, 32–33; he addresses Tobit on 29 (though allowing that this may not be a full-scale exorcism). On pre-Christian examples, see also Hull, *Magic*, 63–64.

148. E.g., Pliny *Nat.* 7.27.7–11; Lucian *Lover of Lies* 31; cf. a haunted schoolhouse in *b. Kid.* 29b. One African scholar reports a (disembodied) spirit that attacked anyone who tried to live on the property a deceased man had left to his widow (Mbiti, *Religions*, 113). Cf. also the Chinese exorcism from a haunted house in Währisch-Oblau, “Healthy,” 89–90; another Asian account in Yung, “Case Studies,” 142; exorcising a curse from a house in India in Bergunder, “Miracle Healing,” 293.

149. Lucian *Lover of Lies* 16 (LCL 3:345); cf. Mark 9:20 for foam.

150. Lucian *Lover of Lies* 16. Lucian knew of Christians, though what he knew of them was probably mixed with other sources (cf. *Peregr.* 11–13). Someone claims to see hundreds of spirits, and to see them all the time, by means of a ring secured from an Arab (Lucian *Lover of Lies* 17).

151. Origen *Cels.* 1.68 (noted in Eve, *Miracles*, 347).

152. Blackburn, “ΑΝΔΡΕΣ,” 192. The commonalities are often observed (e.g., Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 121–25; Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 103, citing Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 2.14; 3.38; 4.10, 25, 40).

153. Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.20 (probably dependent on earlier models from the Gospels, despite differences).

154. *Ibid.*, 4.10.

155. *Ibid.*, 3.38. Cf. Asmodeus, who killed Sara’s first seven husbands, in Tob 3:8; 6:14; homosexually inclined spirits in PGM 2.55–56; PDM 14.68, 287 (cf. also PGM 1.86; 5.376–7.544). In traditional religions, the supposed correlation between possession and male homosexual behavior may appear but is not common (see Beattie and Middleton, “Introduction,” xxv), sometimes appearing in societies that associate possession with women (e.g., Lee, “Possession,” 143–44).

spirits.¹⁵⁶) Another source claims that Porphyry cast a demon from a bath.¹⁵⁷ But pagan exorcism is clearly earlier than these literary sources.¹⁵⁸

Exorcism is attested more strongly and from an earlier period in Jewish sources,¹⁵⁹ which came from the East.¹⁶⁰ Exorcism, in contrast to the mention of demons, admittedly appears much less often in the early period than its emphasis in the Gospels could suggest.¹⁶¹ This may be simply a matter of what literature has survived, however;¹⁶² it already appears in Qumran and Josephus,¹⁶³ and in our earliest traditions Jesus recognized the existence of other Jewish exorcists (Matt 12:27// Luke 11:19).¹⁶⁴ It might involve smoking out a demon with a special substance,¹⁶⁵

156. Elsewhere Apollonius combats a phantom vampire, who had seduced a young philosopher so she could kill him (Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.25). On the sexual interests of spirits in early Judaism, cf., e.g., 1 En. 6:2; 16:2; 69:5; 106:5–6, 13–14; *Jub.* 4:22; 5:1; 7:21; CD II, 16–18; 4Q180 1 7–9; 1Qap Gen^w II, 15–16; *T. Reu.* 5:6; 2 *Bar.* 56:12; *T. Sol.* 4; 5:3; 6:3; *Apoc. Ab.* 14:6; 2 *En.* 18:5; *Gen. Rab.* 24:6; *Incant. Text* 1.12–13; Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:384–85; Alexander, “Sons of God”; Delcor, “Mythe.” Cf. also Greek deities raping or seducing mortals, e.g., in Sophocles *Searchers* 212–15; Euripides *Antiope* 69–71; *Pirithous* 22–24; *Alope* frg. 107; *Antiope* frg. 223.72–77; *Archelaus* frg. 228a.15–16; *Danae* frg. 1132.26–34; *Andromeda* frg. 136 (Stobaeus *Ecl.* 4.20.42); Menander *Heros* frg. 2 (Stobaeus *Ecl.* 5.20a.21); Apollodorus *Bib.* 1.5.1; 1.7.8–9; 1.9.3; 3.1.1; 3.2.1; 3.4.3; 3.5.5; 3.7.6; 3.8.2; 3.10.1, 3; 3.12.2, 5–6; 3.15.2, 4; *Epit.* 1.9, 22; *Thebaid* frg. 11 (from scholiast D on *Iliad*, 23.346); *Cypria* frg. 10 (from Athenaeus *Deipn.* 8.334b); frg. 11 (from Philodemus *Piety* B 7369); Varro *Lat. Lang.* 5.5.31; Ovid *Metam.* 2.714–47; 3.1–2, 260–61; 4.234–44; 5.391–408; 14.765–71; Silius Italicus 13.615; Lucian *Dial. G.* 250 (23/19, *Aphrodite and Eros* 1); Pausanias 8.25.7–8; Parthenius *L.R.* 15.3; Achilles Tatius 1.5.5–7; Apuleius *Metam.* 6.22; Libanius *Speech in Character* 27.3; *Narration* 1; 4.1–2; 17; 31; 32; 39; 41. Cf. one type of medieval *incubus*, in Lugt, “*Incubus*,” 177; for spirit spouses and intercourse today, cf. Mbiti, *Religions*, 111; Firth, *Ritual*, 319–21; Horton, “Possession,” 35, 38–40; Crapanzano, “Mohammed,” 162–64; Rosny, *Healers*, 185; spirits “riding” their “horses,” their “spouses,” in Montilus, “Vodun,” 3 (cf. spirits mounting persons as “horses” also in Michel, Bellegarde-Smith, and Racine-Toussaint, “Mouths,” 82); or attractive spirits in Ritchie, *Spirit*, 25. Cf. also sexually excessive spirits in Stoller, “Change,” 277–80 (which Stoller views as a protest against the republic’s neoconservative Islam); spirits that entice shamans sexually, sometimes even jealous of a wife (Sandner, “Psychology,” 281).

157. Eunapius *Lives* 457; the event probably occurs in Syria. Like Philostratus, Eunapius (late fourth century) and Porphyry (234–ca. 305 C.E.) are both much later than the first century.

158. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 185, cites, e.g., Plutarch *T.-T.* 5, *Mor.* 706E; Lucian *Lover of Lies* 16. In subsequent rabbinic sources, see, e.g., Hruby, “Perspectives Rabbiniques,” 82–83.

159. E.g., Josephus *Ant.* 8.46–48 (on Josephus, see further Eve, *Miracles*, 339–43); in Qumran sources, see, e.g., 4Q Nab (4Q242) I, 4; perhaps 4Q243–45; 4Q552–53; 4Q560 (see Wise, “Introduction” to 4Q242, p. 266); cf. Leicht, “Mashbia”; on the limited Qumran evidence, cf. Kirchschräger, “Exorzismus”; Eve, *Miracles*, 343–45. Some apparently use “healing” as appropriate language for exorcism (11Q11 II, 7; 1Qap Gen^w XX, 21–29; cf. 4Q242 4 I; Josephus *Ant.* 8.45).

160. On the Middle Eastern origin of exorcism stories, see further Williams, *Miracle Stories*, 23–25 (noting on 24 that exorcism stories appear in Greco-Roman settings only later, for which he cites Plutarch *T.-T.* 7.5.4; Lucian *Lover of Lies* 16; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.20).

161. Eve, *Miracles*, 244; idem, *Healer*, 26–27.

162. Eve argues (255–59) that early Judaism exhibited little interest in forming narratives about exorcists, but this verdict could also reflect the limitations of our evidence. See the broader early Jewish context of Gospel exorcisms in Eshel, “Exorcist.”

163. 1Qap Gen^w XX, 21–29; Josephus *Ant.* 8.47. See further sources and discussion in Koskenniemi, *Miracle-Workers*, 290 (who includes also 11Q11; *L.A.B.* 60:1–3; and what he views as related ideas in *Jub.* 11:15–22; *Apoc. Ab.* 13:4–14; *Liv. Pr.* 4:10).

164. On early Christian attestation of other exorcists, cf. also Grelot, “Démonologie,” 63 (citing also Acts 19:13–16); Dakin, “Belief,” 38; Best, “Exorcism,” 1; Rollins, “Miracles,” 45 (adding Matt 7:22).

165. Tob 6:7–8, 16–17; 8:2–3; cf. *T. Sol.* 5:13; Parshall, *Bridges*, 85.

invoking other spirits to expel it,¹⁶⁶ or even laying on one's hands in prayer.¹⁶⁷ As in paganism,¹⁶⁸ the visible proof of departure by some outward act often remained important.¹⁶⁹ Solomon,¹⁷⁰ and to a lesser extent David,¹⁷¹ was associated with exorcism or authority over demons in sources spanning a long range of time. A pre-Christian writer reports how Abraham cast out a demon that Pharaoh's magicians could not.¹⁷²

Because exorcism in this period was more common in the East, the Greek milieu of most extant Gospels does not account for the Gospel narratives of exorcisms;¹⁷³ moreover, redaction-critical analysis shows that neither Matthew nor Luke, writing in different parts of the empire, made major changes in their sources about exorcism.¹⁷⁴ All of this suggests that the substance of the Gospels' exorcism portrayal remains authentic. Whereas many question Jesus walking on water, few doubt that he exorcised, even if they do not believe that actual spirits were involved.¹⁷⁵ Most scholars believe that Jesus historically gained a reputation as an exorcist,¹⁷⁶ although the Gospels omit most magical exorcism techniques dominant among

166. *Incant. Text* 3.8–9; 50.7–8; *T. Sol.* 2:4; 5:5; 8:5–11; 18. Eve, *Miracles*, 347, notes that the names used for invocation in Origen *Cels.* 1.24 are Persian or Egyptian (suggesting Gentile usage); but in *Cels.* 5.45, they submit to the name of God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (presumably a Jewish formula).

167. 1Qap Gen^a XX.

168. Later, Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.20. See more fully Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 66–67 (who also cites Lucian *Lover of Lies* 16; still relevant but less so, Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.10). In traditional Navajo exorcism, the moth flying inside the mentally ill person may be expelled in part by vomiting (Kaplan and Johnson, "Navajo Psychopathology," 211).

169. Josephus *Ant.* 8.48; in modern times, Hes, "Role," 376; Bergunder, "Miracle Healing," 293 (Hindu and Christian exorcism in India); an old Russian Jewish account in Oesterreich, *Possession*, 209–10 (where the departing spirit knocked a small hole in the window).

170. 11Q11 II, 2–12; Josephus *Ant.* 8.45–49; *CII* 1:394, §534; 2:374, §1448; *PGM* 4.850–929, 3039–41; *T. Sol.* Greek title; 2:1–7; 5:10; 6:11; *Incant. Text* 47.1–3; 48.4–5; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:3 (before he sinned); *b. Git.* 68ab; *Ecdl. Rab.* 2:8, §1; *Song Rab.* 3:7, §5 (before his sin); *Pesiq. Rab.* 15:3 (before his sin); cf. *p. Ket.* 12:3, §11; Betz, "Miracles in Josephus," 220–21; Mills, *Agents*, 49–61; Duling, "Introduction," 948; in Islamic tradition, Qur'an 27.17, 39–40; in some folk Islam, Butler, "Materialization," 267. That 2 Bar. 77:25 relates to this tradition is not impossible.

171. *L.A.B.* 60; cf. 1 Sam 16:23, the closest precedent for exorcism in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Kotansky, "Demonology," 269–70, comparing a Greek conception).

172. 1Qap Gen^a XX, 19–29. As in analogous examples in ancient literature, the physicians' and magicians' failure highlights Abraham's superiority all the more (XX, 19–20).

173. McCasland, *Finger*, 65–82 (see esp. 76, 82); also, as noted above, Williams, *Miracle Stories*, 23–25.

174. McCasland, *Finger*, 51, 53. More generally on miracle stories in Luke-Acts, see Williams, *Miracle Stories*.

175. Best, "Exorcism," 2. Hedrick, "Miracles," 312, allows that Jesus may have been a faith healer but denies real demons, hence real exorcism (cf. also Best, "Exorcism," 4–8).

176. Sanders, *Figure*, 149, 154; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:646–77; Dunn, *Jesus and Spirit*, 44; Miller, *Seminar*, 56–57 (though doubting individual accounts); Michaels, *Servant*, 174; Twelftree, "ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ"; idem, *Miracle Worker*, 281–92 (esp. 282–83); Achtemeier, *Miracle Tradition*, 140; Sears, "View," 101–2. One Christian writer suggests that possession phenomena peaked in Jesus's day as part of a demonic counterattack (Alexander, *Possession*, 249; further and less plausibly, Keyser, "Rationale," 362–63, compares their increase in activity through humans with Jesus's incarnation); we may note, however, that claims of spirit possession are widespread in numerous cultures (see discussion below).

other reported exorcists, such as rings, roots, incantations, and so forth.¹⁷⁷ Unlike other forms of healing at times in the Gospels, exorcism is not associated with the ailing person's faith.¹⁷⁸ Exorcism is connected closely with the gospel of the kingdom, as a concrete manifestation of the deliverance it brings.¹⁷⁹ Christian exorcism shares some other aspects in common with some Jewish exorcisms,¹⁸⁰ but especially transformed them by using Jesus's name.¹⁸¹ Justin complains that Jewish exorcists, like Gentiles, depend on "fumigations and incantations," but Christians successfully employ the name of Jesus. No other name, he declared, could accomplish the same effects.¹⁸²

Second-century patristic sources unabashedly report Christianity spreading especially through exorcisms, claiming Christians' success in exorcisms as a matter of common knowledge.¹⁸³ Tertullian even challenges the authorities to bring in a demon-possessed person to court; any Christian will make short work of the demon, forcing it to confess its deceit.¹⁸⁴ If the demons do not immediately confess their identity, he insists, then execute that impudent Christian immediately!¹⁸⁵ Tertullian elsewhere reports a demon being exorcised from a Christian who had gone to the theater. The exorcist demanded how the demon dare enter a Christian; the spirit replied that he "found her on my own ground."¹⁸⁶ By the time of Hippolytus (ca. 215 C.E.), exorcism was often practiced in connection with baptism,¹⁸⁷ and it

177. Kee, "Terminology," 239; Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 23, 65; Twelftree, "ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ," 383–84; Witherington, *Christology*, 159; Eve, *Miracles*, 349. A few later rabbis were also said to have exercised authority over demons with commands (*b. Pes.* 112b; Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 66; cf. Kee, "Terminology," 246; but Eve, *Miracles*, 290–91, notes that Hanina ben Dosa confronts but does not exorcise a demon in *b. Pes.* 112b). The form of many exorcism accounts in the Synoptics resembles many miracle stories (cf. Guillemette, "Forme"). Like many others, Grelot, "Démonologie," 71–72, suggests that Jesus employed the exorcistic language of his era to communicate; as we shall see in appendix B, however, such practice is by no means limited to antiquity.

178. Robinson, "Challenge," 326, noting that even in other cases Jesus required faith not because he depended on it but because he wanted at least some present who would understand his point.

179. Ladd, *Kingdom*, 47; see further Hiers, "Satan"; Kallas, *View*; Evans, "Kingdom"; idem, *Fabricating Jesus*, 141.

180. E.g., Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 66; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 135; cf. perhaps Kee, "Terminology," 246.

181. Edwards, "Exorcisms," noting also that pagans usually viewed Christian exorcism as trickery.

182. Justin *Dial.* 85 (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 241); cf. *Dial.* 76. Eve, *Miracles*, 347, notes Justin's complaint but also presents *Iren. Her.* 2.6.2 (who mentions Jewish prayers before Christ's coming).

183. MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 27–28, 40–41, 60–61; Lampe, "Miracles," 215–17; Young, "Miracles in History," 107–8; cf. McCasland, *Finger*, 55; patristic sources in Martin, "Resisting," 49–50, 58–59; Sears, "View," 103–4. Various sources (Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 185; Talbert, *Acts*, 143; Haines in Marcus Aurelius LCL, pp. 5–6n6) cite, e.g., Justin *Dial.* 30, 85; 2 *Apol.* 5–6; *Acts Pet.* 2; Tertullian *Test.* 3; Origen *Cels.* 1.46; Best, "Exorcism," 3, cites *Acts Pet.* 4.11. Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 185, also thinks that the condemnation of superstitious exorcists in Marcus Aurelius 1.5 refers to Christians. On ante-Nicene demonology, see further Frost, *Healing*, 141–61.

184. Tertullian *Apol.* 23.4–5; MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 27. Cf. similarly the power encounter in the 350s reported in Athanasius *Vit. Ant.* 80 (MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 112).

185. Tertullian *Apol.* 23.6.

186. Tertullian *Spect.* 26 (LCL p. 291).

187. See "Ceremony." This may reflect the perceived rise in demons in the wider culture.

continued to be common in the early church.¹⁸⁸ Augustine reports cases of effective exorcisms, sometimes attested with affidavits.¹⁸⁹

Those who worked with spirits questioned them and for some reason expected honest answers.¹⁹⁰ Incantations were a common means for removing unwanted spirits,¹⁹¹ including in early Jewish circles.¹⁹² A potentially more problematic approach was appealing to higher spirits to manipulate lower ones.¹⁹³ Sometimes demons express willingness to leave in return for a sacrifice.¹⁹⁴ Josephus reports that he personally witnessed, in the presence of Vespasian and others, a Jewish exorcist drawing out a demon through a man's nose by the odor of a special root under his ring's seal, using Solomon's incantations.¹⁹⁵ (Rings that control spirits appear in some Eastern sources, although not pervasively.¹⁹⁶) In a Qumran text, Abraham is said to have just laid hands on Pharaoh and prayed, thereby curing him from his evil spirit.¹⁹⁷ In some, often later, sources, Solomon¹⁹⁸ or others¹⁹⁹ command demons, perhaps sometimes

188. See, e.g., Hillgarth, *Paganism*, 11–12, 183; Daniélou and Marrou, *Six Hundred Years*, 313; Casiday, "Sin," 503, 514; Frank, "Devotion," 539; Frankforter, *History*, 60; Spinks, "Growth," 603, 610; Brenk, "Art," 706; MacMullen, *Second Church*, 4–5. Scholars (esp. here Talbert, *Acts*, 143) provide an extensive list of examples (including Lact. 2.16; 5.2; *Apost. Const.* 8.1; Eusebius *H.E.* 5.7.4; 6.43.11; 8.6.9; Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechesis* 16.15–16; Athanasius *Inc.* 48; *Vit. Ant.* 63; Gregory of Nyssa *Life of St. Gregory the Wonderworker* [PLG 46, col. 916A]; Jerome *Vit. Hil.* 22). Talbert, *Acts*, 143, also cites early Christian novels (*Acts Pet.* 11; *Acts John* 56; *Acts Thom.* 5; 7; 8; *Acts Andrew* [beginning of martyrdom]; *Ps.-Clem. Rec.* 4.7; 9.38). For the office of exorcists, see also Ambrose 1.216 (in Greer, "Care," 573). From a different perspective, see the survey in Oesterreich, *Possession*, 161–68; in medieval sources, Oesterreich, *Possession*, 177–86.

189. *City of God* 22.8; *Conf.* 9.7.16; Herum, "Theology," 63–65.

190. E.g., PGM 4.3043–44. Acquiring accurate knowledge was necessary for manipulating spirits usefully (Arnold, *Power*, 18).

191. E.g., in the haunted house in Lucian *Lover of Lies* 30–31 (claiming satirically that Egyptian curses are the best, 31).

192. E.g., 4Q560; cf. 4Q510 1 4–7.

193. E.g., PGM 101.38–39. The higher ones are angels in *T. Sol.* 2:4; 5:5, 9; 8:5–11; 11:5; *incant. text* 3:8–9; 50:7–8.

194. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 57; cf. the slaughter of a sheep in modern Yemenite exorcism in Israel (Hes, "Role," 376).

195. Josephus *Ant.* 8.47; the exorcist also bound the demon by oath (ὄρκου); cf. Mark 5:7; PGM 1.80–82, 167; 36.307; 39.19–20; Aune, *Prophecy*, 273; *T. Sol.* 11:6; cf. also use of ἐξορκίζω (Kotansky, "Remnants"). On this Josephus passage, see, e.g., Twelftree, *Triumphant*, 34–36. Smoking the demon out also appears in Tob 6:17–18; 8:3; also an account attributed, probably fictitiously, to Johanan ben Zakkai, and noting the use of the roots, as in paganism and Josephus (*Num. Rab.* 19:8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 14:14); and apparently later in some Islamic folk practice (Parshall, *Bridges*, 85, following Jones and Jones, *Women*, 349–50, for a case of smoking the *jinn* out, then beating the boy unconscious, in this case with tragic consequences). Perhaps the roots idea was originally related to the prophylactic herbs of *Jub.* 10:12–13. Fumigation for exorcism appears in some traditional African societies (Ferdinando, "Demonology," 118; Colson, "Possession," 71; Lewis, "Possession," 199; incense fumigation in Granjo, "Rituals," 282); in Somali tradition, fragrant incense can protect from or exorcise malevolent sprites (Lewis, "Possession," 192–93, 199).

196. E.g., Lucian *Lover of Lies* 17 (the source being an Arab); Josephus *Ant.* 8.47; *b. Git.* 68a.

197. 1Qap Gen^a XX, 21–29. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 62n18, thinks that this laying on of hands works for an illness caused by a demon but is not attested for possession; perhaps this is because the possessed would not allow it.

198. *T. Sol.* 3; 6:11. Some early Jewish sources also portray Solomon as a prophet (see Embry, "Solomon").

199. Cf. threats in Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 63–64; exorcistic texts commanding "wandering wombs" (Faraone, "New Light"), and behavior resembling that involved in exorcisms in Soranus *Gynec.* 3.4.29.

reminiscent of the Jesus tradition. In the later (probably third-century) *Testament of Solomon*, the demons bargain for reduced sentences.²⁰⁰ Particular angels could thwart particular demons and those under them, and demons might be compelled to name which angels thwarted them.²⁰¹ Solomon even was said to keep Asmodeus's strength down by maintaining a fire beneath him.²⁰²

In appendix B, I turn to especially anthropological observations concerning beliefs and practices of spirit possession and exorcism today.

Barrett, *Documents*, 34, thinks (from an occurrence in *PGM*) that "come out" (cf. Luke 4:35) was probably a frequent command of exorcists; yet its occasional occurrence in the vast corpus of *PGM* (4.1243, 1245, 3013; 5.158) does not suggest its frequency (cf. Aune, "Magic," 1531), and its context there differs (with incantations; Yamauchi, "Magic," 133).

200. *T. Sol.* 2:6. A minority of scholars, however, attribute *T. Sol.* to a Christian author (Albrile, "Sigilla"); at the very least it contains Christian interpolations.

201. *T. Sol.* 2:4; 5:5, 9; 8:5–11; 11:5. Learning demons' names was also crucial, e.g., *T. Sol.* 5:2, 6–7.

202. *T. Sol.* 5:13. The name Asmodeus, who first appears in Tobit, probably originates with the Persian demon *Aeshma daeva* (Yamauchi, *Persia*, 460).

Appendix B

Spirit Possession and Exorcism in Societies Today

In chapter 1 we noted that most scholars associate Jesus with healings and exorcisms; there is little doubt that people experienced Jesus as an exorcist, although details are debated and few have explored what exorcism looks like in eyewitness reports. My approach in these first two appendixes on spirits and exorcism differs from the main body of the work. Because anthropologists have provided a large body of material on spirit possession, even though usually not from a perspective that affirms the existence of spirits, the comparative documentary sources are so rich that I have cast the net more widely here, drawing especially from their literature rather than popular Christian sources.¹ What I hope to show is that the accounts of possession and exorcism in the Gospels and Acts are plausible from a cross-cultural standpoint.²

Anthropological studies permit us to place possession behavior in ancient texts in a wider context, since such behavior appears in a wide range of societies. Although some expressions of possession vary from one culture to another, some features appear more widely, apparently often even on the neurophysiological level. I treat these matters more fully below.

1. Although we explored briefly accounts of healing in traditional religions (ch. 7), the anthropological approach to spirits appears more distinctive. I treat some of the material here in Keener, "Possession," albeit less fully and with a more direct application to NT historiography; more briefly, idem, "Comparisons," 3–4. A likely helpful work still forthcoming and unavailable to me at the time of this manuscript's completion is Kay and Parry, *Exorcism*.

2. Even some early modern research recognized the continuity among the phenomena reported in the Gospels, those reported in later history, and those characteristic of current reports (see Oesterreich, *Possession*, 3–11).

Cross-Cultural Evidence for Possession Experiences

However one explains them, experiences analogous to ancient depictions of possession by an alien spirit are impossible to deny. Although many modern Western students of early Judaism and early Christianity doubt the reality of spirit possession, they admit that ancients believed in such phenomena.³ Explanations (explored later in this appendix) diverge: for example, most academicians discount the involvement of actual spirits in such experiences;⁴ some, however, question modern Western presuppositions about such phenomena.⁵ Globally, views diverge even further, with many cultures affirming the moral neutrality or diversity of spirits.

Whether one accepts the historically and culturally widespread explanation of invasive spirits or prefers the modern Western materialist rejection of such explanations' tenability, the transcultural character of the *experience* of possession behavior is impossible to evade. At least a few NT scholars cognizant of anthropological research have recognized this fact and applied some conclusions from social-science studies to the Gospels.⁶ Studies have shown "an altered neurophysiology" during many possession states.⁷ While neurophysiological studies cannot determine whether possession phenomena derive from an "an invading alien being" or from other psychological factors,⁸ clearly neurophysiological changes, including hyperarousal, do frequently occur.⁹ Incidents of possession on a notable

3. See Wrede, *Secret*, 26–27.

4. E.g., Best, "Exorcism," 4–8 (on 5 considering Jesus's misunderstanding on the matter as a limitation imposed by the nature of the incarnation; on 6 linking the belief with superstition).

5. E.g., Robinson, "Challenge," 323–25; Yamauchi, "Magic," 142–47; Wenham, *Bible*, 64; Montgomery, "Exorcism"; cf. Borg, *Vision*, 62, 72n16. See a much more complete survey of Western theological skepticism and the suggested problems with it in Twelftree, *Triumphant*, 135–70.

6. E.g., Borg, *Vision*, 62 (citing Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*); Borg, *Jesus*, 149–50; Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 315–17; Loubser, "Possession"; more extensively Davies, *Healer* (introducing spirit possession, 22–42); see further Keener, "Possession."

7. Prince, "EEG," 127–29. For example, persons in altered states of consciousness (ASC) fall in the theta range during an EEG, found in children but not normally in awake adults (Davies, *Healer*, 141–42, following Goodman, *Ecstasy*, 39). Tibetan heat yoga provides an extreme and paranormal example (see Benson, "Temperature Changes"; idem, *Healing*, 163–64). For various studies on the brain and consciousness relevant to "anomalous experiences" (visions, etc.), see McClenon and Nooney, "Experiences," 48, with fuller details in appendix E.

8. Goodman, *Demons*, 126; cf. Ladd, *Theology*, 51. For comparison with multiple personality disorder, cf., e.g., Firth, "Foreword," ix–x (also noting suggestibility on xiii); Bourguignon, "Multiple Personality"; Field, "Possession," 3; for earlier "possession" diagnosis and the sometimes consequent development of "secondary personality," see Oesterreich, "Possession," 111, 140; idem, *Possession*, 127. Psychiatric expectations may often contribute to this disorder (Spanos, "Hypnosis," 109–18, emphasizes the role-playing function). For earlier discussions of neurosis versus demonology, see, e.g., Freud, "Neurosis" (though Freud's diagnosis is problematic; see Midelfort, "Reactions," 139, 143–44); Anne Chevreau in 1598 viewed Marthe's "possession" in terms resembling neurosis (Walker and Dickerman, "Woman," 554). For possession as a religiously meaningful shared cultural idiom for sorts of mental illness, sometimes helpful to the possessed person, see Obeyesekere, "Idiom."

9. Goodman, *Demons*, 1–24, 126.

scale have also been documented, although Westerners may tend to attribute these to mass hysteria,¹⁰ including in earlier Western history.¹¹

Anthropological Reports of Possession Experiences

We thus do not need to assume that ancients invented all experiences of possession and deliverance, although writers probably schematized many and invented some of them. Whatever one makes of such experiences, they are inescapably widely attested;¹² seeking to deny phenomena like possession, trances, and so forth has been regarded as the anthropological equivalent of “being a ‘flat-earther.’”¹³ Although anthropologists do not all share a common cross-cultural conceptual metanarrative with which to frame them, possession states “are among the most commonly discussed behavior disorders in the anthropological literature.”¹⁴ Indeed, although I here address primarily those cases defined by their cultures as possession (control by alien spirits), the “behavior patterns” of many possession cases occur widely even in societies that do not construe them as possession.¹⁵ Cross-cultural comparison is admittedly complicated by whether we are comparing merely altered states of consciousness, however defined, or experiences indigenously defined as possession, regardless of neurological state.¹⁶

10. E.g., when 120 people in a factory in Malaysia were “possessed” in 1978 and the factory had to be shut down while a local “spirit healer” sought to placate the spirits, to the U.S. director’s embarrassment (Keller, *Hammer*, 107, citing Ong, *Spirits*, 204, 209, though interpreting the incident differently from Ong); about four hundred students during a possession epidemic in Transkei (1981–83; Edwards, “Possession,” 220; cf. similar mass possession hysteria in factories in 1787 and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Rosen, “Psychopathology,” 245); possession of Kenyan schoolgirls in the 1990s (Smith, “Possession,” 442 [earlier, cf. 442–45]); possession epidemics in public and private Madagascar schools in the late 1970s (Sharp, “Power of Possession,” 3; cf. the “laughing” epidemic in Tanzania in 1962 (Capps, *Village Psychiatrist*, 10).

11. Mass possessions in Europe appear commonly only after 1500 (Midelfort, “Reactions,” 136), though a major outbreak (the dance frenzy) occurred in 1374 (Rosen, “Psychopathology,” 221–22; these dance epidemics continued in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, 226–27). From 1491 to 1881, see Oesterreich, *Possession*, 187–90. On the convent at Loudun in 1633, see Baskin, “Devils”; Oesterreich, “Possession,” 112–13; Keller, “Glimpses,” 277–80 (for one psychoanalytic approach, Lietaer and Corveleyn, “Interpretation,” 266–73, noting the case of 259, 262–63; for this as pseudo-possession as opposed to genuine possession, see Gildea, “Possession,” 298); at Carpi in the late 1630s, Watt, “Demons” (noting that the cardinals faulted the exorcists for the problem). Sociologists also compare mass hysteria in frontier revivals; cf. the multiplication of visions at Lourdes in 1858 (Taylor, “Letters from Lourdes,” 472).

12. See, e.g., the bibliography in Boddy, “Spirit Possession,” 428–34; earlier, Zaretsky, *Bibliography*.

13. Burrige, *New Earth*, 4n2 (as cited in Lewis, *Healing*, 321–22n15). As early as 1921, Oesterreich, *Possession*, 389, complained that the simple rationalist denial of ancient accounts of spirit possession, as in the case of the Pythoness, “is frankly no longer possible to-day” (though his appeal to the possibility of parapsychological powers need not be granted to uphold this conclusion). Some anthropologists emphasizing participant observation have also entered into shamanic trances (Turner, “Advances,” 48, cites, e.g., Friedson, *Prophets*, 20–22).

14. Guthrie, *Disorder*, 8, as cited in Bourguignon, *Possession*, 9. Not all anthropologists today would view all “possession” as a disorder (see, e.g., Hoffman and Kurzenberger, “Miraculous,” 84–85; similarly, Bourguignon, “Self,” 56, argues that it is not “deviant” in a Haitian context).

15. Bourguignon, *Possession*, 9–10.

16. Cf. problems of various approaches surveyed in Ward, “Cross-Cultural Study,” 27–31.

The anthropological literature demonstrates conclusively that many peoples do experience possession trance, even while the perception, interpretation, and sometimes expression of such experiences vary culturally.¹⁷ Anthropologists today generally try to study the phenomenon from the perspective of societies that claim it, rather than imposing a Western interpretive grid on it.¹⁸ In contrast to theologians and parapsychologists, most anthropologists seek to study not spiritual phenomena but indigenous *beliefs* about spirits.¹⁹ Thus one study offers as a working definition of spirit possession “*any altered state of consciousness indigenously interpreted in terms of the influence of an alien spirit.*”²⁰ More recent studies work harder than most of their predecessors to take into account the indigenous frame of reference;²¹ while traditional Western categories, often from a medical perspective, make cross-cultural comparison easier, more contextualized and phenomenological approaches prove more epistemologically open.²²

As Erika Bourguignon points out, belief in spirit possession is widespread in varied cultures around the world, “as any reader of ethnographies knows.”²³ She sampled 488 diverse, ethnographically representative societies and discovered spirit possession beliefs in 360 societies, that is, in 74 percent (nearly three-quarters) of those

17. Illnesses are often “oriented to and shaped by” cultural conceptions (Kaplan and Johnson, “Navajo Psychopathology,” 203); cf., e.g., a form of possession associated with initial encounters with overhead airplanes (Colson, “Possession,” 79, 85). Groups can experience revelatory trance states that they distinguish from possession (cf. Surgy, *L'Église*, 216–17).

18. Tippet, “Possession,” 143–44. For a brief historical overview of anthropological approaches to spirit possession, see Prince, “Foreword,” xi; Crapanzaro, “Introduction,” 5–7; more thoroughly for recent studies, Boddy, “Spirit Possession,” 410–14.

19. Bourguignon, *Possession*, 14. Some scholars warn of the impropriety of applying some Western diagnostic categories cross-culturally, since some behaviors considered disordered by therapists in one society may be norms in others (Hoffman and Kurzenberger, “Miraculous,” 84–85).

20. Crapanzaro, “Introduction,” 7 (emphasis his; cited also by others, e.g., Davies, *Healer*, 23); for those including any state indigenously interpreted as possession, cf. Bourguignon, *Possession*, 7; Lewis, “Spirits and Sex War,” 627. With respect to shamans, Harner, *Way of Shaman*, xiii, 46–50, speaks of this altered state as a “shamanic state of consciousness” (noting on xiii that shamans can move back and forth between ordinary and shamanic consciousness). Typical shamans depend on guardian spirits (43 and *passim*).

21. Thus, Keller, *Hammer*, 39–40, notes that earlier anthropologists tended to explain possession in psychosocial terms, not commenting on possessing agents, but more recent research “does take seriously the agency of possessing ancestors, deities, and spirits.”

22. See Boddy, “Spirit Possession,” 408, 410–14, 427.

23. Bourguignon, “Spirit Possession Belief,” 18; cf. also Bourguignon, “Introduction,” 17–19; idem, “Self”; Boddy, “Spirit Possession,” 409; Firth, “Foreword,” ix; Morsy, “Possession,” 189; Chandra shekar, “Possession Syndrome,” 80; an earlier intuition in Robbins, “Exorcism,” 201; Oesterreich, *Possession*, 376; on belief in spirits being found in most cultures, Turner, “Reality,” 30 (distinguishing this from mere “energy,” *ki* or *chi*). For the geographic distribution of cultures practicing trance, possession trance, and spirit possession, with maps, see Bourguignon, “Distribution,” 18–32. Most occur in every geographic region, though some more in some regions than others. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 100–126, shows that negatively perceived spirit possession occurs in a wide range of societies, as do efforts to contain or exorcise it. In addition to anthropologists, missionaries widely report the phenomena, although construing them differently (Mooneyham, “Demonism,” 210–14). I have heard many examples orally from African scholar friends, who sometimes have firsthand or secondhand experiences with these phenomena.

studied. The beliefs are most attested in the Pacific islands (88 percent); 77 percent around the Mediterranean; and less in the Americas (64 percent in the aboriginal population of North America and 64 percent in South America).²⁴ Sixteen percent of the 360 societies have possession trance only; 22 percent have other forms of possession; and 35 percent have both.²⁵ One could thus provide examples from a wide variety of societies in most regions of the world,²⁶ among them Africa²⁷ (including the northeast,²⁸ central east,²⁹ south,³⁰ northwest,³¹ and west³²), the Middle East,³³ Asia,³⁴

24. Bourguignon, "Spirit Possession Belief," 19–21; idem, "Appendix"; followed also in Kaplan and Sadock, *Psychiatry*, 259, 1237; Ward, "Possession," 126 (noting that possession or trance states occur in 90 percent; Pilch, *Dictionary*, 81–82, also cites 90 percent for trances or altered states of consciousness); see, e.g., Wetering, "Effectiveness" (in Suriname). It occurs in the West, though often interpreted less benignly (Macklin, "Yankee," esp. 42).

25. Bourguignon, "Spirit Possession Belief," 21, noting that possession trance is rarer in the Americas (5 percent in North America, 12 percent in South America); more have possession without trance (27 percent of North American societies; 34 percent of South American societies). Possession trance is common in African tradition (Ferdinando, "Demonology," 120; Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 183).

26. For samples of those studied, see, e.g., Crapanzaro and Garrison, *Case Studies*; Goodman, *Demons*, 1–24, 126; Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*; Oesterreich, *Possession*; Alexander, *Possession*, 105–6. In addition to those I have surveyed directly, some of the following samples come from the bibliography in Boddy, "Spirit Possession," 428–34 (with 221 sources, it provides a useful starting point for further research); for *zar*, *tumbura*, and *bori* cults, see Makris and Natvig, "Bibliography"; Lewis, Al-Safi, and Hurreiz, *Medicine*, 283–91.

27. E.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 106, 111 (noting an "epidemic" of possession among the Akamba in the early twentieth century), 113, 249–50; Beattie and Middleton, *Mediumship*, passim. In Africa's early Western diaspora through slavery, see Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 10–11, 17, 19, 27–28, 35–37, 63–73.

28. In Egypt, Saunders, "Zar Experience"; Natvig, "Zar Cult" (including early history, 178–80); idem, "Rites"; in Ethiopia, Somalia, and the Sudan (including the *zar* cult there), see Leiris, *Possession*; Lewis, "Possession"; Morton, "Dawit"; Messing, "Zar Cult"; Natvig, "Zar Spirits"; Tubiana, "Zar"; Makris and Al-Safi, "Spirit Possession Cult"; Boddy, "Spirits and Selves"; idem, *Wombs*; Kahana, "Zar Spirits"; Kennedy, "Zar Ceremonies"; Constantinides, "Zar" (for history); Kenyon, "Zar"; Luling, "Possession Cults." For earlier Western reports on *zar* cults, see Oesterreich, *Possession*, 230–35.

29. E.g., Smith, "Possession"; Harris, "Possession Hysteria"; Noble, "Possession"; Giles, "Possession Cults"; idem, "Spirits"; idem, "Possession"; Gomm, "Spirit Possession"; Beattie, "Mediumship."

30. Among Shona peoples, see, e.g., Gelfand, "Disorders"; Fry, *Spirits*; Garbett, "Mediums"; in Transkei, O'Connell, "Possession"; among the !Kung of the Kalahari, Katz, "Healing"; among the Valley Tonga of Zambia, Colson, "Possession"; Luig, "Worlds"; in Zambia generally, including in urban areas, Haar and Ellis, "Possession" (e.g., 204); Binsbergen, *Change*, 75–99; in Madagascar, Sharp, "Possessed"; idem, *Possessed*; idem, "Power of Possession"; Mayotte in the Indian Ocean, Lambek, *Knowledge*; idem, "Disease," 40–45.

31. E.g., in Morocco, Crapanzaro, "Mohammed"; in Mali, Colleyn, "Horse"; in Tunisia, Ferchiou, "Possession Cults."

32. E.g., among the Wolof of Senegal, Zempleni, "Symptom"; in Ghana, Field, "Possession"; Platvoet, "Communication" (analyzing aspects of Akan rites recorded in 1922); in Niger, Echard, "Possession Cult"; Stoller, "Change"; Masquelier, "Invention"; in Hausaland, Abdalla, "Friend"; among traditional Yorubas, Prince, "Possession Cults."

33. E.g., the *zar* cult in Iran, Modarressi, "Zar Cult"; in Kuwait, Ashkanani, "Zar"; see also northeast Africa.

34. E.g., in Nepal, Gray, "Exorcism"; Peters, *Healing in Nepal*; Hitchcock and Jones, *Spirit Possession*; in India, Chandra shekar, "Possession Syndrome"; Basso, "Music" (in Orissa); McDaniel, "States" (on goddess possession in West Bengal); Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, in Wayman, "Meaning"; in Sri Lanka and Sinhalese Buddhism, Kapferer, *Exorcism*; Obeyesekere, "Possession"; Yalman, "Healing Rituals," 128; Halverson, "Dynamics" (esp. 334–42); Oesterreich, *Possession*, 216–17; Pieris, "Humour"; in Hong Kong,

the Pacific,³⁵ and the Americas.³⁶ I will draw further on anthropological research below.

Cultural Elements of Possession Behavior

The actual experiences involved in possession behavior vary, sometimes even within cultures that have multiple forms of possession. One scholar suggests several categories. These include an intense, temporary state usually induced externally (e.g., by drums), which can either involve “psycho-physiological changes” (e.g., ecstasy or trance states) or not. The scholar also elaborates three suggested categories of permanent possession and allows for other types as well. Thus “the empirical facts underlying possession can be anything between a permanent backache and the most expert, breathtaking performance of less than one hour’s duration.”³⁷

Possession behavior does not result from all purported interaction with spirits, though I also survey some claims of the latter experience in this appendix. Shamans in many parts of the world, for example, claim to communicate with spirits but are not taken over by them; some other shamans, however, become completely possessed, whether temporarily or long-term.³⁸ Thus in many traditional African societies mediums are normally in their own minds except when possessed by a spirit; only during the trance state do they function as mediums.³⁹ Spirit possession can be induced or solicited for such purposes by drumming

Yap, “Syndrome”; in the Philippines, Guthrie and Szanton, “Diagnosis”; in Malaysia, Kessler, “Conflict”; Ackerman and Lee, “Communication”; Lee, “Self-Presentation” (esp. 253–57); Keller, *Hammer*, 106–7; in Myanmar (then Burma), see Oesterreich, *Possession*, 218; Spiro, *Supernaturalism*; in Indonesia, Stange, “Configurations”; in Japan, Lebra, *Patterns*; McVeigh, “Possession.” In early Buddhist tradition, see, e.g., Oesterreich, *Possession*, 174.

35. E.g., in the pre-Christian Solomon Islands, see Tippet, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 14, 250–51; in Fiji, Hoare, “Approach,” 124–26; among traditional aboriginal Australians, see Berndt, “Role,” 269; in New Guinea, Salisbury, “Possession.”

36. In New England, Macklin, “Yankee”; in Puerto Rico, Koss, “Spirits”; Garrison, “Syndrome”; Harwood, *Spiritist*; in Montserrat, Dobbin, *Dance*; some groups in St. Vincent, Henney, “Belief”; in a group in Yucatan, Goodman, “Disturbances”; in Haiti, Douyon, “L’Examen”; Kiev, “Value”; in the Brazilian cult of Umbanda, Pressel, “Umbanda”; idem, “Trance”; idem, “Possession”; in this and other Brazilian cults, cf. Krippner, “Call”; Hayes, “Limits”; in a Canadian Native American group, cf. Jilek, “Brainwashing”; idem, “Therapeutic Use”; in a U.S. Native American group, cf. Kaplan and Johnson, “Navajo Psychopathology,” 211; cf. Fogelson, “Theories,” 78, 84.

37. Binsbergen, *Change*, 90–91, also noting mediumship with some but not other kinds.

38. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 6 (cf. possession in 346); Tippet, “Possession,” 165 (following Eliade); Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 10–11. Guardian spirits are essential for shamanism (Harner, *Way of Shaman*, 43). Shamanism is not itself associated with mental illness (Hoffman and Kurzenberger, “Miraculous,” 85). Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 177, notes that those most susceptible to dissociation after initiation may become shamans themselves. Krippner, “Perspectives,” surveys a variety of proposed models and data, including the traditional Christian model of shamans’ “demon possession” (963–64; noting on 964 that shamans sometimes make these claims about rival shamans), which he rejects, and the various attentional states of different kinds of shamans (967).

39. Mbiti, *Religions*, 225–26 (in most other situations, spirit possession can be harmful, 106); cf. Firth, *Ritual*, 298. In some societies, only the medium will enter a trance (e.g., Colson, “Possession,” 76).

and dancing.⁴⁰ (Dancing or drumming can also be associated with healing and exorcism.⁴¹) Some societies believe in possession but lack trance states; others link the two or have only the latter,⁴² though those lacking only the latter could employ possession in connection with spirits.⁴³

Some practices are common in particular regions. For example, in Brazilian spiritism,⁴⁴ in more than half the cults some see spirits of the dead; in all but one some see supernatural beings; most cults include possession of mediums, and most include possession of initiates; most include ecstatic trance; more often the possessed are unconscious than conscious; and in most cults possession can be either spontaneous or induced.⁴⁵ In rural Ghana, possession often includes

40. For drumming, see Mbiti, *Religions*, 106; Harner, *Way of Shaman*, 50–53, 142–43 (its repetition useful for the shamanic state); Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 46, 49; Pressel, “Possession,” 344; Shorter, “Spirit Possession,” 114; Bourguignon, *Possession*, 19–20 (with dancing); Firth, “Foreword,” xiii; Beattie and Middleton, “Introduction,” xxvi; Horton, “Possession,” 19; Binsbergen, *Change*, 90; Verger, “Trance,” 55–59; Southall, “Possession,” 233, 236, 240–42, 248, 269; Constantinides, “Zar,” 89, 91 (for *bori*, but not *tumbura* possession); Luling, “Possession Cults,” 173 (Somalia); Field, “Possession,” 4, 7 (Ghana); Gelfand, “Disorders,” 156, 162; idem, *Religion*, 166–67 (traditional Shona culture); Musi, “Shaman,” 55 (Asian vs. European); Jilek, “Therapeutic Use,” 182 (acoustic rhythm, “kinetic stimulation,” “sleep deprivation,” etc.); Hultkrantz, *Healing*, 36, 66, 163 (drumming to induce the proper state in northern North America and among Native Americans on the Plains); Fleurant, “Music,” 49–50 (Haitian Vodun); in the Dionysus cult in antiquity, Plutarch *T.-T. 1.5.2, Mor. 623B*. Music aids possession in Basso, “Music”; for music and trance, see Alcorta, “Music,” 243–47; for drumming and dancing to induce altered states of consciousness in a Zionist church, see Edwards, “Healing,” 340–42; for sacred dance and healing in a contextualized South African church, see Mthethwa, “Music,” 253–55; dancing and spiritual power in South African African Independent Churches (AICs), Oosthuizen, *Healer-Prophet*, 55–56; shamanic dancing in Hultkrantz, *Healing*, 63–65; possession dance in Stoller and Olkes, *Shadow*, 85. Others have appropriated the shamanic use of drumming to induce altered states of consciousness for therapeutic purposes (Winkelman, “Spirituality,” 459–60; suggesting the psychobiological bases, see 461–62; but Walsh, *Shamanism*, 148, complains that Winkelman fails to cite empirical data for his neurophysiological claims). For fasting altering conscious perceptions, see, e.g., Kluger, “Biology,” 64; for the use of psychoactive plants to achieve altered states of consciousness (ASC), see, e.g., Dobkin de Rios, “Power.”

41. For healing in Siberia, Turner, *Hands*, 59, 71; in one African context, Turner, *Hands*, 71; drumming in an exorcism ceremony in Gray, “Cult,” 177–79; Lewis, “Possession,” 206; Edwards, “Possession,” 215; Schuetze, “Role,” 41–43 (rhythm, with clapping, in addressing spirits); Mthethwa, “Music,” 254 (driving away demons at church); music to set the tone for exorcism in a São Paulo (Brazil) Pentecostal service in Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 154; in African Pentecostalism, cf. Cox, “Miracles,” 91. Cf. sacred dance and healing in a contextualized South African church, see Mthethwa, “Music,” 253–55. Music aids in exorcism in *L.A.B.* 60:2–3.

42. See Bourguignon, *Possession*, 42–49.

43. *Ibid.*, 48, notes that 48 percent of Native American societies (among the highest percentages anywhere) lacked belief in possession, yet “all but one had a pattern of ritual trance, mostly of a hallucinatory or visionary type, in which communication with spirits could be established.” Native Americans had the highest percentages of trance states or altered states of consciousness (Pilch, *Dictionary*, 81).

44. See Johnson, “Authority,” 15–65, including a careful chart of the belief structures of the different groups (64, table 2) and beliefs about possession in these groups (65, table 3); I use especially 65 here. Claims to “see” spirits also appear elsewhere (McNaughton, *Blacksmiths*, 11). Spiritists are highly influential in Brazil and undergo formal training; see Lotufo-Neto, “Influences,” 201.

45. Using sacrifices, drums, singing, dancing, tobacco, prayer, and often drinking. (Such means are not universal; see, e.g., Field, “Possession,” 7; but cf. use of tobacco and rum in Scherberger, “Shaman,” 62,

an initial stupor followed by excited, ecstatic activity;⁴⁶ an established diviner may become possessed to divine what deity is possessing another person.⁴⁷ In traditional Mozambique, a healer drew spirits from the patient's body and then became a mouthpiece for the spirits, which would speak through him.⁴⁸ Among traditional Valley Korekore, spirit possession is common and "danced out" in cult groups, but mediums, who speak by spirit possession, are rarer.⁴⁹

Possession behavior varies in some respects among different cultures.⁵⁰ Possession often follows conventions particular to the culture where it occurs,⁵¹ and some possessed persons seem to exhibit stereotyped responses.⁵² Thus, for example, Somali possession cults lack the emphasis on different spirits with distinct behaviors, in contrast to related Sudanese cults; the possessed dance but do not speak much, in contrast to, say, Comoro Islands possession.⁵³ By contrast, forms of possession trance vary considerably among individual mediums in Palau.⁵⁴

64–65.) For trance-inducing practices in the Afro-Brazilian cults, see Lotufo-Neto, "Influences," 198–200. In Candomblé, an African-oriented cult in Brazil, the Orixás that are invoked "are assumed to dwell in Africa and are summoned from there" (Johnson, "Authority," 32). Shamans also "see" physically invisible "spirit" in Scherberger, "Shaman," 59. Greenfield, *Spirits*, 75, notes possession of mediums and (88–90) hypothesizes a hypnotic state for the patients as well.

46. Field, "Possession," 3–4.

47. Ibid., 8. On possession facilitating ability to diagnose (among the Karanga), see Shoko, *Religion*, 71–72; on comparable dependence on the Holy Spirit in an AIC, see Shoko, *Religion*, 122–23. In the Philippines, some divine by means of the saints as spirits (Licaucó, "Realities," 266–67); Vodun also identifies some traditional spirits with the saints (Fleurant, "Music," 47). Roman Catholic missiologist and anthropologist Louis Luzbetak articulated problems with such syncretic forms that he has called Christopaganism (*Church and Cultures*, 239–48, esp. here 239–40, with sources cited).

48. Roque, "Mafumo," 181.

49. Garbett, "Mediums," 105, noting that mediums, unlike members of possession cults, had to remain in the vicinity belonging to their possessing spirit.

50. See, e.g., Platvoet, "Rule"; Keener, "Possession," 221–24; note also common cultural characteristics in some features of traditional African spirit possession and patterned responses to religious activity in the African diaspora, including many African-American churches (e.g., Jules-Rosette, "Spirituality"). For traditional Japanese spirit possession and other patterns in their cultural context, see, e.g., Lebra, *Patterns*. Some societies lack even dissociation in some cases, so that the common element in possession in these societies tends to be the belief that a spirit is overpowering one's personality (Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 180). Possession accounts focus on children in Europe primarily after 1600, and group possession appears mostly after 1500 (Midelfort, "Reactions," 136). Trance and possession seem more common where members play more responsible roles in collective experience (Swanson, "Trance," 272–73).

51. See, e.g., Verger, "Trance," 64; Southall, "Possession," 243; Firth, *Ritual*, 313–14 (noting the possessing spirits' use of "conventional Tikopia concepts and . . . ordinary Tikopia norms of etiquette and morality"); Binsbergen, *Change*, 92, on temporary possession, as opposed to long-term afflictions classified as possession.

52. E.g., among the southeastern Bantu in Gussler, "Change," 123–24, to at least some degree apparently reflecting traditional beliefs; loss of eye control in Navajo mental illness (Kaplan and Johnson, "Navajo Psychopathology," 206).

53. Luling, "Possession Cults," 175.

54. Leonard, "Spirit Mediums," 176, also noting that most remaining possession trance is found among the elderly.

Even within a single culture (as just noted for Palau), possession behavior sometimes varies widely.⁵⁵ For example, in Mayotte, there is wide variation in susceptibility to and expression of trance or possession.⁵⁶ As Bourguignon summarizes, "Because of its psychobiological substrate, it reveals constants wherever we find it. Yet it is subject to learning and by this means, it is amenable to cultural patterning. As such, it takes on a striking variety of forms."⁵⁷ Moreover, travelers can take particular forms of spirit possession and mediumship with them to societies previously unfamiliar with them.⁵⁸ The nature of cults can change over time;⁵⁹ in some societies a traditionally serious, therapeutic possession cult has been harnessed increasingly in the direction of entertainment.⁶⁰

Some Special Forms of Possession Behaviors

I focus here on some forms of possession behavior, found in some locations, that may be of special interest to students of the Gospels and Acts. In a wide range of societies, possession results in a major change of personality and sudden and dramatic shifts in "behavior, timbre and pitch of voice."⁶¹ Those

55. Nevius, *Possession*, 46, noting wild activity, apparently normal activity except in a different voice, or speaking for a deceased relative or a fox (although all these reactions may have been accepted as stereotyped responses within the culture. On fox spirits, see, e.g., Matsuoka, "Fox Possession"; cf., e.g., one economic interpretation in Miyamoto, "Possessed." On possession supposedly by an animal, see also, e.g., Oesterreich, *Possession*, 28, 144–45, 191, 364, 220, 224–28 (noting the prevalence of fox spirits in Japan and claiming, on 226, oxen in southeast Asia; cf. the snake spirit in Emmons, *Ghosts*, 185, and snakelike action in Koch, *Zulus*, 294; lion spirits in 33; monkey spirits of some sort in Tari, *Breeze*, 63). In Tari, *Breeze*, 131–32, when children cast spirits from a local traditional priest, the spirits appeared like a long black snake coming from his mouth; other animal figures emerge from the mouth in Ising, *Blumhardt*, 170.

56. Lambek, "Disease," 41–43.

57. Bourguignon, "Assessment," 337; cf. similarly McClenon, *Healing*, 60.

58. See, e.g., Shorter, "Possession and Healing," 47 (on coastal beliefs reaching the interior of Tanzania through one Kipakulo in the mid-twentieth century); idem, "Spirit Possession," 122; Binsbergen, *Change*, 96–98. The same system collapsed in 1970 (49). Scholars have tried to reconstruct the spread of the *zar* cult (e.g., Morsy, "Possession," 192–93). *Amafufunyana* possession came to Zululand in the late 1920s or 1930s and spread elsewhere in South Africa (Edwards, "Possession," 209; cf. Oosthuizen, *Healer-Prophet*, 88). Spirits are now globalized, with spirits from Brazil or Ghana or Nigeria possessing persons elsewhere, and spirits that helped an antigovernment cult once based in northern Uganda now called Hitler or Mussolini (Behrend and Luig, "Introduction," xiii, citing for the latter Behrend, *Geister*). Some *bori* spirits in West Africa are "European" (Krings, "History," 53).

59. E.g., Natvig, "Zar Cult," 181; and often in the literature. Syncretism is common (e.g., Constantinides, "Zar," 91) and other factors, such as Islam, have forced a measure of change (e.g., Last, "Bori," 57; Giles, "Spirits," 76), though elements of continuity also appear to exist (Echard, "Possession Cult," 67). Cf. *haziri* possession at Islamic shrines (Bellamy, "Person"); Islamic possession and spiritual power in Ally and Laher, "Perceptions." Like Christianity, Islam faces syncretism on many local levels; see, e.g., between African tradition and Sufism, Ferchiou, "Possession Cults," 213; Islamic and pre-Islamic beliefs in Mindanao, Williams, "Bwaya," 122–25; in East Africa, Giles, "Spirits," 61–62, 71; Nicolini, "Notes," 121; West Africa, in Butler, "Materialization"; Islam elsewhere, e.g., Accoroni, "Healing Practices," 7–11. Coastal Swahili culture distinguishes between Muslim spirits and the "uncivilized" pagan spirits (Giles, "Possession," 148).

60. Cf., e.g., Last, "Bori," 49–50; Hurreiz, "Zar" (esp. 154); Sellers, "Zar" (esp. 156–57, 163). Some exorcistic language and ritual can become "domesticated" (cf. Versteeg and Droogers, "Typology").

61. Tippet, "Possession," 162 (following Herskovits; elaborated further on 162–64, with thorough documentation from anthropological literature). See, e.g., Oesterreich, *Possession*, 19–22 (offering many

leaving the possession state often have no recollection of how they acted while possessed.⁶² Thus Raymond Firth notes that social anthropologists, approaching spirit possession from a very different standpoint from missionaries, spiritualists, or psychics,

have been faced in the field by dramatic changes of personality in men or women they were studying—startling yet evidently accustomed alterations of behaviour, with trembling, sweating, groaning, speaking with strange voices, assumption of a different identity, purporting to be a spirit not a human being, giving commands or foretelling the future in a new authoritative way. Sometimes it has been hard for the anthropologist to persuade himself that it is really the same person as before whom he is watching or confronting, so marked is the personality change.⁶³

Some of these descriptions appear relevant to examples of violent or self-destructive expressions of possession in the Gospels and Acts (Mark 5:4–5; 9:18, 22; Acts 19:16).⁶⁴ In a number of diverse cultures where it has been observed in the modern world, spirit possession sometimes yields superhuman strength that makes restraint

examples), 97, 208; Ising, *Blumhardt*, 104–5, 168, 169, 171–72, 174–75, 178, 183; Mbiti, *Religions*, 225–26, including (on 225) a case he witnessed; Dayhoff, “Guiva” (a girl speaking in a deep, unnatural voice before exorcism); Gelfand, *Religion*, 169 (regarding Shona examples); Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 177; Greenfield, *Spirits*, 40 (new persona), 83 (voice); Emmons, *Ghosts*, 193 (a medium imitating the voice and gestures of the deceased); Stacey, “Practice,” 294 (change in voice and the elongation of facial features); Grof, “Potential,” 144 (change in voice and superhuman knowledge); Wilson, “Miracle Events,” 275 (two male voices from a woman); Instone-Brewer, “Psychiatrists,” 140 (a case he witnessed while studying psychiatry); Ma, *Mission*, 67 (a woman’s voice becoming male); Emmanuel Itapson, interview, April 1, 2011; Pastor Ricky Sayco of Metro Manila, interview, Jan. 27, 2009; Scherberger, “Shaman,” 62 (change of voice and personality through spirit helpers); Turner, “Advances,” 50 (citing also Earle, “Borders,” 3); McClenon, *Events*, 134–35 (a right-handed Chinese non-artist painting with his left hand when entranced), 226 (trance and altered personality in a spiritualist context); cf. the trance behavior of a shaman in Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, 165; Veronica Steiner’s possession in 1574 (Midelfort, “Possession,” 127).

62. E.g., Field, “Possession,” 3, 6; Horton, “Possession,” 23; Gelfand, *Religion*, 166, 169; Bourguignon, “Self,” 53, 56; Grof, “Potential,” 145; Rosny, *Healers*, 185–86; Chandra shekar, “Possession Syndrome,” 87; Bellamy, “Person,” 40; Betty, “Evidence,” 14; cf. Singleton, “Spirits,” 477; Oesterreich, *Possession*, 13 (“posterior amnesia”); but contrast Shorter, “Spirit Possession,” 113. Some claim to know little about the spirits that possess them, claiming to be “powerless in their hands” (Shorter, “Possession and Healing,” 48). In some studies, hypnotic amnesia involves role playing rather than genuine neurological amnesia (see Spanos, “Hypnosis,” 101–2, persuasively; cf. 116–17).

63. Firth, “Foreword,” x (adding his own shock when first encountering spirit mediumship among the Tikopia four decades earlier). Possession typically displaces the normal personality (Mbiti, *Religions*, 206; Montilus, “Vodun,” 3–4); for the possessed acting like the spirits believed to possess them, see, e.g., Verger, “Trance,” 50–51, 53.

64. See also Keener, “Possession,” 231–33. Exorcising a “legion” of demons in Mark 5:9–13 appears an unusual case on a dramatic scale (though cf. Luke 8:2; Mark 16:9), though Blumhardt believed that many demons left his parishioner, with a spiritual effect on the region (Ising, *Blumhardt*, 170–71), and Tari, *Wind*, 38–40, reports a sort of mass exorcism in a village in Indonesia.

difficult or impossible⁶⁵ and often yields “violent thrashing”⁶⁶ or destructiveness⁶⁷ (sometimes requiring isolation⁶⁸), including at times self-laceration.⁶⁹

For example, among traditional !Kung bushmen, younger and less experienced trancers have to be restrained from injuring themselves or others; they are known for grabbing live coals and smearing them on their bodies, contact with fire from one to five seconds producing burns.⁷⁰ One African scholar describes a case of possession trance he witnessed near Kampala, where the medium banged his head on the floor without injury, and after possession returned to normalcy.⁷¹ In many African societies, spirit possession drives the person to live in the forest, to jump into fire, or to use sharp objects to hurt oneself.⁷² According to one report, a possessed child being exorcised of an ancestor spirit hurled “a huge burning log from the fire place” at the prophets, who dodged it and expelled the spirit.⁷³

65. E.g., Kaplan and Johnson, “Navajo Psychopathology,” 208; Murphy, “Aspects of Shamanism,” 58; Field, “Possession,” 5; Oesterreich, *Possession*, 22–23; Filson, “Study,” 154; Betty, “Evidence,” 16, 20; Koch, *Zulus*, 45, 191 (seven men could not restrain her); cf. Edwards, “Possession,” 210; Borg, *Vision*, 62; Ising, *Blumhardt*, 174; Mark 5:4 (but more positively, 1 Sam 11:6–7; 14:6, 19; 15:14; *T. Jud.* 2:1–7); perhaps breaking chains after alleged madness in Quintilian *Decl.* 295 intro; on other occasions, though, a possessed person could be tied up (Gray, “Cult,” 182; Osborn, *Healing*, 315). Pastor Ricky Sayco of Manila recounted an incident where four strong men were unable to hold down an eighteen-year-old woman in Davao City, Mindanao. She had become possessed in response to a curse from her father but was permanently delivered after they had spent five hours in prayer (interview, Jan. 27, 2009). Betty, “Evidence,” 16, 20, following a report from a Western Taoist observer in 1920s China, recounts that the person visibly swelled in front of the eyewitnesses like a balloon and then deflated during the exorcism (something not known to happen naturally). Curiously, an account of an exorcism in India from May 2009, obviously independent from the report just mentioned, notes one bloating and becoming heavy during possession; the person’s exorcism converted the village (a report involving a Philadelphia Bible College graduate, sent by Finny Philip, June 19, 2009).

66. Beauvoir, “Herbs,” 129, also noting “‘wild’ behavior,” but further a quieter form of possession; Wilson, “Miracle Events,” 275.

67. Eliade, *Rites*, 71; Gelfand, “Disorders,” 165, 170; Schmidt, “Psychiatry,” 145; Kaplan and Johnson, “Navajo Psychopathology,” 227; Matt 8:28; for possession yielding threats and aggression, see Obeyesekere, “Possession,” 251. For spirits cursing and berating the possessed, see, e.g., Morton, “*Dawit*,” 221.

68. When possessed persons become unmanageable, they might be confined to a cave, where they would die of dehydration, or (more often) be driven into the woods (Gelfand, “Disorders,” 170).

69. Fox, “Witchcraft,” 185; Ising, *Blumhardt*, 174, 326–27; cf. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, 162; Mark 5:5; 1 Kgs 18:28. For various maladaptive responses, see Ludwig, “Altered States,” 86 (including voodoo death, on which see also Benson, *Healing*, 40).

70. Lee, “Sociology,” 41–42, 47 (though they believed that fire would not burn them, 43); Katz, *Energy*, 121–22. One may also run headlong into a tree; on occasion one has been known to violently attack a dog or to engage in despised sexual behavior (Lee, “Sociology,” 42). In some cultures, shamans can walk on “red hot coals” (Filson, “Analysis,” 76).

71. Mbiti, *Religions*, 225–26.

72. *Ibid.*, 106, noting that sometimes the victim also hurts others; cf. “wandering through the bush” with danger of injury in Gray, “Cult,” 178. In antiquity, cf. Mark 5:5; 9:18; Acts 19:16; cf. also the Galli, who were said to emasculate themselves in frenzy (on them see my *Acts*, at Acts 8:27). For throwing themselves into the fire, see also, e.g., Kaplan and Johnson, “Navajo Psychopathology,” 211 (noting multiple cases); cf. Mark 9:22; Southall, “Possession,” 234.

73. Shoko, *Religion*, 125, recounting the report from within a Karanga AIC in Zimbabwe. Some Kenyan members of AICs experiencing ASCs are able “to run along the road for hours beating drums” or perform exorcisms and the like (Harries, “Nature,” 403).

Such feats appear more widely than in Africa. At a traditional Taiwanese festival, “spirit mediums” become possessed and flail themselves with instruments of “self-mutilation,” allowing them to show immunity to the pain of their wounds.⁷⁴ Some Indian mediums display apparently superhuman character in fire walking or enduring beatings with swords, and some “carry heavy rocks that cannot be lifted by three or four people.”⁷⁵ Some fire walkers in Indonesia have displayed immunity to pain in rapid contact with burning substances and slashing of their tongues.⁷⁶ Haitian possession is said to sometimes involve “glass- or fire-eating” or other feats.⁷⁷ One study suggests that those in trance states can become less susceptible to burns and the like.⁷⁸ It is reported, however, that some persons “have died of post-possession exhaustion” or in the height of ecstasy.⁷⁹

The Christian collectors and their informants in one wide-ranging study on possession phenomena in traditional China, from the final decade of the nineteenth

74. Jochim, *Religions*, 154. Although Ghanaian possession examples lack cases of self-injury noted in many cultures, they appear to lack hunger and many other normal sensations (Field, “Possession,” 6). For cases of immunity to pain or heat, see McClenon, *Events*, 97–100 (esp. photographs of Sufi dervishes vs. pain [98], heat [99], and snake venom [100]); heat immunity in McClenon, *Healing*, 71–74. The Sioux doing Ghost Dancing in the snow (Brown, *Wounded Knee*, 409–10) may have experienced immunity to cold. Less commonly, some have prescribed substances supposed to provide invulnerability even against bullets (Brown, *Wounded Knee*, 408; Stoller and Olkes, *Shadow*, 176; Owusu, “Strings,” 146; Oritsejafor, “Dealing,” 89; protective charms during battle in Burgess, *Revolution*, 84; cf. a mark for protection from sorcery in West, *Sorcery*, 33–34); my wife tells me that it is reported that some young men from one of her nation’s southern regions smeared with such an ointment cried desperately as they found themselves gunned down during a war in her country. When bullets succeed, it is believed that their users employ a more expensive magic that outweighs the protective charms (Owusu, “Strings,” 133).

75. Chandra shekar, “Possession Syndrome,” 89, though noting that these mediums appeared to remain conscious; cf. Betty, “Evidence,” 15–16. For techniques for feigning some kinds of immunity, see Charpak and Broch, *Debunked*, 29–36.

76. Bourguignon, *Possession*, 12, citing Pfeiffer, *Psychiatrie*, 121–22, noting that the cases discussed were not indigenously interpreted as possession, though all participants from one culture entered an altered state of consciousness. Cf. the claim of lack of burns in Koch, *Revival*, 31 (who speaks of various forms of possession trance, also in Bali, in 34–36); study of genuine fire walking in McClenon, *Events*, 115–26 (with fewer blisters for those relying on an outside force, 121; for scientific considerations possibly mitigating the heat distribution with respect to ordinary coals, 121–26; McClenon, *Healing*, 72–73, 75); for scientific reasons why fire walking, properly done, would not produce severe burns, see Charpak and Broch, *Debunked*, 37–41; for denial of mass hypnosis in some Asian fire walking, see Licaucó, “Realities,” 266. Bourguignon, *Possession*, 12, notes that Greek fire walking assumes possession (by St. Constantine; following Michael-Dede, “Anastenari”), whereas Bulgarian fire walking “appears to be linked to a hallucinatory state” (following Schipkowensky, *Feuertanz*). For fire walking in antiquity, see Trombley, “Paganism,” 192 (citing Strabo 12.2.7).

77. Beauvoir, “Herbs,” 130.

78. After noting scientific explanations for lesser cases of heat immunity (McClenon, *Healing*, 72–73, 75), and that many fire walkers blister afterward, regardless of religious commitment (74), McClenon (72–73) notes anomalous cases during trance. Whereas McClenon after his first experiment found that his own blisters took three weeks to heal (74), after hypnosis he was able to walk the coals safely multiple times and to take others so hypnotized across the coals (76). McClenon (94) contends that shamans control bleeding, show heat immunity, and the like through processes similar to hypnosis.

79. Field, “Possession,” 5. In other cases as well, exhaustion commonly follows ecstasy (e.g., Lewis, “Possession,” 202). A Tikopia medium might not feel tired after his spirit control entered, yet feel exhausted through the coming of other spirits (Firth, *Ritual*, 311).

century,⁸⁰ naturally read their data through the grid of their own traditional Christian worldview. Nevertheless, much of the study's data remains informative to a range of scholars⁸¹ because major shifts in Chinese culture since that time have made comparable data less accessible.⁸² Some spirits reportedly spoke with the voice of a fox or a bird; others with the voice of a deceased spouse; some persons normally weak in singing or poetry could sing or compose rhyme under possession.⁸³ The Chinese Christian observers, the study's informants, also claimed "northerners speaking the languages of the South, which they did not know";⁸⁴ often they knew information that they could not have known normally, including other languages unknown to the speaker in his or her normal state; they also knew of Jesus as divine and feared him.⁸⁵ Inexplicable knowledge also appears in some current eyewitness descriptions of reported spirit activity,⁸⁶ including one

80. Nevius, *Possession*. Other scholars have also compared Nevius and biblical portraits to various accounts of possession behavior today (e.g., Heth, "Demonization"; for Nevius, Oesterreich, *Possession*, 219–20; for biblical portraits, also Oesterreich, *Possession*, 3–11; cf. summary of Nevius in Collins, *Exorcism*). Oesterreich, *Possession*, 13–16, cites sources from the 1500s forward, especially favoring some observations by two nineteenth-century doctors (in his book, *passim*, he provides countless case studies, though the reporters behind his sources held a range of interpretations). More than a century ago Alexander, *Possession*, argued for the reality of possession, using medical as well as historical sources (cited also with appreciation in Wilson, "Miracles," 29; I believe that Alexander's rabbinic evidence comes largely from A. Edersheim or other secondary sources).

81. As Oesterreich, *Possession*, 13, observes, the data collected are useful whether the sources attribute the possession behaviors to psychological or demonic sources (thus he includes, among others, missionary reports, e.g., 143–46, 213–15, 219–23, 229, 362–64). Others also find missionary reports useful, though limited, windows into earlier cultures (Kasten, "Shamanism," 65).

82. Even mostly nonreligious university students who grew up during the Cultural Revolution, however, "reported levels of anomalous experience equivalent to U.S. national samples" (McClenon, *Events*, xiii–xiv).

83. Nevius, *Possession*, 46–47, 58; some also noted in Tippet, "Possession," 153. Nevius, *Possession*, 140–43, defends the reliability of his Chinese informants, especially noting on 143 that the reports cohere with reports received from other cultures and eras. Nevius reports that he himself was persuaded of the reality of spirit possession only gradually, through his field experience (ix, 9–13), as others have also pointed out (e.g., Ramsay, *Teaching*, 105–6).

84. Nevius, *Possession*, 58, noted in Tippet, "Possession," 153, also noting that some spirits bargained over the price of their departure. (The entire section in Nevius, "circular letter and responses," is 41–59.)

85. Tippet, "Possession," 154. Cf. also MacPhail, "Path," 190, claiming Indian experience that Hindus, Muslims, and Christians, when possessed, speak of Jesus Christ as the true God. Isaacs, "Disorder," 269, addressing possession disorder in the West, notes frequent revulsion against "religion or religious objects." Allison, "Doubt," 117–18, notes that demons (whether imaginary or real) he encountered in his practice with patients "cowed in fear when I spoke the words 'Jesus Christ,'" and the demons left. Wilson, "Miracle Events," 275, notes that an attempt to say, "Jesus is Lord," was cut short by a demonic manifestation, but after deliverance the woman accepted and confessed Jesus freely.

86. Earle, "Borders," 3 (as cited in Turner, "Advances," 50); McClenon, *Events*, 137 (in a trance, without knowledge of the man, painting a requested picture of a long-deceased man that relatives regarded as "an exact representation"), 138 (accurately answering McClenon's thoughts; but McClenon himself was not persuaded, *ibid.*); Krippner and Achterberg, "Experiences," 353–54; unusually accurate (but not infallible) knowledge of spirit mediums in Emmons, *Ghosts*, 193–96, 198–207; Koch, *Zulus*, 143, 146 (cf. the shaman in 294); a possession state described in Grof, "Potential," 144–45; an occult practitioner's continual knowledge of his wife's whereabouts (Alamino, *Footsteps*, 36); cf. Keener, "Possession," 226; alleged occasional parapsychologic phenomena in Oesterreich, *Possession*, 381–82; supernatural knowledge in

by then-psychiatric student (now rabbinics scholar) David Instone-Brewer,⁸⁷ and others have reported the possessed speaking languages unknown to them, or the beliefs that something like this occurs.⁸⁸

In the early twentieth century, some reports elsewhere in China continued to envision some sort of spirit phenomena; thus one Lutheran observer reports an evil spirit that kept trying to strangle a woman, leaving physical signs of the attacks. After shamans failed to cure the woman of the spirit, Christians tried to help her, but with limited success; everyone noticed that objects started being removed from the house, and she claimed to witness the spirit carrying them away.⁸⁹ (Local Chinese culture believed in haunted houses and in ghosts,⁹⁰ although these appear

Numbers, *Vision*, 344. But this does not appear to be always the case (cf., e.g., Firth, *Ritual*, 310; Emmons, *Ghosts*, 208; test cases in McClenon, *Events*, 138).

87. Instone-Brewer, "Psychiatrists," 140–41, where the apparently possessed person knew the psychiatric student's (Instone-Brewer's) thoughts.

88. Cf. the "alien tongue" frequent in Kalabari possession (in Horton, "Possession," 29); alleged strange tongues in some nuns' possession ca. 1611 (Rosen, "Psychopathology," 231); the illiterate George Lukyns speaking Latin during possession (exorcised by Methodists in 1788; Rack, "Healing," 148); the possessed speaking what hearers took to be Italian or French in Ising, *Blumhardt*, 181; the girl speaking Zulu—not her language—before exorcism (in Dayhoff, "Guiva"); a non-English speaker speaking English (in Hickson, *Heal*, 65, Calcutta, March 1921; idem, *Bridegroom*, 163; though knowledge of English would have been accessible there); again English (in Koch, *Zulus*, 55, though again access is not impossible); an alleged non-Latin speaker using some Latin (Kreiser, "Devils," 63–64—though she undoubtedly had heard Latin); a woman speaking her parents' home language (Malagasy) rather than her usual language (Wilson, "Miracle Events," 275); some elements of High German (possibly mixed with gibberish, Oesterreich, *Possession*, 208); various languages (Koch, *Zulus*, 143, 146); "unrecognizable words" in Stacey, "Practice," 294; nonsense syllables mixed with African fragments in one Haitian case of a "possessed" person's mind (Bourguignon, "Self," 50); occasional supposed African languages in Freston, "Transnationalisation," 211; Hausa-speaking spirits that include (known) elements of Pidgin English and French in Krings, "History," 55–58; other supposed languages in prophetic frenzy in Naipaul, *Masque*, 121. Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 183, recounts a case from Tanzania of an elderly, illiterate vagrant woman, who could have had no exposure to Flemish, accusing a startled Belgian in fluent Flemish (following Robert, *Croyances*, 152–53). Stewart, *Only Believe*, 96, notes a young woman who knew no English speaking perfect English when possessed (though we might note that in her country English was widely known). An eyewitness account notes a demon speaking with a foreign accent (from the Levant in 1936, in McCasland, *Finger*, 57), and speaking with a strange voice may occur in possession accounts (Eliade, *Shamanism*, 365); the possessed may also address exorcists with unexpected theological sophistication (though Midelfort, "Possession," 118–19, attributes this to the reporters). Cf. perhaps the secret spirit languages of some Asian shamans (Eliade, *Shamanism*, 347, 440).

89. Lee, "Rulers," esp. 5–6. Given the account's brevity, I cannot venture an explanation, but analogous, independent accounts of spirits trying to strangle their hosts appear (e.g., Alamino, *Footsteps*, 40, in Cuba; Koch, *Zulus*, 278; cf. also the invisible burning hand leaving burn marks in Ising, *Blumhardt*, 170; biting in Sumrall, *Story*, 7–36, passim, in the Philippines).

90. On local beliefs in houses haunted by evil spirits, see Ronning, "Mission"; in Hong Kong, Emmons, *Ghosts*, 117–43; on Chinese haunting incidents in medieval sources, see McClenon, *Events*, 154–55. Claimed experiences of haunted locations and associated paranormal phenomena, whatever their causes, are documented in various cultures; see Favret-Saada, *Witchcraft*, 139; Koch, *Zulus*, 161–63 (with a narrative of deliverance); Ising, *Blumhardt*, 164–67, 175; more broadly, McClenon, *Events*, xiii, 57–74, esp. specific claims on 62–63, 64–66, 68–69, 70–72, 210–19, with apparitions on, e.g., 70, 72; the story in Davies, "Exorcism," 47. On a more popular level, early twentieth-century Chinese Christians also report some encounters with demons in Baker, *Visions* (2006), 101–4 (also noting their relationship with indigenous

in a more nuanced form among traditional intellectuals.⁹¹) An earlier theological-journal-article writer noted that every Western missionary in China whom he knew affirmed the reality of possession and that the phenomenon was well authenticated by doctors working there. He noted that these claims reflected the indigenous understanding of diseases caused by evil spirits, which were distinguished from mental illnesses.⁹² One of his sources, who consulted many missionaries, noted that the local Chinese Christians would command these spirits to depart in Jesus's name and were regularly successful.⁹³ I am not satisfied that observers have always interpreted these phenomena or reports reliably (some reports appear particularly dissatisfying), but we should listen to them carefully before trying to fit them all into our predetermined interpretive grids.

Spirits, Sickness, and Seers

Some other associations with spirits, not all of them associated with possession, will be of interest to students of the Gospels and Acts (cf. Luke 13:11; Acts 10:38; 16:16).⁹⁴ Shamans are sometimes viewed as healers, addressing the spiritual problem by spiritual means.⁹⁵ Sickness is sometimes associated with pos-

folk beliefs, 106). Buddhist monks in Hong Kong exorcised a building "under government auspices on May 19, 1963" (Emmons, *Ghosts*, 177). Beliefs do not automatically generate reports; whereas belief in ghosts has been much higher in Hong Kong (ca. 50 percent) than in the United States, reported incidents are lower (ca. 4 percent; Emmons, *Ghosts*, 39–40).

91. The Neo-Confucian Chu Hsi (1130–1200) sought to explain ghosts and spirits as part of a larger worldview that did not divide nature from spirit (Gardner, "Ghosts"); spirits could express cosmic *ch'i* and appear as dangerous ghosts or as honorable ancestor spirits (Gardner, "Ghosts," 599; on ancestral spirits, 606–10). While he dismisses many popular rumors about spirits (602), he affirms their existence, along with nature demons, spirit possession, exorcism, and the like (601). Some later claimed to see ghosts (Chan, "Narrative," 37–38); others debated or defended these people (38–39). Many scholars doubt that Ji Yun (1724–1805) believed in ghosts (Chan, "Narrative," 60), but more likely he demonstrated sincerity by acknowledging naturalistic explanations where possible, while arguing especially for the necessity of the reality of spirits based on many bizarre events (e.g., 60–62).

92. Wilson, "Miracles," 30. Among his missionary sources was Dr. Howard Taylor (30), and he cites at greater length Ms. Gordon Cumming, who collected and published information from missionaries working in close relationships with the Chinese people (30–31). He follows her also in the observation that Taoist and Buddhist priests perform exorcisms, though not always successfully (31).

93. *Ibid.*, 31 (still following Cumming). He notes one poor Chinese "Bible woman" asked to pray for a woman who was violently thrashing, foaming at the mouth, and struggling against "the holy one"; after the Bible woman (who refused payment, for the gospel's sake) prayed, the other woman was delivered and asked for baptism. Keyser, "Rationale," 363, cites accounts from China and elsewhere by Presbyterian missionary "Dr. Hugh W. White." More recent popular sources also recount successful exorcisms (Danyun, *Lilies*, 132).

94. Luke associates sickness generally with the devil's activity (Acts 10:38; cf. Thomas, *Deliverance*, 227; Twelftree, *Name*, 154; Pilch, *Healing*, 105; Boyd, *War*, 182–83), but he normally distinguishes sickness from possession (Thomas, *Deliverance*, 191–228, esp. 227–28), perhaps especially in Acts (cf. Weissenrieder, *Images*, 338–39). Although evil spirits can bring some disease in the NT accounts, they are not usually mentioned (Borgen, "Miracles," 101); they constitute only one of the possible causes of illness in the NT (Thomas, "Health," 92–98, for demons or the devil, 95–97).

95. E.g., Lyon, "Prophecies," 71. The presence of their own spirit can make them resistant to diseases (Harner, *Way of Shaman*, 69).

session or demonic attacks, and this has long been the case.⁹⁶ Medical anthropology distinguishes cultures where sickness is caused only naturally from cultures where it can be caused by personal agents such as deities, spirits, or the use of witchcraft.⁹⁷ Although some cultures do not associate spirits with sickness,⁹⁸ a vast number of cultures do.⁹⁹ (Still, in some cultures where many still attribute sickness to spirits, people nevertheless depend more on medicine than on spiritual remedies.¹⁰⁰) In Hmong culture, a kind of evil spirit constricts breathing at night during nightmares. A number of Hmong refugees in the United States have died in their sleep from heart failure with “no structural heart abnormalities,”

96. See the sources in Ward, “Possession,” 126; Shoko, *Religion*, 57–63; earlier, Rivers, *Medicine*, 7–8 (as cited in Loos, *Miracles*, 94, and other sources on 94–99); cf. Keener, “Possession,” 225–26. Pre-Christian Gikuyu attributed sickness to ancestor spirits and witches; the biblically influenced indigenous Arathi movement redefined the cause as Satan (Githieya, “Church,” 241). Whereas in some societies in West and East Africa exorcism may resolve possession-induced sickness (Bourguignon, “Self,” 43, 56), in some others (such as Haiti) spirits may cause sickness without possession (56). For sickness and “spirit substance,” which must be removed, see Turner, *Hands*, 227–28 (based on Inupiat and some other cultures); for the removal of intrusive substances in much shamanic healing, see Harner, *Way of Shaman*, 115–30 (emphasizing sucking); some Indian charismatics in Bergunder, “Miracle Healing,” 293 (though regarded by other Indian charismatics as fraud); objects emerging by vomiting (Ising, *Blumhardt*, 172) or from other orifices or the skin (173, 185, 327).

97. Borgen, “Miracles,” 94; Foster, “Etiologies” (noting exceptions on 775–76). From 186 cultures, Murdock, *Theories*, surveys theories of natural (8–16) and supernatural (17–27) causation. Favret-Saada, *Witchcraft*, 195, describes magic from an indigenous perspective (understanding its function within a culture), rather than denigrating it as illogical; in 250–66, she argues against the older psychiatric view that treats it as mere delirium. Some now attribute the virus attacks to witchcraft (in Brooke, *Science*, 36).

98. Keller, *Miracles*, 243, argues that whereas ancients believed that forces like demons caused sickness, today we understand that bacteria and viruses do. This is somewhat forced-choice logic, since many today who posit demons and witchcraft as causes of sickness would not rule out bacteria and viruses as agents through which those forces at least sometimes work.

99. Bourguignon, “Spirit Possession Belief,” 20–21; idem, “Distribution,” 17; Murdock, *Theories*, 72–76 (on 72 noting 135 of 139, more than 97 percent of the societies he surveyed); Neyrey, “Miracles,” 30–31; for examples, see Bourguignon, *Possession*, 7, 24; Hien, “Yin Illness”; Cho, “Healing,” 123–24; Eliade, *Shamanism*, 215, 363; Ejizu, “Exorcism,” 13, 15, 21; Gray, “Cult,” 171, 178; Lewis, “Possession,” 193; Southall, “Possession,” 259, 262; Welbourn, “Spirit Initiation,” 292; Haar and Ellis, “Possession,” 197–98; Firth, *Ritual*, 319; Ikeobi, “Healing,” 57; Saunders, “Zar Experience,” 179; Morton, “Dawit,” 193, 220; Pressel, “Possession,” 339; Umeh, *Dibia*, 200; Hammond-Tooke, “Aetiology,” 54–58; Berends, “African Healing Practices,” 278–79; Mashau, “Occultism”; Evans-Pritchard, *Religion*, 98; Turner, *Drums*, 34, 119, 296; Colson, “Possession,” 71–72; Beattie, “Mediumship,” 164; Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 65–68; Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 174–76 (regarding what are considered morally neutral water spirits); idem, “Spirit Possession,” 124; Rosny, *Healers*, 116–19; Luling, “Possession Cults,” 175; Ferchiou, “Possession Cults,” 214–15; Bate, “Mission,” 77 (some traditional Zulu association with ancestors); Forsberg, “Medicine” (on supernatural powers, 35–64; on medicine effective against them, 76–147, 158–63); Kham, “Story,” 207 (traditional Chin beliefs); Koch, *Zulus*, 56 (some Zulu shamans), 146–47; Espinosa, “Healing in Borderlands,” 133–34 (late nineteenth-century Mexican folk Catholicism); Bergunder, “Miracle Healing,” 288; Wright, *Miracle*, 143; McGavran, “Healing,” 76; Lake, *Healer*, 118–19 (some but not all sickness).

100. See, e.g., Wyllie, “Effutu.” Many Zulu people appreciate Western treatment but depend on traditional or faith healers to discern illness’s causes (such as sorcery or problems with the ancestors; Crawford and Lipsedge, “Help”). Many members of the Apostolic Church of John Maranke apparently employ herbalists and Western medicine, though both are prohibited (Jules-Rosette, “Healers,” 135). Many Indian Pentecostals recognize natural causes for many illnesses as well as spiritual ones (Bergunder, “Miracle Healing,” 290). In Shoko, “Healing,” 52–53, African Pentecostals demonize ancestor spirits.

and those “who have been revived” from these heart attacks have described the above-mentioned nightmare.¹⁰¹ More generally, a variety of cultures attribute occasions of “sleep paralysis” to evil presences, sometimes accompanied with apparitions.¹⁰²

In a different but sometimes related conception (given the frequent use of spirits in witchcraft), many cultures associate sickness with witchcraft or sorcery,¹⁰³ which are pervasive beliefs in Africa.¹⁰⁴ (Although some writers distinguish witchcraft from sorcery, many use them interchangeably, and I do not make any technical distinction here.¹⁰⁵ They can be used as explanations for misfortune more generally.¹⁰⁶) Witchcraft accusations are thus common

101. Benson, *Healing*, 85–86, citing Adler, “Pathogenesis,” and attributing the real cause to a sense of powerlessness. One seeking a broader context might consider night terrors and especially the cross-cultural approach of Hufford, *Terror*.

102. McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 53 (noting that some respond by reciting incantations, some by calling on Jesus), also citing esp. Hufford, *Terror*. See also McClenon, *Healing*, 129–30.

103. See, e.g., Murdock, *Theories*, 64–71; Ajibade, “Hearthstones,” 198; Eliade, *Shamanism*, 363; Foster, “Etiologies,” 773, 775, 777; Daneel, “Zionism,” 30, 40–41; Jules-Rosette, “Healers,” 128, 131–33, 141, 145; Sofowora, *Traditional Medicine*, 26–27; Uzukwu, “Address,” 8; Ejizu, “Exorcism,” 13–15, 21; Ikeobi, “Healing,” 57; Lee, “Possession,” 144; Beattie, “Mediumship,” 164; Middleton, “Possession,” 225; Rosny, *Healers*, 74, 80, 83, 85; Turner, *Drums*, 14–15, 34, 119, 128–29, 296, 298; McClenon, *Events*, 133; Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 94 (a lion attack); Ayegboyin, “Heal,” 236; Dube, “Search,” 114–15; Ritchie, *Spirit*, 26, 230; Crawford and Lipsedge, “Help,” 133–35 (mental illness); Gaiser, *Healing*, 136n9 (mental illness); Hultkrantz, *Healing*, 29–31, 53–54, 82, 89, 111, 151, 162 (among Native Americans); Maclean, “Misconceptions” (as a source of death in Papua New Guinea); Turnbull, *Forest People*, 48–49 (as an explanation for some untimely deaths); Shoko, *Religion*, 63–67, 97–98; Espinosa, “Healing in Borderlands,” 133–34; Bergunder, “Miracle Healing,” 288–89; cf. Fogelson, “Theories,” 82–85 (affliction with a sort of psychosis, among some Native American peoples). On the harm caused by African witchcraft belief and practice, see, e.g., Manala, “Witchcraft.” Sorcery is often blamed for spirit possession in traditional Sri Lankan Catholicism at Kudagama (Stirrat, “Possession,” 137–38). Debates exist; Foster, “Etiologies,” 775, rightly notes naturalistic ancient Mediterranean systems (as well as those in India and China), whereas Murdock, *Theories*, 57–63, emphasizes witchcraft in the circum-Mediterranean area (too narrowly and with some irrelevant “correlates”); spiritual and herbalist practices coexist in most of Africa (as Foster, “Etiologies,” 776, notes, “the two etiologies are rarely if ever mutually exclusive,” emphasis his).

104. Binsbergen, “Witchcraft,” 254. He concedes that this affirmation is not politically correct in some circles (230); surveys also suggest that a number of Christians or Muslims reject its reality (“Islam and Christianity,” 178–79; though we should also note that out of courtesy African informants sometimes answer the way they think Western inquirers would expect, Debrunner, *Witchcraft*, 3). But while witchcraft is neither exclusive to Africa nor the majority practice, my West and Central African informants offer vivid examples of its occurrence and belief in it.

105. Murdock, *Theories*, 64–71, like Evans-Pritchard, distinguishes witchcraft from sorcery, the latter associated with the New World; but against this being a widely usable distinction, see sources in Welton, “Themes,” 13–15, esp. V. Turner; Bond and Ciekawy, “Introduction,” 26n1; for other distinctions, Krippner, “Medicine,” 191–92; on the lack of a standard definition, see, e.g., Eze, “Issues,” 265–66.

106. E.g., Bond, “Ancestors,” 132; thus deaths are rarely assigned solely to natural causes (138), AIDS is often blamed on witchcraft (154–55), and an epidemic could lead to many witchcraft accusations (152, though on 153 Christian beliefs led to a consensus of divine or satanic activity in addition to witches). Binsbergen, “Witchcraft,” 232–33, argues against witchcraft being an “explanation” (as opposed to a cause). Some traditional Western settings less influenced by modernity have also used witchcraft to explain misfortunes (e.g., Favret-Saada, *Witchcraft*, 137), some of them admittedly quite unusual (see the progression of unusual events in Favret-Saada, *Witchcraft*, 137–39).

in many societies today,¹⁰⁷ as in some earlier periods in Western history.¹⁰⁸ In some places, accused witches are forced to undo their curses.¹⁰⁹ In South Africa, such accusations, often targeting single elderly women, have led to tragic public burnings.¹¹⁰ They have also occurred elsewhere¹¹¹ and were frequent in

107. E.g., West, *Sorcery*, 15–17, 55, 60, 88; Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, 31–32, 122–26; Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 94; Singleton, “Spirits,” 471; Gray, “Cult,” 183–84; Bongmba, “Witchcraft,” 53; Koch, *Zulus*, 152–53, 157 (emphasizing their falsity); cf. Welbourn, “Healing,” 353–55; earlier, Berger, “Women,” 25; for some witch beliefs, see also Hammond-Tooke, “Aetiology,” 51–54. Brand, “Beliefs,” 43–44, reports an indigenous perspective that witchcraft accusations can serve a useful social function of controlling envy and reducing genuine witchcraft practice. In most societies, however, they breed distrust (Harries, “Worldview,” 493; Kgatla, “Moloi”). In antiquity, too, people could attribute untimely death to witchcraft and invoke divine vengeance (Graf, “Death”). Cf. campaigns to eradicate witchcraft in Kenya, by both colonial and independent governments (noted in, e.g., Benjamin, “Squatters,” 260); postcolonial hostility toward and sometimes killing of witches in Zimbabwe (Ranger, “Religion,” 369–71). The modern introduction of newer witchcraft models like Wicca (on its historic discontinuity with older traditions, see, e.g., Hutton, “Status”; Magliocco, “Spells”; Hayes, “Responses,” 340–42) make societal approaches to traditional witchcraft more complex (cf. Wallace, “Debating”).

108. Cotton Mather claimed to have personally known cases of witchcraft (e.g., Scherzer, *Healing*, 98; more fully, Mather, *Providences*), but his later involvement in the hanging of Rev. George Burroughs (Scherzer, *Healing*, 99) seriously risks discrediting his testimony on this subject. In 1598, a woman claiming to be possessed blamed another woman for bewitching her, but her possession was ultimately deemed inauthentic (see discussion in Walker and Dickerman, “Woman,” 551–52; reprinted in idem, “Influence”). “Possessed” Ursuline novices succeeded in getting their confessor condemned and executed and reestablished their virtuous status (Marshman, “Exorcism”). For discussion of eighteenth-century French perspectives regarding witchcraft and possession, see Wilkins, “Attitudes.” Some have explained some physiological afflictions of the possessed at Salem in 1692 on the basis of grain contaminated with toxic ergot (Caporael, “Ergotism”); others demur (Spanos and Gottlieb, “Ergotism”). One deranged preacher accused Francis Asbury and his early Methodist colleagues of witchcraft against him (Wigger, *Saint*, 136).

109. Shoko, *Religion*, 123 (on one AIC), noting that patients often recover after this action; but sometimes putative witches reluctant to reverse their spells are beaten to secure their compliance.

110. E.g., Msaba Zungu and Thabitha Thusi, in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/6980439.stm>; published and accessed Sept. 5, 2007). Kgatla, “Moloi,” 84, estimates more than six hundred lynchings (often with kangaroo courts, 89) in one province in South Africa (where others also emphasize witch burning, e.g., Hayes, “Responses,” 347; witch attacks in South Africa in Wyk, “Witchcraft,” 1202–3). For how witchcraft and sorcery are practiced in South Africa, see Wyk, “Witchcraft,” 1210–17, though it appears to me that the popular version with which we are acquainted in Congo-Brazzaville differs in some significant respects from South African witchcraft customs. In contrast to some positive portrayals in earlier South African media (e.g., Rüther, “Representations,” 390–93), some inaccurately lumped together all traditional healers as murderous witches (401, 405–6). Elderly women are sometimes marginalized as witches in Congo-Brazzaville (where some virtuous people we know have suffered this treatment) and elsewhere (for Mozambique, cf. Lubkemann, “Ancestor,” 344); among the Karanga of Zimbabwe, light-skinned (“red”) and night-dark women are most suspected of witchcraft (Shoko, *Religion*, 43).

111. A young woman burned alive in Papua New Guinea (despite opposition to such burnings from government and churches; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/7825511.stm>; published and accessed Jan. 1, 2009). Cf. the abuse of “witch-children” in southeast Nigeria (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/7764575.stm>; published and accessed Dec. 4, 2008) and Congo-Kinshasa (Phiri, “Witches”; Thomson, “Sorcery”); executions of accused witches among Dagomba Muslims in northern Ghana (Hill, “Witchcraft,” 332); legal issues in Saudi Arabia (Abdullah Al-Shihri, “Saudi Court Rejects Death Sentence for TV Psychic,” http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20101113/ap_on_re_mi_ea/ml_saudi_witchcraft; accessed Nov. 13, 2010); earlier execution of witches among Native Americans (Hultkrantz, *Healing*, 53); in Zanzibar (Arnold, “Conflicts,” 223, 225). The rise of accusations against

an earlier period of Western history;¹¹² locally, some form of witch persecution and sometimes execution appeared as a traditional part of local South African cultures in their fear of witches.¹¹³ Some cultures employ divination to identify sorcery or witchcraft,¹¹⁴ and many traditional African healing practices are directed against them.¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, despite frequent abuses and exaggerations, some people in many African societies do seek to practice malevolent sorcery, as is inevitable in cultures that believe in sorcery.¹¹⁶ On occasion, Western academicians have even come to entertain the potential efficacy of such practices. Certainly it is difficult to deny

children seems a largely new phenomenon associated especially with urbanization and war (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-10671790>).

112. Priests accused of bewitching nuns were burned alive in 1611, 1634, and 1647 (Rosen, "Psychopathology," 231; cf. Baskin, "Devils," 18–19; idem, "Nuns," 199), whereas a politically connected priest in 1730 evaded the charge (Kreiser, "Devils"); for some other tragic burnings, see the older account in Reville, "History," 245–47. Hart, *Delusions*, 76, notes that the dominant period of witch burning was not medieval but early modern, and that the Catholic Church more often than not worked to suppress witch hunts. Some Reformers like Knox assumed but did not emphasize inherited views about witchcraft and demonology (Goodare, "Knox"), but the 1563 Scottish Witchcraft Act, to which he contributed with perhaps different issues in mind, eventually led to as many as two thousand executions (Goodare, "Act"). Warning against executing witches in South Africa, Hayes, "Responses," 343, contends that Christian involvement in the execution of witches was limited to a six-century (and mostly two-century) period in one part of the world and that it was more commonly a pre-Christian practice suppressed with the rise of Christianity (on its geographic limitations to particular regions of Europe, see Wyk, "Witchcraft," 1206). In 1437, a Dominican linked witchcraft to myths about people forming pacts with the devil, and in 1487, two members of the Inquisition wrote on it, propagating this notion and consequent action (Wyk, "Witchcraft," 1207). On false Western witchcraft accusations more recently, see, e.g., in Favret-Saada, *Witchcraft*, 192, 263.

113. See Kirkaldy, "Vhuloi," on late nineteenth-century Vandaland, and the abundant evidence cited there. Missionaries, though not always understanding the local culture sympathetically, sometimes intervened to save the lives of the accused (see in Kirkaldy, "Vhuloi," 106–7). In many societies, African traditional religion opposes witchcraft as harming rather than helping (Ranger, "Religion," 353–58).

114. E.g., Eliade, *Shamanism*, 363–64; Beattie and Middleton, "Introduction," xxiii; Field, "Possession," 11; Beattie, "Mediumship," 164; Gray, "Cult," 183; Middleton, "Possession," 225; Craig, "Divination"; Jules-Rosette, "Healers," 142; Wyk, "Witchcraft," 1217–19; cf. Garbett, "Mediums," 123; Adeyemi, "Healing Systems," 140, 142; Numbere, *Vision*, 39. In indigenous churches, prophecy can be used to identify witchcraft (Ayegboyin, "Heal," 238), not always accurately (e.g., Jules-Rosette, "Healers," 137, 139). Alice Auma felt possessed by the "Italian" spirit Lakwena to discern witches and heal (and eventually lead bloody guerilla warfare; Kassimir, "Politics," 250). Behrend, "Power," 21–29, shows that she combined Christian discourse (communication with the Virgin Mary and deceased good people, 23–26, perhaps analogous to saints or martyrs) with indigenous spirit possession; meanwhile, Arabic spirits were drafted to help with killing (26). Her rival and enemy Joseph Kony adapted her discourse to suit his genocidal activities (29–31).

115. Wyk, "Witchcraft," 1201.

116. Shorter, *Witchcraft*, 99; Wyk, "Witchcraft," 1202; note confessions in Shoko, *Religion*, 46; Mayrargue, "Expansion," 286. Our family also has unpleasant, direct acquaintance with this reality, albeit not as practitioners. Witchcraft is flourishing in Africa (Harries, "Worldview," 492; Hill, "Witchcraft," 323–25; in South Africa, Bähre, "Witchcraft," 300, 329; Wyk, "Witchcraft," 1203–4). African Christians can adapt their approach to practitioners somewhat flexibly (cf. Wild, "Witchcraft," 462, observing Congolese Christians for a time allowed some good through the Mai-Mai, "despite their occult practices"). Witchcraft in the West may often be a very different phenomenon, but some who work with youth have argued that it is more common and harmful than is widely known (Campolo, *Pentecostal*, 141).

that there are practitioners who believe in their practices and endanger others by natural means, some of which have been widely reported.¹¹⁷ Thus one Western lecturer, after having denied the reality of witches, was corrected by an African student who noted that he was a witch and believed that he had an effective record of killing people through witchcraft.¹¹⁸ An anthropologist studying witchcraft observed uncomfortably that soon after some spiritually powerful people uttered curses ("death wishes") against particular individuals, those individuals died in car accidents.¹¹⁹ Western missionaries from desupernaturalized Europe, which had declared belief in witchcraft heretical because of its own earlier excesses, often taught ideas unworkable for an African context.¹²⁰ Some missiologists even argue that many missionaries' claims that believers are immune from the effects of witchcraft simply reinforce the sort of immunity-to-suffering thinking found in prosperity theology.¹²¹ Missiologists are also concerned for syncretism: witchcraft

117. Note, e.g., obvious physical dangers such as the killing of albinos resulting from a premium on their body parts for charms (see the claim, from the International Federation for the Red Cross and Crescent societies, in Tom Odula, "10,000 E. African Albinos in Hiding after Killings," http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/af_af_albino_killings; accessed Nov. 28, 2009; the account in "Burundi Albino Boy 'Dismembered,'" <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11614957>; accessed Oct. 24, 2010). Some claim that they or others have killed victims (in one example one's granddaughter) to consume them or to obtain parts of their flesh, especially genitals, for rituals (Reynolds, *Magic*, 44–47). In late 2010, a friend of ours from southern Africa reported to us that her cousin was recently murdered to procure some of his body parts (quickly removed) for witchcraft.

118. Hair, "Witches," 140 (an interaction that repays reading). For poisoning as well as occult means (sometimes reported by self-acknowledged sorcerers) with intent to kill, see Reynolds, *Magic*, 41–44; Kapolyo, *Condition*, 77. Most Africans are familiar with the use of charms and the like to seek to kill (in southern Nigeria, see, e.g., Numbere, *Vision*, 81, 96, 132–33), in some cases believed efficaciously (Numbere, *Vision*, 136; Oritsejafor, "Dealing," 97–98); some deaths are believed homicides through witchcraft (e.g., Grindal, "Heart," 66; among a northern Alaskan people, see Turner, "Actuality," 5; via lion attacks, West, *Sorcery*, 3–5, 9–10; a fatality within hours after confronting the sorcerer, West, *Sorcery*, 88; cf. Osborn, *Healing*, 313, citing a converted witch doctor but attributing the fatal effects to fear). For the belief that negative shamanism is used to harm or kill among an indigenous people in Guyana, see Scherberger, "Shaman," 57–59; in Africa, Azenabor, "Witchcraft," 30–31; McNaughton, *Blacksmiths*, 69; Koch, *Zulus*, 151–52, 292–93 (witchcraft practitioners' confessions); in India, Bergunder, "Miracle Healing," 293–94; Yohannan, *Revolution*, 21–22, 204; in Indonesia, Tari, *Breeze*, 23 (even through lightning), 135 (Tari saw their instruments), 137 (one claimed to have killed more than one hundred people); for the sacrifice by witchcraft of relatives to achieve success, see Binsbergen, "Witchcraft," 243; for some traditional European witches seeking to harm enemies magically, see, e.g., Alison Mutler, "Curses! Romania's witches forced to pay income tax," http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20110105/ap_on_re_eu/eu_romania_witchcraft; accessed Jan. 5, 2011. Mensah, "Basis," 171, warns that while people in Africa blame deaths on witchcraft too often, sometimes genuinely spiritual as well as medical factors are involved.

119. Favret-Saada, *Witchcraft*, 124–27. She finally concludes that actually bewitching rituals were probably normally rare in that culture, noting that the only ones she was able to uncover related to the more open "unwitchers" (135n18). Favret-Saada's temporary concern that unwitchers might practice witchcraft (123, 126) should perhaps not be too readily dismissed, if witchcraft can be a defensive act (123) and is socially unacceptable enough to remain secretive.

120. Lagerwerf, *Witchcraft*, 14–15. He notes the failure of conventional Western medicine to be able to treat witchcraft affliction because it isolates it from its traditional social framework (16–17), and how local people often mistrusted the missions for ignoring sorcery (18).

121. Harries, "Worldview," 497–98. He argues that (499) "to relegate magic to backward people and bygone years is to misunderstand its nature and to underestimate its power." Most missionaries

beliefs fulfill roles within societies that if unaddressed by newer religious cultures can persist and grow.¹²²

While traditional cultures often seek a beneficial use of power, they frequently retain also malevolent spiritual expressions of conflict.¹²³ In Sri Lanka, for example, people seek sorcerers at shrines of various religions to bring harm to their enemies.¹²⁴ After a chief in Fiji was accused of killing four villagers through witchcraft, he remarkably admitted to this claim, despite cultural stigmas now in place.¹²⁵ Voodoo deaths, associated with spirits, are a real phenomenon,¹²⁶ though Western observers, usually seeking psychological rather than spiritual explanations, typically associate them with terror.¹²⁷

tend to underestimate witchcraft's prevalence (Hill, "Witchcraft," 323–25); early missionaries brought an Enlightenment denial of witchcraft implausible in an African context (Hayes, "Responses," 344–45; Lagerwerf, *Witchcraft*, 1). Koch, *Zulus*, 154–56, contends that believers whose ancestors practiced witchcraft are more susceptible, and (151–52, 158, citing two incidents) that thwarted witchcraft attacks may bring the intended suffering against the witch.

122. Cf. the return to traditional practices among some former Christians in Nigeria (Danfulani, "Conflict"). Some argue that understanding witchcraft customs is important for contextualizing, how to contextualize without religious syncretism (and where the boundaries lie; some, like Brand, "Beliefs," and Hill, "Witchcraft," 337, may go too far; cf. syncretism in Shoko, "Healing," 52) remains a significant problem in missiology. Some African Pentecostal churches have appeared culturally relevant by addressing witchcraft (Maxwell, "Witches," 334); Hayes, "Responses," 346–47, 352, views positively the approach of Zionists like Bishop Nyasha, who simply baptizes, exorcises, and reintegrates those who confess to witchcraft. Most African Catholics, Anglicans, and Presbyterian pastors condemn witchcraft, though their parishioners do not always hear them this way (Ross, "Preaching," 12–13).

123. The conflict sometimes entails competition for life ("kill or be killed"); see, e.g., Favret-Saada, *Witchcraft*, 123.

124. Obeyesekere, "Sorcery" (sampling Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist shrines on 9). Though the intention is deliberately homicidal (3), harm to the desired objects was reported in only one in every thirty-seven cases (and these included retrospective cases and those who suffered only much later; 21). Obeyesekere thinks that in societies practicing sorcery, premeditated (as opposed to spontaneous) lethal aggression may get channeled into sorcery rather than more conspicuous means (22); it is normally (80 percent) practiced anonymously, aggressors seeking distant rather than nearby shrines (5). By its usual definition, sorcery is employed especially to harm others (see, e.g., Krippner, "Medicine," 193).

125. Hoare, "Approach," 127–28. Some do confess to witchcraft to honor their power, however (Azenabor, "Witchcraft," 27).

126. For suffering and death caused by curses, see, e.g., Prince, "Yoruba Psychiatry," 91; Dawson, "Urbanization," 328–29; Mbiti, *Religions*, 258; cf. Remus, *Healer*, 110; Welbourn, "Healing," 364; voodoo and taboo deaths in Benson, *Healing*, 40–41; esp. Knapstad, "Power," 84, 89; for a healing through breaking a voodoo curse, see Blue, *Authority*, 146. Most people in the ancient Mediterranean world also accepted the efficacy of curses (e.g., Aeschylus *Cho.* 912; *Sept.* 70, 656, 695–97, 709 [it was irresistible—see 692–711, 725–26, 833–34]). Widespread beliefs in curses' efficacy appear in rural Africa (e.g., Azevedo, Prater, and Lantum, "Biomedicine"; Lienhardt, "Death"; Chinwoku, "Localizing," 12–13) but also in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Netherlands (see Waardt, "Witchcraft") and in some parts of the West more recently (e.g., Sebald, "Witchcraft").

127. Note voodoo and taboo deaths in Cannon, "Voodoo Death" (cited in Benson, *Healing*, 40–41; Remus, *Healer*, 109); taboo and especially curse deaths in Frank, *Persuasion*, 39–42. Cf. the "nocebo effect," the negative opposite of the placebo effect (in Beauregard and O'Leary, *Brain*, 145–47; Benson, *Healing*, 39, 53, 59, 63, 267–69; Epperly, *Touch*, 36); sudden deaths from emotive trauma in Engel, "Death" (as cited in Benson, *Healing*, 42; cf. Weisman and Hackett, "Predilection," in Benson, *Healing*, 53; Phillips, Van Vorhees, and Ruth, "Birthday," in Benson, *Healing*, 62; Adler, "Pathogenesis," in Benson, *Healing*,

In some traditional societies today, spirits are also believed to be involved in prophetic activity.¹²⁸ Even where spirits are considered generally destructive, they may be reckoned as necessary intermediaries with deities.¹²⁹ In traditional African societies, those possessed virtually always claim to speak for lower spirits, never (in contrast to Christian and Islamic circles) for the supreme Creator God.¹³⁰ In contrast to early Christians but analogous to many Greeks, the traditional African worldview typically views some spirits as good, some others bad, but most neutral, like most people.¹³¹ Defending this worldview, some scholars complain that most Christians “insensitively” classify all possessing spirits, except for God’s Spirit, as evil and demonic.¹³² But this complaint is a case of one religious worldview critiquing another’s critique; competing frameworks determine their respective classifications.¹³³ African culture often applies this approach of allowing moral ambiguity also to magical power more generally.¹³⁴

85). Negative astrological predictions appear to hasten the death of believers in Chinese astrology, but not nonbelievers (Walsh, *Shamanism*, 213 [elsewhere showing the impossibility of astrology, 233]). Ancient sorcerers also sought to terrify victims by leaving physical evidence of their intent (Trombley, “Paganism,” 198).

128. E.g., Mbiti, *Religions*, 233; Evans-Pritchard, *Religion*, 96, 303; Field, “Possession,” 6; Middleton, “Possession,” 224; Southall, “Possession,” 242–43; Fitzgerald, “Speech”; cf. shamans and predictions, Lyon, “Prophecies,” 73. In old Shona tradition, various kinds of spirits can possess mediums (Gelfand, *Religion*, 166), and possession gives the medium powers (177–78).

129. Ohnuki-Tierney, “Shamanism,” 194–96; cf. Mbiti, *Religions*, 233.

130. Mbiti, *Religions*, 249–50; Field, “Possession,” 9.

131. Mbiti, *Religions*, 111; Beattie and Middleton, “Introduction,” xxi–xxii, xxvii; Brand, “Beliefs,” 47; Lema, “Chaga Religion,” 47; cf. Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 188–89; idem, “Possession and Healing,” 48–49, 52; on the amorality of fetishes in Nuer religion, see Evans-Pritchard, *Religion*, 100; on the neutrality of Ga possession, see Field, “Possession,” 13; on the diverse morality of spirits in traditional Yanomamō shamanism (in South America), see Ritchie, *Spirit*, 59; on neutral Mayan mountain spirits, see Garrard-Burnett, “Demons,” 218. On spirits in African tradition, see Ferdinando, “Demonology,” 110–20 (on their ambiguity between good and bad, esp. 114). For a supreme God above these spirits in traditional African and other cosmologies, see Boyd, *War*, 124–27. For one chart comparing Western worldviews (both secular and Christian) with NT and traditional African ones, see Loewen, “Possession,” 128–33).

132. E.g., Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 188–89; cf. Achebe, “Ogbanje Phenomenon,” 35–36. Grundman, “Inviting,” 66, also rejects the biblical opposition to other spirits; Stabell, “Modernity,” 462–63, 470, opposes the usual Christian connection between witchcraft and demons. Cf. the nominally Islamic Segeju identification of *shetani* with Qur’anic demons in Gray, “Cult,” 173–75. Most of the newer churches do view all spirits as harmful (Ranger, “Religion,” 352, complaining about “Apostolic and Pentecostal churches in Southern Africa”); Korean Christians also treated all the older spirits as demons (Kim, “Healing,” 268–69).

133. For example, my Baptist student Paul Mokake, from Cameroon, has experienced power encounters regarding what local people regard as water spirits and ancestral spirits that some others considered neutral (interview, May 13, 2009). In one exorcism of such spirits that he recounted, the person acted like a serpent and different animals as the spirits departed (ibid.). For other exorcisms of water spirits (“mermaids,” or “mammy” spirits), see Numbere, *Vision*, 163–64, 186, 231; cf. discussion in Oritsejafor, “Dealing,” 80–85, 94–95; for (often excessive) beliefs about water spirits (Mami Wata) in eastern Nigerian Pentecostalism, see Burgess, *Revolution*, 80, 226 (some Pentecostals warning against the excesses, 228); Csordas, “Global Perspective,” 339; for Pentecostals addressing concerns about these spirits that traditional churches had ignored, see Marshall-Fratani, “Mediating,” 99; for indigenous beliefs about mermaid spirits in Zimbabwe, see Shoko, *Religion*, 41.

134. Bond and Ciekawy, “Introduction,” 13; cf. Devisch, “Forces,” 108 (for defensive use of power, 115–18; for retaliation, 113–15). In some places spirits and spiritual power are considered neutral (e.g.,

Exorcism in Recent Times

Continuing my approach in much of the book, I initially suspend academic judgment on the meaning of these phenomena in order to recount some common views of them today. Just as belief in malevolent spirit possession is common, so are various attempts to cure, control, or exorcise it.¹³⁵ Those who view all possession behavior as the result of the belief that one is possessed see exorcism as succeeding through the belief that one is possessed no longer;¹³⁶ most who practice exorcism, however, believe that real spirits are being expelled (see many examples below). Some recognize the possibility of either explanation for a given case (see discussion below).

Non-Christian Exorcism Practices

Noted anthropologist Edith Turner argues for the success of an exorcism that she witnessed; I shall address her account more fully below.¹³⁷ Her account is, however, by no means unique, though the forms used to try to rid persons of harmful spirits vary from one culture to another. Thus, for example, the pre-Christian Solomon Islands used various elaborate rituals to try to exorcise spirits.¹³⁸ In traditional African society, cultic personnel might exorcise harmful spirits, and ceremonies could be employed to drive off spirits endangering a village.¹³⁹ For example, traditional Segeju in Tanzania cajole or force a spirit to leave its victim, most frequently by a ritual dance.¹⁴⁰ Conceptualizing the problem differently, vomiting may help expel the moth that causes mental illness among traditional Navajo.¹⁴¹ In nineteenth-century China, the following means of exorcism are reported: “enticing them to leave by burning charms, and paper money; or by begging and exhorting them; or by frightening them with magic spells and incantations; or driving them away by pricking with needles, or pinching with the fingers, in which case they cry out and promise to go.”¹⁴² A Muslim Somali holy man exorcises demons using Qur’anic

Ciekawy, “Utsai,” 176; McNaughton, *Blacksmiths*, 12), but they are potentially dangerous and can be harnessed for harm (McNaughton, *Blacksmiths*, 12, 15; cf. 3; Ciekawy, “Utsai,” 180). Anthropologists typically reserve the label “witchcraft” for the negative use of the power (Bond and Ciekawy, “Introduction,” 26n1).

135. E.g., Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 100–126; Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 183–87 (including various kinds of spirit healers in 185–87); in popular level Christian sources, cf., e.g., Schlink, *World*, 28–53; Williams, *Signs*, 140; for a study of some popular approaches, see, e.g., Wright, “Interpretations.” See, e.g., shamanistic exorcism among the Aymara in Bolivia (Bourguignon, “Spirit Possession Belief,” 20); other cultures in Kaplan and Johnson, “Navajo Psychopathology,” 211; Fuchs, “Techniques,” 135–37; Mbiti, *Religions*, 106; a successful Buddhist Sinhalese exorcism in Obeyesekere, “Possession,” 259–89.

136. Oesterreich, *Possession*, 100.

137. Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 149.

138. Tippet, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 14.

139. Mbiti, *Religions*, 106; for an example, see Turner, *Drums*, 204.

140. Gray, “Cult,” 171. For dances used in expelling spirits, see also, e.g., Garbett, “Mediums,” 105; Lewis, “Possession,” 201.

141. Kaplan and Johnson, “Navajo Psychopathology,” 211.

142. A Chinese report in Nevius, *Possession*, 54. Sometimes demons would leave if given what they demanded; also through “written charms, or chanted verses,” or puncturing “the body with needles” (53).

passages.¹⁴³ On May 23, 1936, a missionary in the Levant reported that locals had tried unsuccessfully to remove long-standing demons by beating the possessed woman and applying hot irons to her.¹⁴⁴

In many societies, spirit possession is employed to drive out a lower, afflicting spirit or to appease an offended spirit.¹⁴⁵ Shamans or mediums in a number of societies enter trance and/or possession states themselves to expel or control spirits.¹⁴⁶ Thus a Balahi Hindu traditional healer, empowered by a spirit's magic power, questions and rhetorically duels with a hostile possessing spirit until successfully expelling it.¹⁴⁷ Filipino psychic healers enter trances that they associate with spirits.¹⁴⁸ Shamans or mediums often have to negotiate with possessing spirits, who speak through the victim's mouth.¹⁴⁹ Thus a Muslim traditional healer, having struck a bargain with local spirits but unable to expel some visiting Fulani ones, had to leave the room and let his wife convince these spirits that it was culturally

In China, Taoist priests until recent times battled spirits to expel them (Betty, "Evidence," 14; for reports of observations of a Taoist exorcism near Shanghai in the 1920s, see 16). Resembling the pain compliance techniques here, some extreme Christian sects have also been reputed to forcibly detain or beat those suspected of possession (for one sect, see Dunphy, "Marriage," C1; Dettling, "Witness"; Watson, "Leader"; Buffington, "Leader"; idem, "Routine"), although the vast majority of Christians and others condemn such behavior. Among the Karanga of Zimbabwe, disease spirits are weakened or expelled by techniques "such as blood-letting, emetics or purgatives, and sniffing" (Shoko, *Religion*, 97).

143. Lewis, "Possession," 199 (noting the special utility of *sūra* 66), 213; cf. the use of verses of the Qur'an drunk in water (Abdalla, "Friend," 38). In the Kuwaiti version of the *zar* cult, the healer also recites *sūras* (Ashkanani, "Zar," 224–25).

144. The narrative is reproduced in McCasland, *Finger*, 57–58 (here 57). Afterward the missionaries gradually cast the demons out and she recovered her health. For flogging to remove a demon, see also the example of the Indian Muslim exorcist in Williams, "Bwaya," 127.

145. Beattie and Middleton, "Introduction," xxv. Cf. appendix A for ancient Mediterranean cases of invoking higher spirits to drive away lower ones (e.g., PGM 101.38–39).

146. Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 196–97, citing especially (197) examples from eastern Siberia; Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 14–15; possession for healing in Southall, "Possession," 237–38; Hien, "Yin Illness," 307 (in "the Mother Goddess religion of the Viêt"); Licaucó, "Psychic Healing," 95; cf. Obeyesekere, "Idiom," 108. By young adulthood, more than half of !Kung males become spirit healers, and roughly 10 percent of the women do (Katz, "Healing," 213). On shamans sending spirits to work harm, see, e.g., Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 61 (noting on 63 that some reject limiting one's powers to only benevolent acts); on mediums able to work harm (sending dangerous spirits) as well as good, see also Beattie, "Mediumship," 169; Somali holy men in Lewis, "Possession," 189; shamans among a people in Guyana, Scherberger, "Shaman," 57–59. For claims of traditional healers offering relief from spirit forces, see, e.g., Achebe, "Ogbanje Phenomenon," 34–35; cf. Shorter, "Possession and Healing," 48. In some cases healers "are mentally disordered" or display psychotic traits (McClenon, "Healing," 40, 45–46), but other psychological approaches exist (e.g., Koss-Chiokino, "Transformation," 56–63).

147. Fuchs, "Techniques," 135–37. The ritual typically concludes with the patient swooning, after which she is cured (137). Hindu shamans could also be possessed for acts of power or involuntarily possessed via impurity from an "Untouchable" (Harper, "Pollution," 189). For possessed persons in Hindu sources, see, e.g., Oesterreich, *Possession*, 175; McDaniel, "States."

148. Licaucó, "Psychic Healing," 95; idem, "Realities," 263 (on 265 noting local attribution to the Holy Spirit).

149. E.g., Singleton, "Spirits," 473; Schuetze, "Role," 47 (for an agreement with the spirits, 39–49); for spirits departing if they get what they wanted, Gray, "Cult," 181. Likewise, traditional Tanzanian *migawo* specialists have to "persuade" spirits to depart (Shorter, "Spirit Possession," 119). By contrast, Pentecostals and charismatics usually just cast out spirits without negotiation (Schuetze, "Role," 50–53).

rude for them to possess a guest visiting in their home.¹⁵⁰ Various forms of exorcism have continued among some traditional Jewish groups into the modern period.¹⁵¹ Some cultures fear that possessing spirits can be transferred to exorcists or bystanders during exorcism.¹⁵²

Christian Movements and Exorcisms

Some argue that a major reason for the proliferation of Pentecostal, charismatic, and evangelical Christianity in tropical Africa today involves “their perceived ability to provide the believer ultimate protection against the ever-present evils of magic, witchcraft and sorcery.”¹⁵³ Christians in the Majority World often practice exorcism,¹⁵⁴ able to draw on the church’s heritage of exorcism often neglected today in the West.¹⁵⁵ I noted the frequency of exorcisms in patristic sources in chapter 10; one may also compare accounts in Augustine’s *City of God* 22.8. Early Pentecostals were also quick to reclaim this emphasis throughout the world,¹⁵⁶ an emphasis that often persists today. When those from Afro-Spiritist groups enter their typical trances while visiting Brazilian Pentecostal churches, for example, the leaders command the spirits out.¹⁵⁷

150. Abdalla, “Friend,” 38–39. The Sudanese culture of hospitality applies to treatment of *zar* spirits, as to people (Kenyon, “Zar,” 108). Similarly, in sixteenth-century Europe many believed that some types of spirits (nymphs, sprites, fairies, and so forth) were limited to particular locales (Midelfort, “Possession,” 115).

151. Cf., e.g., Hes, “Role,” 376, 380; Oesterreich, *Possession*, 207–10. Burning the skin with a heated nail, or extracting blood, provides an aperture for the spirits’ departure (Hes, “Role,” 380).

152. Cf., e.g., Obeyesekere, “Possession,” 253.

153. Owusu, “Strings,” 129; earlier, healing churches in Debrunner, *Witchcraft*, 2, 149, 160–61. Even where Western missionaries have denied the existence of witchcraft, local peoples often refuse to believe them (e.g., Smythe, “Creation,” 139).

154. As often noted, e.g., Alexander, *Signs*, 103; in Nigeria, see Folarin, “State,” 85–87 (including examples of excesses); among Costa Rican Pentecostals, e.g., in Bastian, “Pentecostalism,” 171; a case in Mongolia noted to me by Korean Presbyterian pastor Mun Kil Kim (July 24, 2010); cases in Cuba noted by Dr. Mirtha Venero Boza (Aug. 6, 2010); India, Devadason, “Band,” 64; the West, e.g., Robertson, *Miracles*, 93–94, 98, 101–2. Pentecostals usually prefer terms like “deliverance” or “liberation” to “exorcism,” emphasizing freeing individuals rather than emphasizing the hostile spirits (Brown, “Introduction,” 5), but I retain the older term typical in anthropological literature for various cultures.

155. For contemporary Anglican approaches to exorcism, see, e.g., Malia, “Look”; Milner, “Exorcism”; Hexham, “Exorcism” (esp. 115–16); for a contemporary Catholic perspective, Li, “Theology of Exorcism”; concisely, Davies, “Exorcism”; discussion of the Catholic *Rituale Romanum* in Landmann, “Agape.” Addressing the Anglican report, Welbourn, “Exorcism,” 596, contends that the magical worldview involved in exorcism is impossible for technological people but makes sense for other peoples. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Calvinists, in contrast to Lutherans, deleted the traditional baptismal exorcism rite (Nischan, “Baptism”; reprinted as idem, “Controversy”; cf. Martin, “Resisting,” 57); for a Lutheran case in 1546, see Wengert and Krey, “Exorcism.” Christians might need to adapt some of the traditional ritual (some of which might even reflect the influence of Valentinus; see Leeper, “Connection”) in view of NT exegesis (see Schloz-Durr, “Exorzismus”).

156. Early twentieth-century Pentecostals practiced exorcism in various places, e.g., a case in Syria in Malick, “Sowing” (though the “symptoms” explicitly reported are not particularly compelling); Kucera, “South India”; Ruesga, “Healings” (noting prayer and fasting); Otero, “Convention”; indirectly in Reiff, “Los Angeles Campmeeting,” 14; among non-Pentecostals, see, e.g., Anderson, *Pelendo*, 97–98, 133.

157. Greenfield, *Spirits*, 141–42; cf. Shaw, *Awakening*, 145.

Such practices are frequent in Africa; in many African countries a third of Christians claim to have witnessed exorcisms, and in some that figure rises to roughly half (Uganda, Mozambique), 65 percent (Ghana), or 74 percent (Ethiopia).¹⁵⁸ Exorcism is common, for example, in Ethiopia¹⁵⁹ and in Ambanja in Madagascar¹⁶⁰ and appears in various settings, including contemporary healing evangelism modeled after Acts.¹⁶¹ A range of Christian movements in Africa employ exorcism, including among Catholics¹⁶² and African Independent Churches.¹⁶³ One African scholar writing for an African theological journal associated with a mainline denomination recommends the use of exorcism for some situations, citing the case of a woman tormented for years by spirits. The article claims that at her exorcism in 1982 other voices were heard calling through her mouth, and then she was permanently free.¹⁶⁴ A German scholar reported many exorcisms among the Zulu people of southern Africa, often resulting in permanent deliverance and healing.¹⁶⁵ Paul Mokake, a Baptist from Cameroon who obtained both master's and doctor's degrees at my institution, shared with me various firsthand exorcism accounts; in one example, when in the village of Nguti they cast the spirits from a woman who had worshiped spirits of the sea, she acted like a serpent and different animals in succession as the spirits were departing.¹⁶⁶

Jorum Mugari from Zimbabwe, now studying at Gordon-Conwell's Charlotte campus, was a traditional exorcist before his conversion to Christianity. He noted that whereas particular rituals (typically including singing, instruments, lotions,

158. "Islam and Christianity," 214. My colleague in Hebrew Bible, Emmanuel Itapson, attests witnessing such events firsthand in Nigeria (interview, April 1, 2011).

159. For exorcism in Ethiopia, see Geleta, "Demonization."

160. Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 142, citing Sharp, *Possessed*. For a much older account of possession in Madagascar, see Oesterreich, *Possession*, 138; for Christian approaches to healing in Madagascar, see Rasolondraibe, "Ministry" (mentioning exorcism on 349).

161. E.g., Sung, *Diaries*, 23, 30, 34 (though Sung reports very few exorcisms compared with other forms of healing; for the principle, Sung, *Diaries*, 90); also see Hickson, *Heal*, 65, 70–71 (on events in India and China in 1921; cf. idem, *Bridegroom*, 212–13, in Japan); Lindsay, *Lake*, 22, 28, 39–40 (early twentieth century); Menberu, "Regassa Feysa" (on events in 1965); cf. Pullinger, *Dragon*, 210; Storms, *Convergence*, 69–71; Best, *Supernatural*, 158–59 (Wimber). Long histories of different forms of exorcistic practice appear in Catholicism (e.g., Toner, "Exorcism") and Eastern Orthodoxy (e.g., Papademetriou, "Exorcism"); for some patristic prayers of exorcism, see Stephanou, "Exorcisms," 57–66; for Eastern Orthodox accounts of possession over the past nearly three centuries, see Stephanou, "Exorcisms," 66–72.

162. On exorcism in an African Catholic context, see Ikeobi, "Healing," 73–75, 78–82; Eneja, "Message," 164–66; cf. Manus, "Healing," 101.

163. See, e.g., in AICs, in Oosthuizen, "Healing," 79–80, 89; idem, *Healer-Prophet*, 117–48. On the linkage of most sorts of events with spirits in AICs, see, e.g., Molobi, "Knowledge," 85.

164. Mchami, "Possession" (esp. 31), who notes the case of "Esther" in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (her entire account is 31–34; the article is also cited in Jenkins, *New Faces*, 105–7). Elsewhere, an alleged ghost followed a woman wherever she fled, tormenting her, and others witnessed the phenomena until she was delivered (Koch, *Zulus*, 160–61; cf. an analogous nineteenth-century experience reported in Ising, *Blumhardt*, 166–67).

165. Koch, *Zulus*, 55 (permanent deliverance of a witchcraft practitioner), 56–58 (healings during conversion/deliverance), 132–35, 163–65 (uniquely effective).

166. Paul Mokake, interview, May 13, 2009. Others have independently described similar behavior elsewhere (e.g., Koch, *Zulus*, 54–55).

and the like) led to possession manifestations in traditional settings, even a simple prayer could trigger such manifestations in Christian settings. Christians exorcised all spirits; traditional practitioners sought to get harmful spirits to leave but solicited information from those they considered beneficial. Traditional exorcists sought to torment the spirits, sometimes handling the patients roughly; Christians normally would command the spirit to leave until it complied.

Possession behavior, which was the same in both settings, sometimes included having immunity to pain and fire, rolling on the ground, acting like snakes or animals, or even moving up through a roof. In one case he noted in a Christian setting, a person who had descended several steps into a baptismal pool suddenly became violent and then slithered like a snake out of the pool (not using the steps). The church members then exorcised the spirit.¹⁶⁷

Whatever explanations one prefers (see discussion below), some exorcisms have a therapeutic effect.¹⁶⁸ Some systems that attribute everything to spirits appear to generate their own supply of possession and demand for deliverance;¹⁶⁹ nevertheless, serious cases of disturbance not manufactured by exorcists also appear. A boy in Indonesia, possessed after he was given an amulet by a witch doctor, terrorized the area, killing chickens. Even five men together could not restrain him, but evangelists cast the spirit from him, leading to his freedom.¹⁷⁰ Likewise, Marino Shed wandered around terrorizing people in Madolenihmw, Pohnpei Island, in the Pacific for two decades. Finally, Steve Malakai, a pastor on this island, and another believer cast the spirits from him. Now Marino, transformed, is loved by his community,¹⁷¹ and he is involved in a respectable profession.¹⁷² An Anglican minister in Southeast Asia, from a Buddhist background, notes that his sister was delivered from demon possession.¹⁷³

Ajith Fernando, a well-known Methodist Bible expositor, recounted to me that a woman who had found no deliverance from some local non-Christian exorcists in Sri Lanka was delivered in their church and has remained well since that time fifteen years ago.¹⁷⁴ In Nepal, non-Christian religious teachers sometimes refer cases of spirit

167. Jorum Mugari, discussion, March 27, 2010; personal correspondence, April 1, 2, 5, 2010. For a possessed person acting like a snake in a different African culture, see Koch, *Zulus*, 294 (in the context of snakes associated with sorcery, 294–95).

168. See, e.g., Ma, *Mission*, 67–68, offering two examples in the Philippines; earlier, cf. Ising, *Blumhardt*, 185.

169. See, e.g., the decline in possession when exorcism services became insufficient to meet the demand, in Csordas, *Language*, 38 (citing Ackerman, “Language”).

170. Filson, “Study,” 154; Indonesian exorcisms also appear in Crawford, *Miracles*, 62–65, 70–72. My friend John Lathrop shared with me a local account of exorcism, producing the person’s dramatic healing and conversion, that he heard while in Indonesia (personal correspondence, Dec. 11, 2008).

171. Bozarth, “Demons.” Steve Malakai had a similar impact on a young man named Andy Titirik (Cagle, “Happened”; Wayne Cagle, personal correspondence, Feb. 10, 2009).

172. Wayne Cagle, Jan. 25, 2009 (based on conversation with Marino several years earlier).

173. Green, *Asian Tigers*, 99. Anglicans in Southeast Asia value deliverance from the demonic as an important ministry (110–11).

174. Phone interview, Oct. 1, 2008; personal correspondence, March 13, 2009.

possession to Pentecostal churches for deliverance.¹⁷⁵ In another case, Nepali pastor Mina KC heard of three girls (Pramila, Rita, and Sunita) who, bound by a hostile spirit, were mute for three years.¹⁷⁶ They were released when she prayed for them, and the cure was so dramatic that “their whole village came to know Christ”; the three girls also began bringing others to Christ through their testimony.¹⁷⁷ A South African psychology professor, head of the Department of Industrial Psychology at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, explains his own former case of possession, with another personality controlling him and institutionalization proving ineffective, until his spontaneous exorcism by a Christian.¹⁷⁸

As noted in chapter 8, I had an opportunity, while briefly visiting a country in Asia before lecturing in another location in 2007, to talk with some Chinese pastors. Although these pastors were not charismatics or Pentecostals, when I spontaneously asked if any of them had firsthand accounts of healings, several offered exorcism accounts. For example, one eyewitness recounted that in 1994 a woman could not remember her identity and began having hallucinations. When the believers prayed, two spirits began speaking to them through the woman; the spirits threw her down before them, crying, “Please leave us! We can’t bear more about Jesus!” The spirits tried to negotiate conditions, finally settling on eating a meal through the woman. The possessed woman ate an inordinate amount of food, and then the spirits left, never returning.¹⁷⁹

Similarly, an elderly woman pastor mentioned a thirty-year-old woman with a psychological problem, to whom everything seemed unreal. Sometimes she felt pressed down on the floor; now she was pale, not having eaten for several days. Half an hour after the pastor’s prayer, casting out a demon in Jesus’s name, the woman felt ready to eat and was completely cured of her sickness. This was no merely temporary cure without the possibility of long-term verification; she is now the worship leader in the pastor’s church.¹⁸⁰

A sociologist reports the account of one Christian minister in Japan. A spirit had given a woman strikingly accurate precognition, but both her own spirit and a

175. Sharma, “History,” 304.

176. Mina KC, interview by John Lathrop, provided to me March 3, 2010.

177. Ibid.

178. Venter, *Healing*, 249–52, providing the written testimony of Robin Snelgar, his brother-in-law.

179. I was curious about the Christians allowing the negotiation and about the eating, but I simply recount the story that the man gave me. Jesus made one concession (Mark 5:12–13), but it seems not to have been to the spirits’ benefit (Mark 5:13). Claims of spirits requesting meals to eat through their hosts appear elsewhere (e.g., Turner, *Healers*, 115, following J. Boddy).

180. The pastor also offered another exorcism account involving a person whose parents practiced necromancy. This account included a sudden and extreme drop in temperature in the room to below freezing during the exorcism. Neither I nor my informant could understand the reason for this phenomenon. (Contrast the generation of heat in a form of Tibetan yoga, in Benson, *Healing*, 164, citing idem, “Temperature Changes.”) Some accounts do include a stench, as of a corpse, accompanying spirits (Eshleman, *Jesus*, 120). For another exorcism account from contemporary China, see Lambert, *Millions*, 116, and the mention of Christian nurses there who could readily distinguish demonization from mental illness, 117. For other accounts, see Yamamori and Chan, *Witnesses*, 47; Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 85.

shaman warned her that she would soon die unless she became a shaman herself. Wishing to avoid this destiny, she allowed the minister to pray for her. According to the minister's account, she collapsed with a shriek and unconsciously defied the minister in a man's voice, refusing to leave. He appealed to Jesus's name and for hours kept commanding the spirit to depart; during this time she even "levitated above her bed." Finally, however, she returned to normalcy, the spirit and her psychic abilities gone. She accepted the Christian faith and attended the church regularly after that.¹⁸¹

Some report even physical recoveries in connection with exorcism (see comments on spirits and sickness above).¹⁸² For example, witnesses attest the recovery after exorcism over the course of several days of a boy who had been near death.¹⁸³ In another account, a Zulu boy cursed by a witch doctor at the age of seven had not grown in the seven years since that time and acted like an animal. Shortly after exorcism, however, he recovered fully.¹⁸⁴ In Cuba, Eusbarina Acosta Estévez told me that years ago she was invoking other spirits and was too sick to walk. When two pastors prayed for her in 1988, she recounts, she fell to the ground and all the chairs around her were also thrown back by the force of the spirits coming out.¹⁸⁵ She was converted, and her severe heart and kidney malfunctions ended instantly. Likewise, Leonel Camejo Tazé experienced paranormal phenomena just before falling very sick for months; his deliverance from these spiritual forces shortly preceded his healing.¹⁸⁶

When visiting a Cameroonian student from our seminary, Paul Mokake, in summer 2006, Yolanda McCain, one of our American students, was shocked to witness a blind man's sight restored during exorcism of what purported to be a spirit partly controlling his nervous system.¹⁸⁷ Paul Mokake, who performed that exorcism, offered other sample accounts. Among them was the exorcism of a woman who was said to have spiritual power in her nails; when they were cut (as a way of renouncing the connections with the spirits), she became largely blind for two months, able to see only with special lenses. At the end of those two months, her sight returned, and she never again needed the lenses.¹⁸⁸

181. McClenon, *Events*, 144–45; idem, *Healing*, 59.

182. Daniel Mekonnen notes this in his ministry (phone interview, Dec. 10, 2009).

183. Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 47–49; they also note (59) the exorcism of a girl in north India.

184. Jackson, *Quest*, 256–57 (with further details; following Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 175–76). For another exorcism involving Wimber, see Venter, *Healing*, 126–27.

185. Eusbarina Acosta Estévez (interview, Aug. 7, 2010).

186. Interview (Aug. 11, 2010). He was nonreligious himself before his conversion; but his grandfather practiced Santería; phenomena that he reported included something invisible sitting by him, visibly indenting the mattress, and (later) a force grabbing his feet and chest.

187. It is difficult for me to conceive of a witness more trustworthy than Yolanda, who also conveyed the report with genuine astonishment. She reported this account orally in 2006 and confirmed it for me in writing Oct. 3, 2008; Paul confirmed this for me again on May 13, 2009. Both Yolanda and the person who performed the exorcism, Paul Mokake, are Baptist (I mention this to counter the possible prejudice that those who report such phenomena are only, say, Pentecostals, Catholics, or AICs).

188. Paul Mokake, interview, May 13, 2009. Ancient Israelites might have understood such conceptions better than modern Western readers; for an implied symbolic connection between a physical state (there apparently reflecting a Nazirite vow) and spiritual power, cf. possibly Judg 16:19–20.

Perspectives on Exorcisms

Current perspectives on exorcisms vary, including among those who doubt the reality of spirits.¹⁸⁹ Some argue that minority religious movements in regions, such as contextually relevant, indigenous Pentecostal Christianity in parts of India, may adapt elements of non-Christian indigenous exorcism forms in their competition with local traditional beliefs.¹⁹⁰ Whatever the particulars, Indian Pentecostalism,¹⁹¹ like African Pentecostalism,¹⁹² clearly appeals to people in a context of belief in the pervasive experience of oppression by spirits. Some affirm any neutral, "client-centered" therapy that "works within the belief structure of the patient";¹⁹³ others question the ethics of an approach that encourages a belief such as exorcism that the therapist rejects.¹⁹⁴ In one case, when a psychiatrist referred what he believed a possessed person to a minister, the minister refused to help, denying the reality of demons; the client "then became profoundly depressed and attempted suicide."¹⁹⁵ While false diagnosis of possession would surely exacerbate problems, failure to treat possession beliefs seriously also carries potential problems.

Some have argued that exorcism might constitute the most culturally sensitive therapy for those for whom possession is the most culturally intelligible explanation for their condition.¹⁹⁶ One psychiatrist has found exorcisms effec-

189. For its usefulness, Bull, "Model"; Bull et al., "Exorcism," 194 (on 191 noting eight with exclusively positive, and seven with partly positive, and none with fully negative experiences). Page, "Role," 129; idem, "Exorcism," 143, affirms exorcism but insists qualified medical help should identify whether the person is possessed; for arguments that the warnings contain overreactions, see, e.g., Wilson, "Possession"; cf. Beck and Lewis, "Counseling." Wilson, "Exorcism," addresses the use of shared language (whether "possession" or "psychological disorders"), noting that society shapes how it is viewed but that wide use of possession language would increase cases of "possession" (295; Wilson himself views it in sociological, not demonic, terms, 292–93).

190. The view of Bergunder, "Healing," 103–5; idem, *Movement*, 125–26, 155–58; cf. idem, "Miracle Healing," 292–94 (on demonology, but noting fundamental theological differences on 294–95); Csordas, "Global Perspective," 335, on Catholic exorcism in India; MacPhail, "Path," 187–99 (suggesting syncretism in Catholic *Jebakulam*, from an explicitly outsider perspective). In Brazil, cf. Lehmann, *Struggle*, 145, though highlighting important differences (esp. Pentecostals' demonization of possession cults' spirits, and the former having followers in contrast to the latter having clients). Cf. also comparisons of the function of prophets in AIC churches with traditional diviners (Oosthuizen, *Healer-Prophet*, 165–93, while recognizing differences, 166–70). In antiquity, too, exorcism could symbolize triumph over competing religious claims (see, e.g., Frankfurter, "Christianity and Paganism," 184; Trombley, "Paganism," 192).

191. See Frykenberg, "Globalization," 127. Bergunder, "Miracle Healing," 288, contends that Tamil Pentecostalism's demons are largely derived from popular Hinduism.

192. Maxwell, "Witches," 325. Pentecostal exorcism has displaced some traditional religions in some regions (326), just as many adherents of spirit-possession cults have now turned instead to Pentecostalism (Berger, "Women," 44, on women).

193. Bull et al., "Exorcism," 195, noting the large proportion of Christian clients who affirm the reality of spirits.

194. Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 184–85; cf. Ikeobi, "Healing," 66; zar therapy in Rahim, "Zar," 145–46.

195. McAll, "Deliverance," 298.

196. E.g., Martínez-Taboas, "Seizures" (after inability to change the patient's beliefs about possession, Martínez-Taboas, "World," 18; responding to Castro-Blanco, "Sensitivity," who prefers challenging "the utility of the belief in spiritual possession" [15]); Singleton, "Spirits," 478; Hexham, "Exorcism"; Heinze,

tive for multiple personality disorder (MPD; what he considers “internalized imaginary companions” conceptualized by patients as demons) but ineffective for altered personalities created by dissociation.¹⁹⁷ Others, by contrast, note differences from multiple personality disorder (now usually called dissociative identity disorder [DID]), contending that the spirit-possessed generally do not have alternate personalities,¹⁹⁸ and warn that misdiagnosing it as possession is harmful.¹⁹⁹ Not every therapist would necessarily explain or treat every case so labeled by others in the same way; I lack clinical expertise, but it appears that even most clinicians who allow for genuine cases of possession would recognize the disorder as existing apart from possession. Most would recognize that culture may shape the expression and labeling of conditions; some psychiatrists in India note that possession syndrome is common there (largely among women) whereas MPD/DID is rarely diagnosed there. They suggest that these are “parallel dissociative disorders with similar etiologies despite some major differences in clinical profiles.”²⁰⁰

Some sociologists studying routine “deliverance” services have suggested that some cases involve more metaphoric issues²⁰¹ but note that even full exorcism sometimes helps those “suffering from psychologically induced traumas.”²⁰² Indeed, one anthropologist specializing in the study of spirit possession points out

“Introduction,” 14 (as a helpful fiction allowing the experience of multiple personality disorder to be objectified); cf. Ashkanani, “Zar,” 225 (some Kuwaitis more receptive to *zar* therapy than modern therapies). Krippner, “Perspectives,” 972, emphasizes that understandings will vary from one culture to another and Western therapists need to be culturally sensitive. For one case of treatment blending psychiatric help with traditional practices, see Hammerschlag, “Offering.”

197. Allison, “Doubt,” 116, 119. Initially he denied genuine spirits (110) but gradually discovered that exorcism worked, though he did not fully believe in it (110–13); he offers examples of successful exorcisms on 116–19. Many psychiatrists believe that the other personality is purely human (cf. discussion in Betty, “Evidence,” 23); others (below) suggest that cases might differ, since causes might differ. Cf. the discussion in Leshar, “Response,” 168–72.

198. Eve, *Healer*, 64 (following Davies, *Healer*, 86–89); Bourguignon, *Possession*, 38–39.

199. Friesen, *Mystery* (who does believe that genuine possession also occurs), as summarized in Hoffman and Kurzenberger, “Miraculous,” 78. Cf. Young, “Miracles in History,” 118, affirming that cases of genuine possession exist but warning that often exorcists are misdiagnosing psychological disorders.

200. Adityanjee, Raju, and Khandelwal, “Status,” 1609–10 (quote from 1610), as quoted in Davies, *Healer*, 87. Whereas DID is more often linked with child sexual abuse, in anthropological literature possession more often appears in contexts of current family problems (Davies, *Healer*, 88, noting that these circumstances naturally often overlap). Davies (89) associates Mary Magdalene’s condition more with DID than with anthropological possession reports, since the latter usually lack the appearance of multiple personalities (Luke 8:2; later, Mark 16:9).

201. Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 155, for cases in Thailand and especially Brazil (contrasting “curses” with actual “spirit possession” and giving an example of an experience of child abuse dominating one’s life). For older exorcism accounts from local physicians in Siam (Thailand), see Oesterreich, *Possession*, 217–18.

202. Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 156, suggesting that it is “at least as effective as some forms of Western psychotherapy, which, when spontaneous remission is excluded, have relatively low cure rates.” Whatever one’s view about this, they suggest that deliverance either is a “form of psychotherapy” significantly effective beyond Western models or that it is at least sometimes genuinely effects a spiritual deliverance (156–57). They believe that it also has positive long-range economic effects (170).

that only exorcism works as a strategy for removing possession.²⁰³ Some Western observers, writing for *African Affairs*, lament the failure of more traditional churches to provide the exorcisms needed to confront the epidemics of spirit possession in some African societies.²⁰⁴ Some others appreciate healthy, cathartic aspects of exorcism in some African indigenous churches²⁰⁵ while warning that their exorcistic practice can at times reinforce unhealthy aspects of traditional worldviews.²⁰⁶ Some observers attribute this effectiveness to the placebo effect.²⁰⁷ This verdict presumably would be accurate for psychological disorders socially defined as possession but would equally presumably prove insufficient in cases of genuine spirits.

Several examples help make these generalizations more concrete. One girl in Nigeria, tormented day and night by spirits and unable to improve through a psychiatrist, was freed through the help of an indigenous healing movement.²⁰⁸ Immediate cures of severe psychiatric disorders attributed to spirits are reported in India.²⁰⁹ (Of course, exorcisms do not always resolve all problems, either.²¹⁰) One may also recall many of the accounts offered above.

203. Goodman, *Demons*, 125; for the effectiveness of exorcism in particular kinds of cases, see also Shorter, "Possession and Healing," 51; Allison, "Doubt"; Lagerwerf, *Witchcraft*, 55–56. For one story of an effective deliverance of an early twentieth-century man detained in an asylum, see John Lake's diary, cited in Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 64–65; for a mid-twentieth-century doctor's claims of exorcisms successfully resolving what appeared to be neurological problems, see Woodard, *Faith*, 24–29. Some witch doctors have complained that other witch doctors cheat by merely bargaining with witches to remove curses (Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, 195, skeptically).

204. Haar and Ellis, "Possession," 205–6 (favoring Emmanuel Milingo's approach, while archbishop, over that of other elements of the Zambian church hierarchy).

205. Daneel, "Exorcism," 239–41 (positive features more generally on 237–45).

206. See Daneel, "Exorcism," 243–44 (the fowl's blood and other symbols evoking older traditions). Newell, "Witchcraft," contends that much of the structure of African witchcraft ideology has been imported in local Pentecostal witchcraft polemic.

207. Ward, "Exorcism," 134–37. For the influence of a culture's beliefs on traditional exorcism's effectiveness, see also Wetering, "Effectiveness."

208. Ejizu, "Exorcism," 14 (on the girl's experience with the Christ Healing Sabbath Church), noting that "her case is one out of so many hundreds" (this article also appears in Ejizu, "Perspective"). Among African immigrants in Germany, see Währisch-Oblau, "Healthy," 92.

209. See Bergunder, *Movement*, 162, 164, though he warns on 151 that diagnoses probably attribute too much to demons; see one early Pentecostal example in Kucera, "South India"; exorcism in Marszałek, *Miracles*, 34–35. Some have portrayed the spirits as those of repressed deceased humans (Selvanayagam, "Demons"; Bergunder, "Miracle Healing," 288; on possession as a form of Dalit protest, cf. Tajkumar, "Reading"; spirits of the deceased in Korean Pentecostalism, Kim, "Healing," 281; earlier, a case in Ising, *Blumhardt*, 109, 178), but I am relatively sure that the majority Pentecostal perspective globally would involve demons who were not deceased humans.

210. Some late medieval exorcists blamed their failures on the victim's pact with the devil (Goddu, "Failure," 2; for earlier accounts of difficulties, though rarely explicit failures, in exorcism, see 7). For a survey of some medieval German accounts of exorcism and Satan, see Nauman, "Exorcism," 73–85; other medieval accounts, Caesar of Heisterbach, "Encounters"; Keller, "Glimpses," 266–75; Catholic accounts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Robbins, "Exorcism," 204–15; for Jewish accounts from the 1500s forward, see, e.g., Lieberman, "Dybbuk," 101–4; on the golem, Lieberman, "Golem." Contrary to some earlier portrayals, however, modern scholars usually doubt that medieval Europe viewed all mental disorders as demonization (Kemp, "Ravished," 67, 76–77).

Interpreting Spirit Possession

The matter of interpreting possession experiences is a question distinct from reporting them,²¹¹ but even here we should note that a traditional modern Western reading, which is naturally materialistic, is not the only possible interpretation, nor do even modern Western interpreters all share precisely the same interpretive framework.²¹² As one anthropologist notes, worldviews, including those of anthropologists, offer grids to “introduce order” to our data; “as our frameworks shift, our creation and use of data shifts.”²¹³ The approaches of anthropologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and indigenous interpreters often vary considerably from one another.²¹⁴

Natural Elements and Western Academic Explanations

In 1871, E. B. Tylor recognized that most cultures still held possession to be the main cause of inspiration and sickness. Nevertheless, he held that this interpretation was simply a necessary stage in the development of religion, eventually supplanted by medical knowledge.²¹⁵ In 1971, M. J. Herskovits took possession seriously but regarded it as unexplained; mere psychopathological explanations, however, he viewed as inadequate.²¹⁶ Some interpreters who lack a commitment to purely materialistic worldviews are more apt to allow that, once spurious and psychopathological cases are removed, some cases of genuine possession by invasive entities do occur, as suggested by cross-cultural, consistent motor behavior.²¹⁷

211. Thus, e.g., Smith, *Magician*, 9, reports his own eyewitness encounter with possession behavior but does not genuinely regard it as involving a spirit. Cf. similarly Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 47, of his own “possession” state. For the range of interpretations, see also Keener, “Possession,” 227–31.

212. “Modern Western” might need to be defined. Joseph Glanvill, for example, a leader in early moderate empiricism, warned that open-minded science ought to recognize rather than disparage evidence for witchcraft and spirits (Burns, *Debate*, 49–50), and Robert Boyle (father of chemistry) agreed with him (51). Deists like Toland expressly demurred (75).

213. Silverman, “Ambiguation,” 228 (see also 204). On presuppositions in social sciences, see also Murphy, “Social Science,” 33–37.

214. E.g., Wendl, “Slavery,” 120, criticizes psychoanalytic (Crapanzano), sociological (Lewis), and feminist approaches for imposing grids instead of analyzing indigenous functions for possession experience.

215. Tippet, “Possession,” 144. His interpretation seems to fit the evolution of religion paradigm dominant in that era. Even half a century later, Henson, *Notes*, 140, viewed exorcism as sometimes useful, but only as “a suggestive fiction adapted to” the “ignorant superstition” of “primitive societies” (on 140–42 noting that Hickson’s successful use of it occurred esp. among peoples whom Henson deemed primitive).

216. Herskovits, *Life*, 147–48 (as summarized in Tippet, “Possession,” 146). Social context often determines whether possession is perceived as pathological (Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 14–16). Johnson, “Model,” 19–30, contends that the dissociation involved in shamanism is useful rather than pathological, the pathological model imposing a Western cultural construal of shamanistic cultures as pathological; researchers in shamanism today normally reject the pathological model (Walsh, *Shamanism*, 8, 93–99; Hoffman and Kurzenberger, “Miraculous,” 85). Note Hood and Byrom, “Mysticism,” 174 on the diverse psychological and religious evaluations of mysticism.

217. Tippet, “Possession,” 147–48. I use “materialistic” for “matter” in the ordinary sense (e.g., distinct from energy); one could allow for superhuman beings that were “material” as part of the natural order.

Aspects of some concretely documented forms of possession experience are not limited to states indigenously interpreted as possession. Various “secular” stimuli not normally connected with possession can induce trance states in normal people.²¹⁸ Dissociation and altered states of consciousness (ASC) are universal phenomena, but interpretations vary:²¹⁹ the primary mystical interpretations (though not all are mystical) are soul loss and spirit possession.²²⁰ Further, a range of altered states of consciousness exists, from rapid eye movement to a trance state to “possession trance linked to impersonation behavior.”²²¹ Others have pointed to neurological parallels in psychomotor epilepsy,²²² sleepwalking,²²³ and hysterical fugue states.²²⁴ Studies have shown that people (as well as dogs) experiencing an overload of stresses (among humans, e.g., battle fatigue) may experience a collapse of their nervous systems; an induced collapse may in fact relieve stresses and aid mental health.²²⁵ Some have

218. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 39. This may be described as “mental dissociation” (44); but not all “possession” involves trance, so the two should not be identified (45). Possession is not inherently “mentally dissociated” but is a particular cultural construction of the person’s state in terms of an invasive spirit (46; cf. Bourguignon, *Possession*, 7). Thirty-five percent of people in the United States claim to have felt a force lift them outside themselves, 12 percent reporting “several times” and 5 percent often (Swanson, “Trance,” 273).

219. Worldview affects dissociation’s description in various societies, though the degree of acculturation is often a common factor (Maquet, “Shaman,” 3; Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 11–16, 46–47, 50; Frey and Roysircar, “Acculturation and Worldview,” citing other studies, most relevantly Castillo, “Possession”; Hollan, “Culture”; Krippner, “Disorders”; Leavitt, “Trance”; Prince, “Variations”; Schumaker, “Suggestibility”; Sadowsky and Lai, “Variables”; for variations in posttraumatic stress responses, Marsella et al., “Aspects”; Oquendo, Horwath, and Martinez, “Ataques”). Lack of suggestibility may render “possession” difficult (cases in Last, “Bori,” 52–53). For common features through history and in diverse societies, see McClenon, *Events*, 36–56; idem, *Healing*, 60; McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 47–48 (citing further McClenon, “Shamanic Healing”; allegedly in Paleolithic art in Lewis-Williams and Dawson, “Signs”); even animals can be susceptible to hypnotic experiences (McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 48, citing McClenon, *Healing*; on common characteristics of “mammalian consciousness,” Hobson, *Chemistry*).

220. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 64.

221. Bourguignon, “Introduction,” 14; cf. also examples in Finkler, “Religion,” 52; Johnson, “Neuro-theology,” 223.

222. Prince, “EEG,” 122–24. For studies linking temporal lobe epilepsy with religious experiences (due to the temporal lobe’s association with such experiences), see McClenon, *Healing*, 90. Some traditional African culture attributes epilepsy to spirits of ancestors (Gaiser, *Healing*, 139). It should be noted that some medieval Christian writers distinguished possession from epilepsy (Kemp, “Ravished,” 74). Some could attribute epilepsy, as illness more generally, to demonic sources (e.g., Aramaic Incantation Text 53:12; cf. Yamauchi, “Magic,” 100–113); by contrast, however, Matthew distinguishes the two in Matt 4:24 (cf. Alexander, *Possession*, 32, 63; Gaiser, *Healing*, 138), though demonization apparently causes this condition in the specific case of 17:15, 18. The term he uses did have a broader usage than epilepsy alone (cf. Ross, “Epileptic”; Yamauchi, “Magic,” 129). Dr. John Wilkinson, noting that physiological factors are sometimes, but not always, identifiable, allows that a spirit could be a cause in some cases but not in others (*Healing*, 73).

223. Prince, “EEG,” 124–25; cf. Field, “Possession,” 4–5. Cf. the Haitian association of sleep talking with possession (Bourguignon, “Self,” 50, 56). Obeyesekere, “Idiom,” 108, compares “hypnotic sleep” to aspects of possession; but while lucid dreams appear especially during REM sleep (LaBerge and Gackenbach, “Dreaming,” 158–60; brain patterns in REM sleep resemble waking—Greenfield, *Spirits*, 186), McClenon distinguishes brain activity during hypnosis from REM sleep (McClenon, *Healing*, 88).

224. Prince, “EEG,” 125–27. Herbert Benson likewise offers a range of experiences comparable to meditation/relaxation, including athletic euphoria (*Healing*, 137–38, 167).

225. Prince, “EEG,” 129–30. (Against Sargent, he thinks [130, 132] the convulsions during Wesley’s preaching on June 15, 1739, represent suggestion rather than emotional collapse. White, *Spirit*, 181, notes

pointed to experiential parallels with hypnosis (at the least, both shamanism and hypnosis involve trance states, or altered states of consciousness).²²⁶ Hallucinogenic drugs can also induce altered states of consciousness.²²⁷

Neurophysiological studies do not ultimately address the possibility of invasive spirits but do help explain the human neurological side of possession behavior. Societies that believe in spirit possession could naturally expect the activity of such spirits on the human nervous system to often produce results no less traumatic than other stimuli; likewise, they could believe that neurophysiological stimuli that produce susceptibility to suggestion or harsher stresses might well also render a person more susceptible to the activity of invasive spirits.²²⁸ Such studies need not rule out the possibility of other factors in various cases but may help us understand how many forms of possession experience function neurologically.²²⁹

Some have linked possession experience to social frameworks (an explanatory paradigm that need not be incongruent with some others);²³⁰ this approach has also been applied to Jesus's setting.²³¹ Increase in occurrences of possession often

that Wesley expected such emotional expressions as works of the Spirit, and some occurred, in a more restrained fashion, in Whitefield's meetings.) Drumbeats at the right intervals, like photic driving, can produce emotional and neurological shifts (Prince, "EEG," 133–34).

226. Cardena, "Hypnosis," 290 (observing "similarities between shamanism and deep hypnotic phenomena" in 292–99; on possible genetic factors in the predisposition to hypnotizability, see 293). In general, the most hypnotizable 10 percent of people (those most prone to dissociative states) are six times more prone to anomalous experiences than the least hypnotizable 10 percent (Pekala and Cardena, "Issues," 71). Some studies also associate past life memories with hypnotizability (Spanos, "Enactments"; idem, "Identities," as cited in Mills and Lynn, "Experiences," 287); such memories also appear culturally shaped (e.g., the likelihood of gender change from a past life varies widely based on cultural attitudes; Mills and Lynn, "Experiences," 292; Mills, "Investigation," 244 [though Mills herself believes that reincarnation best explains some data, 263]; cf. the cultural variations in reincarnation as males or females [243] or the gap between death and reincarnation [245]).

227. Cf. Pinkson, "Pilgrimage," 165, for an ASC through LSD; for hallucinogens and shamans, see Metzner, "Hallucinogens," 170–75; for experiences of "evil entities" through drugs, see Grof, "Potential," 141–42; for religious experiences and drugs, see Roberts, "Contributions," 244–46, 258; idem, "Study"; Hood, "Mysticism," 33; in some Amazonian indigenous practices, Tupper, "Healing." Some have argued for drug use at ancient Eleusis (Ruck, "Solving," 48–50), but this approach has faced serious challenges (Burkert, *Mystery Cults*, 108–9; Klauck, *Context*, 96).

228. While familiarity with local traditions of possession offer the primary factor for it in one study in Trinidad, stress or emotional conflict provide the immediate trigger (Ward and Beaubrun, "Psychodynamics," 206); stress being a precipitating factor appears in numerous studies (cited by Ward and Beaubrun, "Psychodynamics," 206), e.g., Douyon, "Lexamen"; Freed and Freed, "Possession"; Leiris, *Possession*; Pressel, "Trance"; Warner, "Witchcraft." Case #2 in Ward and Beaubrun, "Psychodynamics," 203, lends itself especially readily to psychological explanations (at the least in terms of susceptibility). Some exorcisms probably prove effective by correcting hysterical disorders (Instone-Brewer, "Psychiatrists," 134–35), although this explanation proves inadequate for some of the phenomena recorded in the NT and other sources (see the analysis by Instone-Brewer, "Psychiatrists," 135–40).

229. The presence of physiological elements in anomalous experience, as well as its frequency in a range of unrelated cultures, clearly shows that purely cultural explanations are often inadequate (McClenon and Nooney, "Experiences," 47).

230. E.g., Prince, "Possession Cults."

231. Cf., e.g., Hollenbach, "Demoniacs"; Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 318. While affirming anthropological observations regarding intrafamily conflicts and possession (Davies, *Healer*, 81–84), Davies

accompany dramatic changes in society.²³² Even in the nineteenth century, observers noted that “cases of possession are less frequent in peaceful times, and more frequent in times of civil commotion; also less frequent in prosperous families” and “among educated people.”²³³ Possession without a trance is more common in hunter-gatherer societies; increasing societal stratification and complexity increases the likelihood of added trance states.²³⁴ Some others have also concurred that it appears more commonly in stratified slave societies.²³⁵ Some societies use trances under controlled, ritualized situations; when society becomes uncontrolled, the instability creates crisis for the individual and his or her surroundings.²³⁶ (Shamanic rituals involve the group, in contrast to usual Western medical practice focused on the individual in isolation.²³⁷) In at least some cases, people are socialized into the role of possession; certainly their behavior was often structured according to expectations.²³⁸ (Thus, for example, some Haitian parents have encouraged

views Hollenbach's approach (emphasizing a sociological response to pervasive Roman oppression) as “preposterous” in view of the Galilean context (79–80). In any case, sociological factors seem to influence susceptibility but do not by themselves appear adequate to explain the phenomena surrounding the more anomalous cases (i.e., it appears reductionist to appeal solely to such factors).

232. See Wetering, “Effectiveness.” Cf. also the increase in witchcraft and anti-witchcraft movements, e.g., in Li, “Abirewa.”

233. Nevius, *Possession*, 58. For their greater frequency among the uneducated, see Field, “Possession,” 4; Oesterreich, *Possession*, 99, 121, 165, 203, 205.

234. Bourguignon, “Spirit Possession Belief,” 22. In “Introduction,” 22, she notes that it is more common in stratified slave societies but on 23 thinks that rigidity also affects its occurrence (on 31, 33, relating possession behavior to release from societal strictures without changing the strictures). The data do not seem to fit readily a single consistent model, and correlation might reflect common factors rather than causation; but they might also reveal some conditions most conducive to possession states. In some settings, some trance states might perform a cathartic function (though Prince, “Foreword,” xiii, warns that this approach fails to account for societies where the healer rather than the patient “becomes dissociated”). When working among highly marginalized people living on the street years ago, I also observed a much higher than usual incidence of dissociative states (sometimes with explicit possession claims), though whether social marginalization helped produce the state or whether the state led to marginalization (as it inevitably would; more generally, federal cuts in assistance for the mentally ill did increase homelessness, hence our contacts) I am not qualified to guess.

235. Greenbaum, “Societal Correlates,” 54; idem, “Possession Trance,” 84; for emphasis on demonology in periods of “social oppression and loss of social integration” (Pattison, “Interpretations,” 217).

236. Bourguignon, “Assessment,” 339; for the stress of social change and possession in one African society, see, e.g., Stoller, “Change”; in another, Smith, “Possession,” 452–53 (the informants claimed that unemployment led to the spirits not being fed, hence protesting through schoolgirls). Cf. the relation to ferment in sixteenth-century cases suggested in Sluhovsky, “Apparition,” 1053. But mediums initially uncontrollably possessed may learn to control the impulses (Horton, “Possession,” 36, 41; Verger, “Trance,” 51), though this varies (cf. Berenbaum, Kerns, and Raghavan, “Experiences,” 30).

237. Kasten, “Shamanism,” 68.

238. See, e.g., some of the examples in Spanos, “Hypnosis,” 103–8 (e.g., on 108, demonized Catholics denouncing the pope and praising Calvin, whereas demonized Puritans avoided Calvin but read Catholic and other non-Puritan texts; on anti-Huguenot exploitation of Catholic possession, see also Walker, “Propaganda,” 285–94; Walker and Dickerman, “Woman,” 550–51). That public, ritual expressions of possession differ from private cases also suggests frequent performance according to expectations in such cases (Lee, “Self-Presentation,” 251–52); similarly, conformity to anticipated behavioral patterns can enhance a medium's credibility (Lee, “Self-Presentation,” 257). For the possibility of adopting “roles” informed by beliefs about the devil, see discussion in Wikstrom, “Possession,” 32–33 (noting that possession includes a religious interpretation system).

children adopting new roles and playing at spirit possession as a sort of game.²³⁹) Social contexts also provide the shared vocabulary for articulating the experiences.²⁴⁰

Including ecstatic Christian experiences in her analysis, Bourguignon suggests that possession trance is most common among the more marginalized members of a society; groups that once experienced it, such as early Methodists,²⁴¹ that have now become respectable are far less likely to display it.²⁴² It often appears among those marginalized from other means of power in their society,²⁴³ especially women,²⁴⁴ although this pattern varies from one society to another.²⁴⁵

239. Bourguignon, "Self," 48.

240. Lee, "Self-Presentation," 251.

241. On revelatory claims among early Methodists, see, e.g., Noll, *Shape*, 46; for popular "enthusiasm" among them, see, e.g., Wigger, *Saint*, 58–59, 78, 81–83, 166–67, 170, 307, 311–12, 320, 322. Marginalized Christian groups experiencing such phenomena (cf., e.g., Ghanaian "Holy Spirit" movements in Field, "Possession," 9–10) could view it as God's favor toward the marginalized (cf. healings in Chevreau, *Turnings*, 16–17; Jesus's healings in Percy, "Miracles," 13–14). Lewis, *Healing*, 293, notes that most of the charismatic participants in his study on healings were middle-class professionals and that many did experience some ecstatic phenomena like "shaking or falling over." But he also observes (268) that healings seem to have occurred more often among those of "lower social classes" present, suggesting perhaps divine bias for the weak. In Zambia those self-reporting possession included many educated, urban professionals (Haar and Ellis, "Possession," 189, 191, 195, though mentioning the influence of national poverty on 202); cultural factors may be involved in the varied acceptability of such diagnoses.

242. Bourguignon, "Epilogue," 342–43. Bourguignon, *Possession*, 55–58, compares other ecstatic phenomena in the history of U.S. revivals and contemporary Christian movements in North America and (56–57) attributes the more subdued ecstasy of middle-class charismatics vis-à-vis many other groups to their respective social status. Csordas, *Self*, 32, compares "resting in the Spirit" among charismatic Catholics; Haar and Platvoet, "Bezetenheid," compare Milingo's exorcism ministry. Barnett, "Answer," 280, compares a traditional spirit trance with "similar seizures at evangelistic revival meetings."

243. Lewis, "Possession," 189–90; Sharp, "Power of Possession," 4; cf. Rahim, "Zar," 138–45; Morsy, "Possession," 204–5. Some explain some Pentecostal activity in these terms (cf. discussion in Alexander, "Ritual").

244. Kessler, "Conflict," 301–2; Berger, "Women," 41, 55; Shorter, "Spirit Possession," 115 (cf. 119); Obeyesekere, "Idiom," 103; Horton, "Possession," 41–42; Colson, "Possession," 90–92, 99–100; Lee, "Possession," 143–44, 150–51, 154; Southall, "Possession," 244; Abdalla, "Friend," 41, 44; Last, "Bori," 58–59; Hammond-Tooke, "Aetiology," 57; Oosthuizen, *Healer-Prophet*, 88; Midelfort, "Possession," 124 (in the period 1490–1579, though not the following period); Sluhovsky, "Apparition" (1054–55, on Nicole Obry as well as others, 1565–66); Walker and Dickerman, "Woman," 539, 554; Stirrat, "Possession," 138, 151 (80 percent; of these, 70 percent are adolescents or in "early maturity"), 154; Oesterreich, *Possession*, 121; Giles, "Spirits," 77; Sousa, "Women"; Kenyon, "Case"; cf. Chandra shekar, "Possession Syndrome," 85 (surveying several approaches); Gray, "Cult," 171; Lewis, "Possession," 216–17; idem, "Introduction," 5; idem, "Deprivation Cults," 313–25; Constantinides, "Zar," 89; Ashkanani, "Zar," 228–29; probably even among Greeks, in Kraemer, "Ecstasy"; varied evidence in Haar and Ellis, "Possession," 193–95. Wilson, "Ambiguity," 366, suggests that the tension in these cases more often involves other women rather than other men (e.g., 370, when the husband is acquiring an additional wife); but Lewis, "Spirits and Sex War," 627, thinks this less clear. On spirit possession and gender, note the survey in Behrend and Luig, "Introduction," xvii–xviii. Among Christians, women outnumber men among participants in Catholic charismatic prayer groups, although their experiences were comparable (Csordas, *Self*, 31–32); also among Zulu faith healers (Crawford and Lipsedge, "Help," 138). Likewise, they account for the majority of cures at Lourdes (three to one), but this is in proportion to their participation in pilgrimage there (Cranston, *Miracle*, 154; for examples, see 247–58; for notable men, see, e.g., names on 137).

245. E.g., in one study of the Azande, women rarely became witch doctors (Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, 155–56); a masculine cult in Mali conceptualized as defending against feminine witchcraft in Colley,

Perhaps often because of this marginalization, possession behavior sometimes can gain desires otherwise inappropriate to express.²⁴⁶ Possession trance may provide a socially sanctioned outlet for aggression where other such outlets are lacking²⁴⁷ and has historically been exploited to target enemies.²⁴⁸ Claims of possession can reduce guilt by projecting it on the invasive spirit;²⁴⁹ in some societies, possession can generate more sympathy than acknowledgment of mental illness would, inviting some mentally ill persons to "seek shelter" under this diagnosis.²⁵⁰ Because spirit possession and exorcisms fulfill a sociological function, some factors supposed to abolish such practices (such as urbanization or Western education) do not always do so.²⁵¹ Others, however, warn about the ideological underpinnings of the deprivation hypothesis about possession.²⁵² Moreover, many studies have overplayed the social benefits of possession to the possessed at the expense of noting the problems it causes them.²⁵³

"Horse," 72; mixed data on witches' gender in Crawford and Lipsedge, "Help," 134; more traditional Sukuma spirit mediums are male (Tanner, "Theory," 274) but the possessed patients female (Tanner, "Theory," 281). Pre-Islamic Hausa women played a stronger role in healing rituals than they do today (Abdalla, "Friend," 40–41). Morsy, "Possession," 208, argues that societies that allow women to express resistance through possession continue to subordinate them.

246. Successful, e.g., in Chandra shekar, "Possession Syndrome," 88, 91; Bourguignon, "Self," 50, 53; cf. Ward, "Possession," 130–32; Sharp, "Power of Possession," 4; Eve, *Healer*, 67. In the *zar* cult, the genie usually asks for something the adolescent has been wanting anyway, so it provides a safe outlet for expressing feelings (Modarressi, "Zar Cult," 154–55; cf. Lewis, "Possession," 201–4, 210–12, 216–17; Southall, "Possession," 243); elsewhere, possession may yield less pleasant eruptions "of forbidden impulses" (Ludwig, "Altered States," 86) or can express "frustrated love and passion" (Lewis, "Deprivation Cult," 315–16) or supposed neglect (Lewis, "Deprivation Cult," 317–18; cf. perfumes, etc., to compensate for a husband taking another wife, Wilson, "Ambiguity," 370); a culturally accepted outlet for relieving frustration (Beauvoir, "Herbs," 129). The spirits in Abdalla, "Friend," 39, demand special treatment for their mount. A "trance attack" or possession in India is described as "essentially a culturally sanctioned mechanism" (Raguraman et al., "Presentation").

247. This has been proposed, e.g., for women in Samoan society (Lazar, "Aggression") and in Sri Lanka (Obeyesekere, "Idiom," 104–5).

248. Kreiser, "Devils," 71–73 (though the civil courts disregarded the charges as unproved, 83–84); cf. also anti-Jewish (Walker, "Propaganda," 284–85) and anti-Huguenot and other anti-Protestant use of exorcisms (Walker, "Propaganda," 285–94; Walker and Dickerman, "Woman," 550–51).

249. Ward and Beaubrun, "Possession," 201. From the descriptions in the article (esp. case #2 on p. 203), the psychological explanations appear more persuasive than others in these cases.

250. Chandra shekar, "Possession Syndrome," 92.

251. Jacobs, "Possession," 186–87 (focusing on two East African cultures); Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 179; Makris and Al-Safi, "Spirit Possession Cult," 118; Emmons, *Ghosts*, 191; Behrend and Luig, "Introduction," xiii–xiv; healing practices, Jules-Rosette, "Healers," 127–29; for shamanism in Korean cities, see Hard, "Animism"; for the pervasiveness of spirits in pre-Christian Korean life, see Kim, "Healing," 269–70. Likewise, witchcraft remains a significant problem in South Africa, not resolved by political freedom (Bähre, "Witchcraft," 300, 329). Still, a comparison of the few (three) epidemiological studies cited in Chandra shekar, "Possession Syndrome," 80–81, could suggest that it is more prevalent in rural than semi-urban areas. Cf. the unanticipated failure of modernity to eradicate religion in Cladis, "Modernity"; Butler, "Theory"; Haught, *Atheism*, 58–59.

252. Binsbergen, *Change*, 86–87 (cf. 24–25, 77–86). Wilson, "Ambiguity," 377, suggests that the jeopardization or ambiguity of status is more precise than general "deprivation" or marginality.

253. See Hayes, "Limits."

Diverse Approaches

Diverse cultures offer an array of different interpretive matrixes for these experiences,²⁵⁴ although their experiences do produce some similar beliefs even in a number of very different societies.²⁵⁵ Some societies employ naturalistic explanations for possession trance; others, supernaturalist ones.²⁵⁶ Naturalist expectations are more common in the West²⁵⁷ but occasionally appear elsewhere;²⁵⁸ supernaturalist explanations include soul absence²⁵⁹ or the presence of a spirit.²⁶⁰ Some observers warn that “natural” interpretations are unlikely to be credible in much of Africa, where “nature” is never autonomous.²⁶¹

Likewise, both voluntary and involuntary possession states could exist;²⁶² sometimes they coexist in the same culture (e.g., voluntary for the shaman and “hysterical” for the patient),²⁶³ and various anomalous experiences may shift from voluntary to involuntary or the reverse.²⁶⁴ Cultures that believe in possession by a spirit are more likely to generate more cases of the phenomenon so interpreted.²⁶⁵ Evaluations of trance behavior can be positive or negative,²⁶⁶ and the explanatory

254. See, e.g., Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 44; cf. also Maquet, “Shaman,” 3; Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 11–16, 46–47, 50. Deprivation theories often are reductionist (cf. Hunt, “Sociology,” 183–84).

255. McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 47.

256. Bourguignon, “Distribution,” 4–11; Pattison, “Interpretations,” 205–6. Technically, one might better speak of material and nonhuman-but-personal explanations (in the biblical worldview, for example, such spirits are not supernatural, though they are not material in any traditional sense).

257. E.g., many offer psychological explanations, such as the emergence of repressed subconscious thoughts (e.g., Singleton, “Spirits,” 475); certainly this appears to be the case in some instances (see, e.g., Lewis, “Possession,” 201–3, regarding suppressed erotic desire; cf. guilt in Ferchiou, “Possession Cults,” 215–17). Cf. the naturalistic discussion of one semi-naturalistic practitioner of altered states of consciousness in Zusne, “States.”

258. Bourguignon, “Distribution,” 6. Ivey, “Discourses,” finds evil and possession to be useful metaphors; he explains the basis as an internal “splitting,” a defense mechanism (56), which causes the destructive “spirit” to function “as an autonomous suborganisation of the psyche,” projected onto the mythical demon (57; some view religion more generally as a defense mechanism; see Spiro, “Systems”). But Ivey, “Discourses,” follows Freud in regarding psychoanalytic language as itself no less “mythical” than the older demonic terminology; it is simply a different construction of reality (58–59); Pattison, “Interpretations,” 217, treats “psychoanalytic psychotherapy” as a secular form of “exorcism” (for an analogous understanding of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Mesmerism, see Spanos and Gottlieb, “Possession”); Kauffman, “Representations,” 157, questions the idea that psychotherapy is a simple “successor” of exorcism. For one attempt to borrow Jungian language for the demonic, see Cook, “Manticores,” 165–74.

259. Bourguignon, “Distribution,” 7–9.

260. *Ibid.*, 9–12.

261. Harries, “Nature,” 404, noting that the experience in Africa is typically associated with the divine (or, one might add, the realm of spirits). For one African view, see Kapolyo, *Condition*, 56, 103–4.

262. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 64.

263. Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 147–48; see also Basso, “Music.”

264. Berenbaum, Kerns, and Raghavan, “Experiences,” 30.

265. Kemp, “Ravished,” 75; cf. also the prognosis for Western churches accepting the diagnosis in Wilson, “Exorcism,” 295.

266. Bourguignon, “Distribution,” 6–7, 13–15. Thus some societies seek possession whereas others seek deliverance from it (Bourguignon, “Self,” 42–43). Some societies have trance without possession; others possession without trance; and still others, possession trance (Bourguignon, “Distribution,” 18; *idem*, “Spirit Possession Belief,” 21–22).

systems attached to trance behavior inevitably affect the behavior.²⁶⁷ Some peoples, for example, regard spirit affliction as a danger caused by an ancestor spirit;²⁶⁸ possession by deceased relatives is one of the most common conceptualizations of spirit possession.²⁶⁹ Not all peoples, however, view ancestor spirits as malevolent or dangerous.²⁷⁰

267. Bourguignon, "Distribution," 12. Popular literature also suggests culturally defined conduits for possession behavior, such as the "werewolf" in Argentina (see Bottari, *Free*, 30–31; such zooanthropy reflects an older belief documented in the Middle Ages, Oesterreich, *Possession*, 191; it appears in various settings today, Berenbaum, Kerns, and Raghavan, "Experiences," 31). Ancients also believed that witches could turn themselves or sometimes others (as in Homer's Circe) into animals (Ovid *Am.* 1.8.13–14; Apuleius *Metam.* 1.9; 2.1, 5, 30; 3.21–25; 6.22; Ps.-Callisth. *Alex.* 1.10; Libanius *Encomium* 2.18; cf. Blackburn, "ΑΝΔΡΕΣ," 190, 193); for the belief today, especially for turning themselves into animals, see also West, *Sorcery*, 20; Oesterreich, *Possession*, 144; Lowie, *Religion*, 33; Mbiti, *Religions*, 256–58; Nicolini, "Notes," 119; Nanan, "Sorcerer"; Umeh, *Dibia*, 132; Zempleni, "Symptom," 99; Dobkin de Rios, "Power," 293–94; Wyk, "Witchcraft," 1210–11. For familiars used for witchcraft, see Turner, *Drums*, 206; Bond, "Ancestors," 138, 141; Shoko, *Religion*, 44–45 (animals in Zimbabwe); Debrunner, *Witchcraft*, 50; witch familiars or assistants as particular kinds of animals or half-animals in South African witchcraft in Bähre, "Witchcraft," 301; Crawford and Lipsedge, "Help," 134–35; beating by something with a tail in Koch, *Zulus*, 275; animal familiars in northern Zimbabwe (and elsewhere, 36), see Reynolds, *Magic*, 34–39; for shamanic spirits in many societies envisioned as power animals, Harner, *Way of Shaman*, 81, 87–88, 98; cf. the belief that ghosts can possess animals (Emmons, *Ghosts*, 176; cf. Mark 5:12–13); the demonic animals in southern Nigeria in Numbere, *Vision*, 118–19, 171–72, 233.

268. Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 182; Obeyesekere, "Possession," 239; Garbett, "Mediums," 123; Reynolds, *Magic*, 62; cf. Bate, "Mission," 77; ancestor possession in Beattie and Middleton, "Introduction," xxvii; Field, "Possession," 9; Lee, "Possession," 131–32; Keller, *Hammer*, 131–32, 155; Zempleni, "Symptom," 92; Barrington-Ward, "Spirit Possession," 456; Jules-Rosette, "Healers," 133, 142; Loewen, "Possession," 121 (causing sickness); on non-trance, Haitian possession by spirits of the dead (causing sickness by sorcery), see Bourguignon, *Possession*, 24–27; possession by dead relatives in Melanesia in Eliade, *Shamanism*, 365–66; possession by souls (in the West, esp. after decline in belief in the devil) in Oesterreich, *Possession*, 26–27, 186, 209; ghost possession in Hien, "Yin Illness," 312, 316; Emmons, *Ghosts*, 171–72, 175–76; on spirits of the dead more generally, see, e.g., Beattie and Middleton, "Introduction," xix–xxii; Beattie, "Mediumship," 162 (dangerous ghosts, including ancestors); Ma, "Types," 207 (on the need to appease ancestral spirits); Tenibemas, "Folk Islam," 23 (they disturb people); Horton, "Possession," 15; Southall, "Possession," 233 (spirits of deceased soldiers), 246–49, 255 (spirits of earlier chiefs); Welbourn, "Spirit Initiation," 291–92 (on dangerous ghosts); Byaruhanga-Akiiki and Kealotswe, *Healing*, 111–12 (for consulting spirits of the dead for healing, see 113); Barnett, "Answer," 277 (white people appearing like pale spirits of the dead to some traditional peoples in New Guinea); Shoko, *Religion*, 45 (witches exploit spirits of the dead to steal for them). Among the Valley Tonga, possession by ghosts can be fatal (Colson, "Possession," 71). In Prussian folklore, a ghost might attack the living until the ghost's offensive corpse was burned (Straight, *Miracles*, 142).

269. See Chandra shekar, "Possession Syndrome," 81 (following Salisbury, "Highlands," in noting that it usually follows a relative's death within two weeks). Ancestor possession appears even in Zimbabwean novels (see Vambe, "Possession") and something apparently analogous to it in some sixteenth-century Jewish mysticism (Schwartz, "Possession"). Many charismatic Christians who would not speak of ancestor possession nevertheless speak of "generational [ancestral] curses"; in India, see Bergunder, "Miracle Healing," 290.

270. They provide good things in Turner, *Drums*, 14; they provide helpful information in Garbett, "Mediums," 105; also (but normally only for the recently dead) Last, "Bori," 51; protection even in some AICs (Oosthuizen, "Baptism," 185); they must be propitiated to be kept neutral rather than harmful in Tanner, "Theory," 274; Ma, "Veneration," 168; in contrast to many kinds of spirits, in most but not all cultures they do not possess in Hammond-Tooke, "Aetiology," 55–56. On ancestor spirits, see also, e.g., Koss, "Spirits," 372; and numerous other sources. Traditional Shonas' "ancestor" spirits effectively

Religious interpretations may flourish where possession behavior occurs in cultic contexts, as it often does.²⁷¹ Many cases of spirit possession are reported in connection with Vodun in Haiti²⁷² and various forms of spiritism in Brazil.²⁷³ Possession trance is also said to occur in the *zar* cult (which occurs in Iran, Sudan, Egypt, and some parts of Arabia);²⁷⁴ among traditional Yorubas;²⁷⁵ in some fundamentalist cults in St. Vincent;²⁷⁶ and in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism,²⁷⁷ for example. In nineteenth-century Fuchow, a Taoist priest would take the pose of a worshiped image, then tremble, and then begin to speak for the spirit, receiving incense and veneration.²⁷⁸ Not all trances, however, have particular religious connection.²⁷⁹

Even in the West, there is no unanimity on the meaning of possession experiences. Thus, for example, anthropologists have criticized psychologists and psychiatrists for ethnocentric understanding of altered states of consciousness, whereas others have criticized anthropologists' limited competence in psychological and psychiatric matters.²⁸⁰ Confronted with some anthropologists' macrosocial interpretations of possession as resistance against dominant social power structures, one Japanese hypnotherapist objected, "Don't anthropologists understand what

include only grandparents and parents (Gelfand, *Religion*, 173). Even many South African independent churches venerate ancestors (Molobi, "Veneration"), and some theologians support elements of this practice (Kahakwa, "Theology"). Many other Christians argue that attempted contact with (as opposed to respect for) ancestors is syncretistic (see Gehman, "Communion").

271. Tippet, "Possession," 148–51; often in the literature, e.g., Gray, "Cult," 171; the religious context of the 1374 European outbreak of the "dance frenzy" in Rosen, "Psychopathology," 224; cf. Keener, "Possession," 224–25. In antiquity cf. perhaps Persius *Sat.* 5.185–89 on demons related to the Cybele cult.

272. See Bourguignon, *Possession*, 15–27 (esp. the ritual described in 18–21); Tippet, "Possession," 155–56; Douyon, "L'Examen"; Kiev, "Value"; Perkinson, "Iron," 574–75.

273. Tippet, "Possession," 157–58; Pressel, "Umbanda"; idem, "Possession," 333–35. Cf. also the Spiritist Church, in Puerto Rico (Garrison, "Syndrome," 393–94; for mediums, see 398–403); New England (Macklin, "Yankee"); and elsewhere.

274. Modarressi, "Zar Cult."

275. Prince, "Possession Cults."

276. Henney, "Belief"; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 63–64.

277. Wayman, "Meaning." Cf. a Buddhist monk's exorcism and the pervasiveness of spirit propitiation in traditional Sinhalese Buddhism in Ames, "Magical-animism," 40–41; exorcism in Sinhalese Buddhism in Ames, "Magical-animism," 33; exorcism of troubling spirits from the home in Korean shamanism that overlaps with local Buddhism in Ma, "Worldviews," 9.

278. A Chinese report in Nevius, *Possession*, 47 (the reporter seems skeptical about the supernatural element). Cultic contexts often produce social pressure on particular persons to enter possession trance (Firth, "Foreword," xiii; Horton, "Possession," 24, 25, 35; Verger, "Trance," 52).

279. Shorter, "Possession and Healing," 48 (Maji-ya-Soda viewing the water spirits as neutral and adapting the ritual to fit his various clientele's religious sensibilities). Water spirits are frequent in discussions of African spirits (e.g., Horton, "Possession," 15, 17, 45); they are hostile and require exorcism in Numbere, *Vision*, 163–64; Paul Mokake (interview, May 13, 2009).

280. Ward, "Introduction," 9. Ward, "Cross-Cultural Study," 17, notes that psychologists' focus on "objective, quantifiable data" must be complemented by anthropologists' "incorporation of subjective experiential data." While she favors most often social approaches emphasizing adaptive responses, she recognizes that a variety of psychiatric conditions also appear under the cultural umbrella of possession (Ward, "Possession," 132–33). For a wide range of modern scientific (esp. psychiatric) classifications, see Chandra shekar, "Possession Syndrome," 82–83. Many psychologists view "demons" as just repressed parts of the psyche (Hoffman and Kurzenberger, "Miraculous," 84).

people actually feel?" and noted that this explanation omits a significant proportion of cases.²⁸¹ Interdisciplinary exploration is important.

Possession experiences are widely attested in anthropological literature. But whereas the leading collectors of data on the subject have been anthropologists, whether actual spirits could be involved in some extreme cases is a matter of the *interpretation* of the data and can vary according to the philosophic assumptions of the interpreter. That is, anthropologists are not the only community qualified to interpret their data; social, psychiatric, and spiritual factors may each be accorded a role in many cases without necessarily excluding the others. Genuine (sometimes organic) psychiatric problems in some cases can be channeled behaviorally in culturally conditioned patterns that can be used for other purposes by other members of society; there is no inherent reason why cases involving the activity of genuine spirits could not be expected to fit into a larger social matrix as well.

While Western scholars lack unanimity on particular approaches, however, in most disciplines there remains a prejudice against considering and especially articulating the possibility of nonmaterial personal agents, that is, a common indigenous understanding of the experience. Contexts make a difference in the interpretations that can be articulated: some interpretations in some circles would be academic suicide, whereas criticism of such interpretations is politically advantageous. Nevertheless, some anthropologists like Edith Turner (treated below) have attempted a critique of the materialist interpretation of such experiences common in Western thought, which she regards as ethnocentric and reductionist on this point.

Possession and Spirits

Various anthropologists sometimes offer contrasting readings of possession experiences based on the same data and sometimes concede that the data can be read in different ways.²⁸² While anthropological literature normally seeks to adopt a neutral stance,²⁸³ simply describing phenomena and the views of the subjects, some anthropologists today press beyond traditional paradigms.²⁸⁴

281. Noted in McClenon, *Healing*, 59–60. Postcolonial approaches tend to emphasize such factors, but while they might help explain the dominance of possession trance in some societies, they do not explain its much more widespread incidence. Although West, *Sorcery*, 66–67, notes some local relationships between social settings and sorcery accusations, he recognizes (1–5, 14, 24–25, 35–38, 83) how such Western social and economic models often distort data and neglect genuinely indigenous perceptions.

282. See, e.g., Wilson, "Spirits" (against I. M. Lewis), conceding at the end (on 629) that both interpretations discuss "good ideas" in a subjective manner in which speculation plays as large a part as investigation." While most postmodernists remain inclined toward skepticism, they are more open to spirits being actual than modernists were (Hoffman and Kurzenberger, "Miraculous," 84).

283. Despite efforts at value neutrality, however, social sciences as typically practiced presuppose some values that tend to dictate their conclusions (Murphy, "Social Science," 33–37; using esp. Murphy and Ellis, *Nature; Milbank, Social Theory*).

284. Probably most would concur at least with Werbner, "Truth," 190–91: anthropologists as outsiders may be skeptical of witchcraft, but they must suspend their skepticism to enter sympathetically into the culture. Out of innate courtesy, most African informants would not challenge their Western interrogators' skepticism; the vocal Western critic would thus not learn indigenous beliefs (Debrunner, *Witchcraft*, 3).

Thus, for example, one anthropologist with psychological training notes that the category “hallucination” fails to cover some clear experiences, such as his own experience of two apparitions in the context of Native American religion.²⁸⁵ Even further from traditional approaches, a minority²⁸⁶ of anthropologists specializing in such observations have dared contravene the usual assumptions of academia, publicly contending that the spirits are real.²⁸⁷ (They do not, however, all view these spirits in the same manner.) Some anthropologists have noted the transformation of a number of other anthropologists’ beliefs through their anomalous experiences.²⁸⁸

One obvious example of this pattern is the noted anthropologist Edith Turner,²⁸⁹ who describes her gradual transformation from skeptical observer to convinced observer and finally participant, now rejecting her former stance as cultural imperialism.²⁹⁰ In 1980, she and her husband, Victor Turner, were leading some students at New York University in some rituals addressed to Yoruba deities, with drumming and songs; right there a street theater director went into a trance and made accurate predictions afterward. The Turners had not expected the ritual to function this way outside its original context.²⁹¹ Her “experience of seeing a spirit” began her experiential research,²⁹² following what her husband called “coexperience”

285. Young, “Visitors,” 174.

286. Most anthropologists deny the existence of spirits (Goulet and Young, “Issues,” 323); some advocate simply accepting local beliefs about them (324); Goulet and Young “reject both of these extremes” (324), noting that both approaches require taking a particular worldview literally to the exclusion of others (325). Fictional elements in Carlos Castaneda’s work (Marton, “Legacy,” 281–82, though cf. some possibly truthful elements on 284) also stirred a reaction in some circles against better-documented claims by some other anthropologists (275; cf. 273–74); researchers of shamanism today question his material (see Walsh, *Shamanism*, 6).

287. See examples cited below; of course a larger number will contend that they are *psychologically* real from the standpoint of the patient (e.g., Singleton, “Spirits,” 477).

288. McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences.” In their view, these findings support evolution of religion (e.g., 46).

289. A lecturer in anthropology at the University of Virginia and editor of *Anthropology and Humanism: Journal of the Society for Humanistic Anthropology*, known for her earlier fieldwork in Africa beside Victor Turner, her late husband.

290. See Turner, “Reality of Spirits” (from a pro-shamanist perspective); cf. idem, “Reality.” Cf. also the earlier gradual shift of German philosophy professor Traugott Konstantin Oesterreich from positivism to neo-Platonism under the influence of studying paranormal phenomena (Gregory, “Introduction,” vi). Valuing participation, see, e.g., Scherberger, “Shaman,” 66; Turner, “Advances,” 43; Earle, “Borders,” 2 (as cited in Turner, “Advances,” 50). Even several decades ago, many anthropologists recognized that while much objectivity is necessary for writing, for better or for worse it is difficult to avoid becoming involved emotionally in relationships in the host culture (see, e.g., Nunez, “Objectivity,” 167–71, a negative example; cf. also Firth, “Anthropologist,” 31; Barnett, “Answer,” 280; Forge, “Anthropologist,” 297), and some early examples of participation were being reclaimed (e.g., Gronewold, “Cushing”; cf. Tedlock, “Observation,” 70–71). For most of the twentieth century, the Anglophone anthropological ideal of “participant observer” (with some Jesuit antecedents; Poewe, “Nature,” 8) created considerable dissonance between the ideals of empathy and detachment (Tedlock, “Observation,” 69).

291. Turner, “Field,” 9.

292. Turner, *Hands*, xxii.

with the people whose culture an anthropologist is researching.²⁹³ Turner notes that anthropologists normally regard their subjects' beliefs as significant culturally and do not care whether they are true, but in the past have at times assumed that needs for psychological compensation simply drove "underprivileged people" to "hallucinations."²⁹⁴ She complains that some academics "believe that trained anthropologists . . . understand aspects of a culture better than field subjects."²⁹⁵ She further complains that anthropologists repeatedly "witness spirit rituals" and hear explanations from indigenous experts concerning the activity of spirits and the centrality of such rituals to their culture, yet the anthropologist continues to interpret the data according to a Western framework.²⁹⁶ Often Western observers genuinely disrespect indigenous views, for all their pretense of sympathetic understanding.²⁹⁷

Moreover, she charges, anthropologists have often responded to paranormal events by simply remaining silent about them.²⁹⁸ By contrast, she insists that she is unwilling to be silent. She notes that when she sought to be more sympathetic to local interpretations than in the past,²⁹⁹ during a Zambian spirit ritual in 1985 to eject an *ihamba*, she was stunned by an unexpected experience: "I saw with my own eyes a giant thing emerging out of the flesh of her back. This thing was a large gray blob about six inches across, a deep gray opaque thing emerging as a sphere."³⁰⁰

293. Ibid., xxiii. She warns that "the usual policy of using 'the scientific method'" (i.e., distancing from the subject) is inadequate for this kind of research (xxiii).

294. Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 3 (for such "compensation," cf., e.g., Firth, "Foreword," xii).

295. Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 4, noting that today many recognize this approach as ethnocentric, ignoring other logics. Yet (15) she denies using postmodern or neocolonial postures, which often provide a Western grid through which fieldwork subjects' "traditional religion" is viewed as oppressive to them. Cf. Swarz, "Changed," 209: while claiming neutrality, Western interpreters select and rearrange data to fit their grids rather than hearing the fuller story of local informants.

296. Turner, "Reality," 30. She compares Western psychoanalytic approaches concerning dream figures from the imagination but thinks traditional cultures' explanations of external spirits even more plausible and certainly no less deserving of respect. Anthropological approaches have become much more open to indigenous categories, however (see Keller, *Hammer*, 39–40; Wilson, "Seeing," 198–206).

297. After her experience, she concluded (Turner, "Reality," 28) that many members of her guild had "perpetuated an endless series of put-downs about the many spirit events in which they participated—'participated' in a kindly pretense. They might have obtained valuable material, but they have been operating with the wrong paradigm, that of the positivist's denial." Anthropologists have sometimes devalued Native American medicine (Hultkrantz, *Healing*, 163–64; cf. 3 for frequent Native American distrust of anthropologists).

298. Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 3.

299. Turner, "Reality," 28.

300. Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 149; similarly, idem, "Field," 9; idem, "Advances," 43; idem, "Actuality," 2; idem, *Healers*, 1–23; idem, "Spirit Form." Although she allows some sleight-of-hand regarding other parts of the ritual (Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 165; on such tricks, see Frank, *Persuasion*, 44–45), she insists that she knows what she saw and that she was "not in trance" (Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 159). Wanting to keep the tradition intact, the person leading the ritual did not want any Christians (advocates of a hostile belief system) around (Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 155). Cf. Turner, "Religious Healing," 403: "There are spirit figures and forms: some of us have seen them." For one Christian claim of unexpectedly seeing a demonic form, see, e.g., Storms, *Convergence*, 67; for a claim of a cure through expelling (in spittle) a visible "witchcraft" substance, see Bergunder, *Movement*, 157. On the *ihamba* more generally, cf. Turner,

She says that she realized that there is genuine “spirit affliction: it isn’t a matter of metaphor and symbol, or even psychology.”³⁰¹ She afterward entered sympathetically into the spirit experiences of her traditional Eskimo hosts in 1987.³⁰² She questions the ethics, in a multicultural world, of imposing a traditional positivist paradigm on local cultures (even to the extent of reforming indigenous elite perspectives) “at all costs,” despite the evidence favoring indigenous interpretations.³⁰³ After surveying some of her research findings, she concludes one book regarding the Iñupiat people and their spirit experiences: “We may have to come to terms with the fact that we are not the only souls occupying this earth, that there are indeed other entities.”³⁰⁴ Elsewhere she offers claims of healings involving spirits,³⁰⁵ affirming that she experienced one herself.³⁰⁶

Some other anthropologists and NT scholars have also noted with appreciation Turner’s challenge to traditional Western reductionist approaches to such claims.³⁰⁷ (Some anthropologists teaching about spirit possession today even introduce students directly to such experiences.³⁰⁸) Two sociologists observed what appeared to be socially patterned, apparently culturally learned expressions of possession behavior. Their interviews with many educated observers who had

Drums, 156–97 (on the *ihamba* tooth, cf., e.g., 175–83, 298–99); on extractions of harmful objects and spirits from persons, see Shoko, *Religion*, 48, 97, 127–28 (regarding the Karanga of Zimbabwe).

301. Turner, “Reality,” 28.

302. *Ibid.*, 29. Wilkie, “Imagination,” 163–64, invokes spirits because it is effective but leaves open for further exploration their nature and categories.

303. Turner, “Reality,” 30, comparing this anthropological approach with that of missionaries, whose role she also dislikes; questioning the ethics, cf. also *idem*, “Field,” 10–11. She concedes (“Reality,” 30) that some anthropologists are more respectful than others, trying to “bend over backward to accord their people a much fuller sympathy” but announces that “in this paper I really go over the edge” of traditional boundaries for the discipline (also “Field,” 11). One should note that many of our disciplines were formed in an era in which positivist (and more to the point in this case, in my opinion, antisupernaturalist) influence was inevitable. Some missiologists also warn against reductionist dismissal of cultural idiom (Hoare, “Approach”) or reality (Hill, “Witchcraft,” 325); others affirm the transcultural truth claims of possession (see discussion below).

304. Turner, *Hands*, 232.

305. Turner, *Healers*, 103–40.

306. *Ibid.*, 103.

307. See Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 51, citing Hume, *Ancestral Power*; cf. Walsh, *Shamanism*, 144 (a psychiatrist); respectful discussion of this pedagogic strategy in Barnes, “Introduction,” 19–20. Among scholars in theological disciplines, see, e.g., Eddy, “Reality of Spirits,” not yet published. His paper, which pointed me to many sources on this subject, provides additional sources that I have not followed up for this appendix; see a sampling of this research in Eddy and Boyd, *Legend*, 67–69.

308. Turner (“Anthropology,” 203) and others (Winkelman and Carr, “Approach,” 177–78; Goodman, “Workshop”; Wilkie, “Imagination,” 137–40, corporately invoking Greek deities; cf. Millay, “Time Travel”; Harner, *Way of Shaman*, 65–68, 76–85) actually introduce students to shamanic experiences in classes, an approach that many (including myself) find deeply problematic (note voices summarized in Barnes, “Introduction,” 20). Less problematic would be observing rituals of their choice outside class (as in Payne-Jackson, “Magic,” 232–35) or participating in class field trips (Mosher and Jacobs, “Seminar,” 270–71). Some anthropologists now advocate sympathetically entering “witchcraft” experiences as learners, while keeping in mind scholarly obligations (Salomonsen, “Methods”). Although not accepting the indigenous epistemological framework in many respects, Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, 37–54, also supports an experiential anthropological approach (Peters underwent shaman training).

a wider range of experience, however, brought to their attention “manifestations that simply did not fit secular categories of explanation.”³⁰⁹ Some other Westerners initially skeptical of the reality of spirit powers in traditional religions, viewing them as mere superstition, have gradually become convinced otherwise through experience.³¹⁰ Turner notes that the discipline has moved so far that even some more “old-school” anthropologists “concede place to the new ethos with a kind of shrug—‘We’re not supposed to call spirits “metaphors” anymore.’”³¹¹

A growing minority of scholars are challenging the recent Western academic consensus against spirits.³¹² The modern Western assumption of pure materialism has counted against exploring other interpretations, but it has not disproved them.³¹³ Paul Stoller, an anthropologist working among Songhay Muslims, was warned that he would face an attack of sorcery; that night he felt a suffocating weight on him and heard threatening creatures on his roof. The affliction stopped only when he recalled the prescribed cure in that culture (some Qur’anic verses). This changed his perspective; indigenous understandings rather than his anthro-

309. Miller and Yamamori, *Pentecostalism*, 156, citing one example of an especially “difficult deliverance of a woman who was well known as a medium,” “who skidded across the floor of the church in a prone position, apparently being propelled by some supernatural force.” Cf. the apparently difficult position of the body in Ising, *Blumhardt*, 175. Moreland and Issler, *Faith*, 157–59, also note occult phenomena in which, for example, objects were moved across the room.

310. E.g., Steyne, *Gods of Power*, 14–19; Nevius, *Possession*, ix, 9–13. Cf. Peters, *Healing in Nepal*, above; on 50, when he lost motor control and in a vision or dream saw a green figure, the shaman interpreted this as a spirit possessing him, though (47) Peters himself does not believe in spirit possession. McClenon, *Events*, 236–37, notes that he experienced the paranormal but allows that this experience could be purely subjective.

311. Turner, “Advances,” 45. She notes (*ibid.*) that shamanism is now “the fastest growing field” in anthropology. I should note, however, that many recent works do continue to treat spirits and witchcraft discourse as political metaphors. Some areas of anthropology seem susceptible to “political reductionism” (a phrase borrowed by Burgess, *Revolution*, 261, from Jean Copans and Ruth Marshall); Wuthnow, “Contradictions,” 157, suggests this tendency in sociology of religion.

312. See, e.g., Betty, “Evidence,” and sources cited there; Isaacs, “Disorder”; Johnson, “Possession”; Sall, “Possession”; and sources cited below. Baker, “Believes,” 211–13, notes that in U.S. society generally, belief in demons or personalized, spiritual evil, which a majority of people in the United States hold, on average tends to decrease with rise in income and education, possibly because of greater comfort. But he also notes (216–17) that religious attendance is a stronger prediction of such beliefs (with a positive correlation). He further notes (212, 218) that it tends to run higher among women, probably because they are more often religious, and African-Americans, both because of religious tradition and the experience of social marginalization. His statistics appear to suggest those with graduate education are only 75 percent as likely to believe this as those with only a high school education, but this figure may also suggest that *most* who believe in these entities do not lose that belief despite the materialistic training characteristic of most education. My focus here, however, is not on these sources of belief more generally but the narrower category of those who claim to have encountered embodied examples of such belief.

313. With Tonquédec, *Miracles*, 64–65; cf. similarly Wilson, “Miracles,” 32–33, noting on 33 that there is no specifically logical reason to discount the possibility; Goulet and Young, “Issues,” 325, questioning whether “any scientific experiment” can settle the question of spirits. As to whether such entities could be subsumed under materialism, this might depend on how we define materialism (e.g., the material universe includes energy and can be defined as including human intellect).

pological training enabled him to cope with the local reality.³¹⁴ Publication of his experience initially stirred controversy and disdain from some peers, though it eventually led to accolades.³¹⁵

Likewise, Solon Kimball, a noted anthropologist,³¹⁶ notes his own completely unexpected experience of encountering an apparition during his fieldwork in Ireland.³¹⁷ He was just outside his hotel when an apparition began moving toward him; when he tried to strike it, thinking it a human aggressor, his foot passed through empty air, and the apparition quickly vanished.³¹⁸ Shaken, he reported his experience to the hotel porter, and in the morning others in the hotel, especially long-term residents, began to share their own “ghost” experiences.³¹⁹ One land commissioner had found “a figure standing at the foot of his bed”; another resident had been rid of a “persistent visitor” only through the intervention of “the Franciscan fathers.” When a man from the town heard the story, he recounted seeing the same “apparition on a number of occasions” in the same vicinity.³²⁰

Recounting his experience later, Kimball notes that in subsequent years he had “puzzled” over the experience. Transcendentalists might suggest a ghost, whereas materialists would suggest a hallucination, but there was no way to resolve which was correct.³²¹ From a neutral anthropological perspective, he concludes, it does not matter whether the encounter involved a ghost or a hallucination; the important point is that the experience reveals the influence of local culture on the observer.³²² Some other anthropologists have reported unusual apparitions of deceased persons while awake.³²³ But we should remember that Kimball had no knowledge of the

314. Stoller, “Eye,” 110 (as cited in Turner, “Advances,” 41). That the experience occurs at night is consistent with the belief that witches are thought to go out at night (Bond, “Ancestors,” 141; in classical antiquity, see, e.g., Ovid *Am.* 1.8.3–8).

315. Turner, “Advances,” 42.

316. Coeditor of the volume in which the essay was offered, he was at the time of its publication graduate research professor in anthropology at the University of Florida, and had been visiting professor in such institutions as the University of Chicago and University of California at Berkeley; he had also been president of the American Ethnological Society and of the Society for Applied Anthropology. Dr. Paul Eddy, personal correspondence, Oct. 26, 2009, directed me to this source.

317. He notes that Irish culture when he was there embraced the supernatural, so that no one doubted the experience (Kimball, “Learning,” 188, 190–92). Turner, “Advances,” 37, confesses that “anthropology marveled briefly at Solon Kimball’s ghost story” but then neglected its implications until other such stories began to be published. She also notes (Turner, “Advances,” 40) “a strange public apparition” in Trinidad during the time that Joseph Long, a medical anthropologist, was there; for other claims of apparitions, see McClenon, *Events*, xiii, 70, 72 (noting also some apparitions to groups of people, 75).

318. Kimball, “Learning,” 189.

319. *Ibid.*, 189–90.

320. *Ibid.*, 190.

321. *Ibid.*

322. *Ibid.*, 191, noting that “the capacity for supernatural experience as well as its form and content is culturally learned.” While the shape of interpretations may be culturally learned, however, anomalous experiences appear in a wide range of cultures (McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 46–47).

323. McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 51, cite Goulet, “Ways of Knowing,” 129–30 (also cited in Turner, “Advances,” 47). McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 51, also cite Young, “Visitors,” 168–69, for one twice awakened by visiting apparitions (note in Young, “Visitors,” 172, that a local Cree healer

familiar “ghost” sightings nearby. If one does not need to explain his experience in materialistic terms, is that the *most* plausible explanation for it?³²⁴

Certainly many intelligent observers from many other cultures do not share the dominant Western interpretations. This is no less true among Christians than among other indigenous interpreters. Thus, one Chinese church leader of a previous generation reproved Western critics with the observation that their theological hairsplitting would benefit them little in his country “if when the need arose you could not cast out a demon.”³²⁵ As one Lutheran writer in Tanzania notes, “The phenomenon of demon possession is a hard reality with which a good number of East African Christians struggle daily.” Whereas Westerners tend to denigrate such views as “primitive,” he notes, East Africans take them for granted, and “the biblical accounts are read not as myths, but as objective accounts of actual experiences.”³²⁶

A generation ago noted missiologist Stephen Neill warned that it was next to impossible to convince most Majority World Christians “that evil spirits do not exist”; he noted that they cited examples of local possession cults. He further observed that most missionaries who lived in traditional areas similarly refused to reduce all cases of possession to hysteria.³²⁷ Many early Presbyterian missionaries to Korea had learned in seminary that spirits were not real, but most came to believe otherwise in the context of ministry alongside indigenous believers.³²⁸ Thus for example Charles Clark was astonished in the face of a violent demonstration of spirit possession; quickly changing his doctrine, he invoked Jesus’s name and the man quickly became rational, completely unaware of his prior state.³²⁹ Other missionaries also reported exorcisms (usually led by Korean believers), and noted that in the early, groundbreaking years exorcisms similar to those in the NT accompanied the start of many or most churches.³³⁰

More recently, Peruvian missiologist Samuel Escobar reports a conversation with an indigenous teacher from the Peruvian jungle. When local people noticed

recognized his description of the first apparition as a spirit regularly encountered there). McClenon, *Events*, 39–45, shows that “apparitions” are attested in a wide variety of cultures.

324. Paul Eddy, who supplied the source, suggested that a materialistic or even cultural explanation seems to fall “very flat in light of his own report of the event” (personal correspondence, Oct. 26, 2009), and I am inclined to agree, especially if such experiences could be multiplied (and they can be, though that is not the subject of this book). I do not personally believe in ghosts but also doubt that the conventional denial of extrahuman forces can explain all our evidence.

325. Watchman Nee in Kinneer, *Tide*, 152; on 318n10, he notes “an account of an exorcism.” One Chinese minister, Pastor Hsi, became known as “Shengmo,” the “demon overcomer” (McGee, “Regions Beyond,” 70).

326. Mchami, “Possession,” 17 (while conceding that East African interpretation could use more exegesis).

327. Neill, “Demons,” 161.

328. Kim, “Healing,” 270.

329. *Ibid.*, 270–71. In 1908 the same missionary reported an exorcism, after extended prayer, of a spirit so powerful that three nonbelievers outside were hurled to the ground when it came out (271, citing Clark’s report).

330. *Ibid.*, 272–73. The best known Korean exorcist was also the most popular Korean Protestant preacher of the day, Presbyterian Kim Ik-tu (Kim, “Healing,” 273–74).

demons in the Western linguist's translation of Mark, the Western linguist explained that such spirits were only for the first century. While the local teacher respected the linguist, however, he insisted that their local environment matched better what they found in Mark: "We know that there really are demons and spirits; they're around here."³³¹

Other indigenous interpreters have rejected conventional Western explanations, contending that some spiritual power is at work. As John S. Mbiti points out, "Every African who has grown up in the traditional environment will, no doubt, know something about this mystical power which often is experienced, or manifests itself, in [the] form of magic, divination, witchcraft, and mysterious phenomena that seem to defy even immediate scientific explanations."³³² He notes even documented cases of Westerners who experienced these powers at close hand and were therefore forced to acknowledge and deal with them.³³³ Ohene Kweku Opare-Sem, a U.S.-trained hematologist and oncologist working in Ghana, notes that when he went to touch one patient who had been to "fetish priests," something "like a bolt of electricity" jolted his arm, paralyzing it "for several hours." When he tried to visit her again in the morning, as soon as their eyes met, it happened again, and subsided only as he retired "to the doctor's room to pray."³³⁴

One of my Nigerian students in the United States, Benjamin Ahanonu, told me of confronting spiritual powers in his home village. Others who had been cursed by those known to harness such powers often died suddenly soon afterward; after his own confrontation, he found himself in the hospital in the capital the next day. A village elder finally traveled to the capital because, he informed Benjamin, they had been surprised not to get word that he had died; the elder was now even more shocked to find him alive. Benjamin recovered and has since returned to the village many years to preach.³³⁵

Various personal experiences and reports from some close and trusted African friends also predispose me to be among those who accept the reality of nonhuman spirits behind some (but by no means all) contemporary possession claims.³³⁶ Generally when I have asked educated persons from Africa and many other parts of the

331. Escobar, *Tides*, 86.

332. Mbiti, *Religions*, 253–54. I am more skeptical of some of Mbiti's individual anecdotes (e.g., 256–57), but not all of them.

333. *Ibid.*, 254–56. I am tempted to recount also my own few, involuntary experiences with these practices in Africa, experiences that I think would surprise most Western readers, but will offer only a bare minimum, preferring to reserve my credibility for points where it matters more.

334. Mensah, "Basis," 176.

335. Interview, Dec. 1, 2009. We and our immediate relatives in Africa have some similar stories, some of which I myself experienced in that context.

336. Without knowing where to draw the line, I am aware of circles that attribute all mental illness or personal problems to the direct effects of indwelling demons, a perspective that is neither biblical nor sensible. One cannot by any means identify with demonization all kinds or cases of mental illness, which in the Gospels overlaps with demonization in at most some cases (see Songer, "Possession," esp. 121; on 119 counting "naïve" the simple equation of ancient demons and modern neuroses; cf. Gaiser, *Healing*, 136n10). Against excess deliverance ideology, see, e.g., Onyinah, "Deliverance," 133.

Majority World whether they believed in the reality of spirits, occult activity, and the like, their response has been, "Of course," sometimes with a caveat that they are careful with whom they discuss such matters, especially among skeptical Westerners.³³⁷

I recognize that some who follow the secondary argument of the main book (that God sometimes does miracles) will not share my openness to some other cultures' affirmation existence of other spirits in addition to one God. Still, one clearly monotheistic NT scholar has suggested that accepting the possibility of malevolent spirits is no more a priori implausible than accepting the possibility of "a good spirit—God."³³⁸ Another, who has researched the issues extensively, remains "convinced by the testimony of credible witnesses and reasonable arguments, as well as personal experience, that it is judicious to entertain the idea of the existence of some form of destructive spiritual entities not unreasonably designated 'evil spirits.'"³³⁹ While not all cultures treat these subordinate spirits as hostile, some post-Holocaust Western theology has affirmed a dimension of personal superhuman evil that allows for such hostility.³⁴⁰

Regardless of interpretation, however, possession behavior is well documented cross-culturally, and there is no reason to automatically doubt reports of it in our ancient sources. There is no inherent reason to suppose such reports are necessarily fictitious or legendary rather than potentially based on eyewitness claims.

Western Psychiatrists and Belief in Genuine Spirits

Reports of spirit possession have been less frequent in most of mainstream Western society,³⁴¹ yet not so infrequent as to occasion no comment. From popular reports to the public claims of a small number of psychiatrists³⁴² willing to defy

337. Cf. the similar observation about educated Africans' affirmation of these realities in Hart, *Delusions*, 102. I say "generally" not because there have yet been any exceptions but because I recognize that my sample size is anecdotal. Many Africans today apparently do not believe in "evil spirits" ("Islam and Christianity," 177) or "witchcraft" (*ibid.*, 178; cf. 179; elsewhere, cf. Friedrich, "Fighter," 141), though some may have construed "believe in" differently from how the questioners intended the questions ("demand effects" and the desire in some hospitable African settings to please questioners, who often may not have believed in such spirits, may also have affected the results; cf. the observation in Debrunner, *Witchcraft*, 3). Thus in Ethiopia, where 31 percent of Christians "believe in evil spirits" ("Islam and Christianity," 177), 74 percent claim to have experienced or witnessed evil spirits being cast out of someone (214); figures for other countries likewise reveal this sort of disparity.

338. Ladd, *Theology*, 51.

339. Twelftree, *Name*, 293.

340. See discussion in Boyd, *War*, 70–71. Cf. also the reasoning in Hultgren, "Stories," 133; calling for countering the neglect of this theme, see earlier Stewart, "Emphasis." Africans are sometimes especially cognizant of the reality of evil (Oduyoye, "Value," 113).

341. Berends, "Criteria," 347–48, suggests that possession could be rare as in the OT era; restricted especially to areas with little influence from the good news of the kingdom; or increasing because of the "last days." On 348–52, he suggests that it would be expected most in pagan environments (and [351] where people are particularly interested in spirits; he compares missionary reports). He concludes (364) that they will predominate in pagan societies.

342. E.g., Wilson (then a psychiatry professor at Duke University), "Hysteria," 225–30, providing three case studies; Isaacs, "Disorder," 265–66 (noting both psychologists and psychiatrists); Johnson,

the conventions of modern Western intellectual thought,³⁴³ some even in the Western world report not only cases of possession but also cases of successful expulsion of spirits.

Many cases of apparent possession have more direct psychological explanations.³⁴⁴ I noted earlier in the book my concern with a particular documented exorcism detailed as an example in one generally useful academic work.³⁴⁵ Charismatic psychiatrist John White, noted earlier in the book, treats psychosis as the result of chemical imbalance rather than demons.³⁴⁶ Even when one allows for the possibility of spiritual explanations, they do not supplant psychological ones. Behavior may be the same whether a person has psychiatric problems from material or emotional causes or because these are caused by an invasive spirit, leaving the burden of proof on the latter claim; when preternatural phenomena accompany the apparent possession, however, the presence of another spirit becomes more plausible.³⁴⁷

Scott Peck, a noted psychiatrist, dismisses most claims of possession and exorcism but claims that he has encountered rare cases for which he found this the only explanation.³⁴⁸ (Peck does believe that most cases of malevolence, however, are of purely human character.³⁴⁹) He became certain enough of one case of possession that he risked endorsing the need for exorcism despite the disdain for this practice in his profession;³⁵⁰ it was this encounter that convinced him that personal nonhu-

"Possession"; cf. McAll, "Taste"; idem, "Deliverance"; see further Peck, *Glimpses*, below; cf. Friesen, *Mystery* (as summarized in Hoffman and Kurzenberger, "Miraculous," 78); for Christian doctors, Lees and Fiddes, "Healed," 22; for some popular claims, see Harris, *Acts Today*, 140–45. White, "Lady," 75, notes that he struggled not to come to this conclusion, but some phenomena in his patients compelled him to arrive at this conviction (for one exorcism account, see White, *Spirit*, 203–7). Walsh, *Shamanism*, 147–48, notes that different paradigms explain the evidence differently and allows (148–49) that different cases may have different explanations (cf. similarly Moreau, "Possession Phenomena," 772).

343. I assume that a head count would show more psychiatrists denying than affirming the reality of genuine spirits. Nevertheless, those supporting a currently dominant paradigm are normally the majority until detractors challenge the adequacy of the paradigm to cover all the data.

344. Cf. "pseudo-possession" in Gildea, "Possession," 296–98.

345. Miller, "Story"; more critically evaluated in Smucker and Hostetler, "Case." My concern about the exorcist Sam Fife (or at least about what he became subsequently) is not intended to deny the genuineness of Miller's experience.

346. Loewen, "Possession," 137–38. John Wilkinson, also a medical doctor, warns that psychiatric knowledge cannot exclude "possession as a possible cause" of psychosis, but also that it is not always a cause (*Healing*, 73).

347. Cf. Gildea, "Possession," 299, though he questions the accuracy of reports of such phenomena (310) and allows that those who regard psychic powers as inherent in the human personality may regard even these as not identifying a foreign spirit (301). I have received oral reports of preternatural phenomena from a number of eyewitnesses, but more often in connection with claims of witchcraft than with possession.

348. In *Glimpses*, providing fuller detail (as he notes on xvii) for two accounts of exorcism merely summarized (and with some more potentially controversial details omitted) in his widely read *People of the Lie*. Others also cite Peck (e.g., Betty, "Evidence," 17; Loewen, "Possession," 138–39; less favorably, Collins, *Exorcism*, 166–70). Cf. Grof, "Potential," 144–45, for one rare case that exceeded normal psychiatric (or human) bounds (Roberts, "Study," 51–52, tries to interpret this report in light of mysticism).

349. Peck, *Glimpses*, 239–41.

350. *Ibid.*, 237–38.

man malevolent beings do exist.³⁵¹ He suggests that enough empirical information is already available “to make demonology a respectable field of research and study.” But he doubts that science will undertake such an objective study, “at least not until . . . a 350-year-old separation of the world of supposed natural phenomena from the assumed world of supernatural phenomena is revisited, and recognized by all concerned as having been a gigantic mistake.”³⁵² Some other NT scholars cite his approach respectfully.³⁵³

William P. Wilson, professor emeritus of psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center, regards as purely psychological many problems popularly attributed to demons today, but insists that there are real cases, including some that he has encountered, of actual spirits.³⁵⁴ He offers as an example a Malagasy woman whose parents practiced the occult. On various occasions, she “would be violently thrown to the floor, whereupon two male voices” would speak through her in what was not her normal language. Confronted with this behavior, Wilson commanded the spirits to leave her, invoking Jesus. She regained normalcy immediately, and remained healthy during the year of follow up.³⁵⁵

Another psychiatrist warns against viewing most sorts of emotional problems as demonic³⁵⁶ but notes that he has seen a few clear cases of possession by a genuine spirit “even in my own psychiatric practice.”³⁵⁷ Still another psychiatrist notes that 70 percent of his work deals with psychosomatic cases, but in 4 percent of the cases he has treated, he has needed to undertake exorcism. He notes roughly 280 cases that required exorcism, especially resulting from the occult practices of the person or their family (such as Ouija boards, witchcraft, horoscopes, etc.).³⁵⁸ In one case, the timing of a mother’s deliverance correlated with the instant curing of her son (who, unknown to them, was suffering schizophrenia in a hospital four hundred miles away), as well as the son’s wife’s tuberculosis.³⁵⁹ He describes an instant release from schizophrenia through exorcism removing the curse of an occult group; the complete healing through exorcism of a violent woman in

351. *Ibid.*, 238.

352. *Ibid.*, 249.

353. See esp. Borg, *Jesus*, 322n9, allowing for this paradigm.

354. Wilson, “Miracle Events,” 268.

355. *Ibid.*, 275.

356. Johnson, “Possession,” 150–51.

357. *Ibid.*, 152. On 152–53, he offers three examples; all these patients were involved with the occult. Similarly, a Mennonite pastor in Pennsylvania notes that he runs into “two to three demonized persons a year”; the first occasion was a “high priestess of a satanic coven” (Winslow, “Care,” 192). Before deliverance ministries became excessive, early Igbo Pentecostal deliverance especially occurred in evangelistic contexts among those previously involved in spiritual power in traditional religions (Burgess, *Revolution*, 153).

358. McAll, “Deliverance,” 296. A counselor in Ball, “View,” 127–28, also reports the deliverance of someone demonized who apparently had a background in the occult; so also a report from Portugal, among reports sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, Nov. 9, 2009. Occult background also figures in two confrontations with spirits noted by Samson Uytanlet in personal correspondence (Dec. 15, 2009); cf. also concerns with the occult mentioned in Davies, “Exorcism,” 17–19, 23, 29, 46, 50.

359. McAll, “Deliverance,” 296–97.

a padded cell who had not spoken for two years; and the instant deliverance of another woman in a padded cell, when several prayed at a distance from her and without her knowledge.³⁶⁰

Occult connections appear in many of his accounts. Although possession could “mimic epilepsy,” he noted, it differed from it. Three adults tried to restrain one six-year-old, but in contrast to epilepsy, the boy remained conscious; the boy was cured when his father renounced Spiritualism. A heroin addict whose mother was a Spiritualist medium was through exorcism completely freed from addiction despite his initial “lack of cooperation.” Another boy was healed through exorcism when his mother renounced her role as a fortune-teller. The daughter of a witchcraft practitioner who had cursed her was freed immediately from alcoholism when (unknown to her) some people prayed for her release.³⁶¹ Likewise, an emergency room physician notes a case that appeared to be possession by some extraordinary evil, in a person allegedly promoting voodoo.³⁶²

One counseling professor, while insisting that most claims of possession are inauthentic,³⁶³ observes in a professional journal that he encountered what he believed to be a genuine one. When a sixteen-year-old boy involved with the occult started “snarling like an animal,” a crucifix fell from the wall, its nails hot and melted.³⁶⁴ The father, a physician, decided that the son was possessed; nominal, mainline Protestants, the family asked a team of ministers and psychological professionals to help. A minister on the team asked the boy to repeat “Jesus Christ, son of God,” but before the young man could finish, his visage and voice altered.³⁶⁵ “You fools,” he uttered, “he can’t say that.”³⁶⁶ The exorcism was, however, ultimately successful.³⁶⁷ Several

360. Ibid., 297, noting in the last case that unknown to them at the time, her aunt had been “a patient in a mental hospital” in another country and was delivered simultaneously. Healing during deliverance, whether from physical or mental affliction, appears in many accounts. For an example of the former, see, e.g., a report by D. F. Rodrigo of Sri Lanka, in which the Hindu family became Christians and joined the church (sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, Nov. 9, 2009). In an account from Benin illustrating the latter, people brought to a Pentecostal church for prayer a woman considered insane; once there, she fell into a coma for six hours, but after much prayer she revived, “healed from her insanity” (a report from Pastor Achille Todego, sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, Nov. 9, 2009; on Pentecostalism’s anti-witchcraft posture in Benin, see Mayrargue, “Expansion,” 283; for its growth through healings, 287). A clinical psychologist, Russ Llewellyn, “Events,” 252–53, reports a healing of schizophrenia and two resolutions of Dissociative Identity Disorder through prayer (citing no involvement from other spirits).

361. McAll, “Deliverance,” 297.

362. Lesslie, *Angels*, 155–66 (voodoo is mentioned esp. on 160). The woman had torn out her tongue, with shockingly minimal bleeding, and apparently swallowed it.

363. Van Gelder, “Possession,” 160. Van Gelder was at the time associate professor of pastoral counseling at Erskine Theological Seminary.

364. Ibid., 151–52 (depending on both parents for this information). The son had been involved with the occult since age ten (152). For the claim of a dangerously hot cross in a “haunting” context, see McClenon, *Events*, 68.

365. Van Gelder, “Possession,” 153.

366. Ibid., 154. Similarly, in Crandall, *Raising*, 164, whenever a demonized person attempted to utter Jesus’s name she appeared to become temporarily catatonic; this changed immediately after exorcism. In Tari, *Breeze*, 61–62, demons were upset to hear about Jesus.

367. Van Gelder, “Possession,” 154.

of those present were professionals, the professor notes, and he also notes his own ample acquaintance with psychiatric disorders; it was clear that they were not dealing with epilepsy, psychosis, or other conditions that they knew how to recognize.³⁶⁸

Another professional claims that whereas standard treatments can help hallucinations and psychosis, demonization can be cured only by prayer or exorcism.³⁶⁹ One study, noting that typical cases of possession do not fit other diagnoses, identified seven common characteristics in possession cases.³⁷⁰ A number of the individuals saw “dark figures” and would “hear audible and coherent voices” outside themselves but as part of otherwise normal reality.³⁷¹ They often exhibited revulsion toward religious objects;³⁷² in contrast to psychological disorders, “there is an impact on others in the vicinity of the patient,” who may also “experience odd phenomena.”³⁷³ The study’s sample size, however, is small (fourteen individuals),³⁷⁴ and some different characteristics may have been screened out circularly by the “possession” definition employed. If an alien spirit did affect the psyche or the central nervous system, would it not sometimes produce some effects comparable to problems those areas of a person could also experience apart from it?³⁷⁵ The examples identified as possession here, however, offer at least some perspectives on criteria used by some professionals to identify a minimum number of cases of possession by a genuine spirit.

Francis MacNutt, a figure in Catholic and Episcopal renewal circles mentioned earlier in the book, notes that he has witnessed “what purport to be demons speaking through the person (e.g., ‘You will never drive us out; we are too many and too

368. *Ibid.*, 158.

369. Sall, “Possession,” 289, also noting other clinical contrasts, though conceding that most deviance in the West reflects natural causes. Gebru Woldu named a hospital psychiatrist in Ethiopia, as well as some Western doctors he has taken to Ethiopia with him, who treat genuine medical and/or psychiatric cases but expect Gebru and his team to pray for the genuinely demonized (interview, May 20, 2010).

370. Isaacs, “Disorder,” 266. On it not fitting other diagnoses, see 265–66.

371. *Ibid.*, 268.

372. *Ibid.*, 269. Woodard, *Faith*, 25, cites blasphemy among the behaviors of one he describes as possessed; cf. earlier Ising, *Blumhardt*, 171, 183, 326, 337.

373. Isaacs, “Disorder,” 270, noting “poltergeist-type phenomena and the feeling of suffocation while praying.”

374. The study took subjects referred by four Episcopal exorcists (two of them priests) who distinguished these cases from psychological ones; then the cases were referred to one psychiatrist and four psychologists for diagnosis (*ibid.*, 264).

375. Some proposed criteria for distinguishing possession are thus subjective (see, e.g., Bach, “Possession,” 25, noting that they may overlap and mistrusting the distinctions in Sall, “Possession”; Sall offers an able reply in “Response”), though suprahuman knowledge, strength, and so forth are not (see Gildea, “Possession”). Monden, *Signs*, 163, thinks that the line between the natural and demonic exploitation of psychopathology is not easily discerned psychologically. Some warn that some Christians now carry deliverance too far, so that “preoccupation with demons and witches” becomes “an affirmation of the old order” (Onyinah, “Deliverance,” 133). In contrast to Third Wave theology, Western Pentecostals normally doubt that Christians can have demons (Wright, “Profiles,” 287; Carter, “Demon Possession”; *idem*, “Possession”; Collins, “Perspective 1”; *idem*, “Perspective 2”; Macchia, “Deliverance”; historically, see Collins, *Exorcism*, 22, 46–47n169), as do some other circles (e.g., Berends, “Criteria,” 364; cf. varying views among Mennonites in Burkholder, “Foundations,” 42).

strong for you')—often much to the speaking person's surprise." Entirely rational people sometimes find themselves hurled to the ground while being exorcised, as astonished as anyone else. Other explanations remain possible, he suggests, but the simplest is the best: in cases like these, a spirit is actually speaking through them.³⁷⁶ A Western medical doctor, shocked to find a new voice from his patient insisting, "Let her alone, she's ours!" reports that he decided that something spiritual was happening for which even his psychiatric colleagues had little training. After some hesitation, he succeeded in expelling the spirits by invoking Jesus's name.³⁷⁷

Obviously exorcism has a severely tarnished history of extremism, an excessive tendency that continues frequently in many settings today.³⁷⁸ When exorcism captures Western public attention, it is usually in this malignant form.³⁷⁹ Others, however, convinced that some spirits are real, have reported confrontations with what they believe are genuine spirits (among Christians, probably more frequent in missiological power encounters than in ritualistic "exorcistic" settings).³⁸⁰ Although

376. MacNutt, *Healing*, 214 (though even MacNutt has been accused of seeing demons too widely; cf. Collins, *Exorcism*, 56–63). For a charismatic Protestant report, see Wimber, *Healing*, 98; in India, see Yohannan, *Revolution*, 30.

377. Mullen, *Feel*, 151–52.

378. Faddish approaches have developed in some charismatic circles (see criticism in Stackhouse, "Foreword," xv; Robertson, *Miracles*, 94–95), with roots in practices by figures like W. Branham (Collins, *Exorcism*, 28–30); A. A. Allen (37); Derek Prince (43–53, with idiosyncratic views such as demons being pre-Adamite humans, 48); and further extremes in F. and I. Hammond (authors of *Pigs in the Parlor*; 64–69) and Bill Subritzky (87–89); in addition to pure fabrications (99–100, 142–47). Extreme demonology also appears in some noncharismatic circles (e.g., 154–66), where it sometimes has been wielded against Pentecostals and charismatics (117–26, 131, 149–50). Collins's critique is generally helpful, despite his reliance on the category of "enthusiasm" (and excessive epistemic reticence toward experience, *pace* Hume!). Cf. the harmful practice of psychologically induced vomiting in a church in Bowler, "Bodies," 90 (perhaps reflecting the pastor's initial experience with exorcism; cf. 87); disputed claims in Bergunder, "Miracle Healing," 293. Some African charismatics express concerns that others' deliverance ministries have become extreme (Gifford, "Provenance," 70, 73; Burgess, *Revolution*, 228); charismatics from different cultures and movements often hold strongly divergent views (Brown, "Awakenings," 360). One may demur from beliefs and practices of many deliverance ministries without viewing all practices as equally extreme; some focus on correcting demonic influence on thinking much more than on what most would mean by exorcism or possession (cf., e.g., Lozano, *Unbound*, 12). Yet in more extreme cases, when prosperity teachings failed, for example, many resorted to challenging "spirits of poverty" (Burgess, *Revolution*, 229–30).

379. E.g., the extremism reported in Collins, *Exorcism*, 70; according to some media reports, also in a recent case in Guyana (http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100402/ap_on_re_la_am_ca/cb_guyana_exorcism_death; accessed April 2, 2010). In general, few reports of more positive outcomes would likely survive the journalistic publication process (in contrast to anthropologists' notes), since some Western editor or publisher along the way would probably object to it, whereas negative reports can be viewed as enlightening the public (in favor of a conventional modern Western worldview). The exceptions might be an occasional more thoroughly documented investigative report or (unhelpfully and counterproductively) sensational entertainment media catering to popular fascination with the lurid and the occult. Yet there are certainly enough genuine instances of extremism to fill volumes with negative examples.

380. If some Western critics would accuse me of ideological bias for admitting Christian reports about spiritual confrontations, I would note that most of my critics have an ideological bias against local informants' claims concerning spirits and spiritual power. Sometimes Western observers have simply transmuted these spiritual claims into sociological critiques of political power; while such critiques may be necessary, they are hardly the traditional point of most village witchcraft discourse—at least not insofar

many Westerners look askance at the practice, missiologists collecting field data today have sometimes reported a strong success rate for exorcisms conducted in Jesus's name in various cultures.³⁸¹ Power encounters of various kinds have been influential in church growth in cultures where spiritual power is emphasized.³⁸² (Although from a different perspective and not my focus here, some sorts of spiritual power conflicts undoubtedly occur in competition among adherents of traditional religious worldviews as well, and supernatural claims have generated growth among such groups.³⁸³ Some of these also appeal to supernatural means to display hostility toward Christian conversion.³⁸⁴)

Missiologists on Power Encounters

Karl Barth appealed to Christ's victory in an exorcism performed by J. C. Blumhardt as encapsulating the gospel message of Christ's triumph.³⁸⁵ Nevertheless, modern Western Christians often consider only one spirit, God, and dismiss the reality of other spirits; Christians in many parts of the world, however, have experience with what they believe are multiple spirits and look to biblical models for showing why their God should be preferred to other spirits. Missionary anthropologist Paul Hiebert notes that Christians in India addressed a cultural blind spot

as I may trust my informants who grew up in such settings rather than Western visitors who read all such accounts through a purely materialist grid.

381. Johnson, "Authority," 105–6 (on Brazil); cf. the observations in Instone-Brewer, "Psychiatrists," 140–41. I cannot ascertain from Johnson's report the extent to which experiences of spirit possession (as defined above, as opposed to mere confrontation of spiritual ideologies and practices) are involved (without which the NT, at least, lacks examples of exorcism). Others have also reported the efficacy of Jesus's name in exorcising spirits (e.g., earlier Chinese reports in Nevius, *Possession*, 13, 33–35, 55–57); cf. demons' fear of the rosary in traditional Sri Lankan Catholicism at Kudagama (Stirrat, "Possession," 138, though the goal is simply to make "life so unpleasant for the demon that it eventually leaves," 140). A former Yanomamō shaman came to view the Creator God of whom Christians spoke as more powerful than all the spirits (Ritchie, *Spirit*, 113–232, esp. 159, 214–15, 226–28, 237–38) and claims that spirits could desert or kill old shamans who were no longer useful (*ibid.*, 226–27; cf. the fear in Koch, *Zulus*, 143).

382. E.g., Johnson, "Growing Church," 54–58; cf. De Wet, "Signs," *passim*; cf. accounts in Alexander, *Signs*, 95–114 (esp. 110–14). Anderson, "Exorcism," argues that "deliverance ministry" meets a felt need in Africa, helping fuel Pentecostal growth in Africa (see also Newell, "Witchcraft").

383. Cf. "contest stories," e.g., the Buddha competing with the Brahmin tradition, Hindu stories about Hindu sages overpowering Buddhist ones, and the like (Woodward, *Miracles*, 25). Fulani and Turawa spirits dislike each other (Krings, "History," 63). For the revival of Taiwanese folk religion since World War II, see Chin, "Practices," 1 (noting that 85 percent of people in Taiwan follow folk religion). Cf. various religions' practice of exorcism (e.g., Hien, "Yin Illness," 313–18; other sources in this appendix).

384. For possessing spirits complaining about Christian conversions, see, e.g., Field, "Possession," 8; spirits hostile to missionaries, e.g., Sandgren, "Kamba Christianity," 176 (in the late nineteenth century); Lema, "Chaga Religion," 55–56; conversion as a danger, Maddox, "Cigogo," 156; for Nkai (divinity) punishing a woman with blisters for attending church until she desisted, see Straight, *Miracles*, 171. Spirits are said to dislike Protestantism conversion, which some in Haiti undertake to escape "indebtedness" to uncooperative spirits, but some disillusioned with Protestantism convert back to Vodou (Michel, "Worlds," 35).

385. Barth, *Dogmatics*, 4.3:165ff., noted in Kauffman, "Introduction," 7–8.

that he carried: his scientific training stressed a naturalistic, empirical approach; his theological training emphasized theistic explanations. But he had lacked a functional category for superhuman activity other than that of the supreme God, despite its prevalence in parts of Scripture as well as belief in it in many cultures. In recent centuries, Western thought had left no intermediate category between God and the natural world, but in his dialogue with Indian Christians he came to believe that such a sphere existed.³⁸⁶

Presumably a significant proportion of this book's readers will have particularly Christian or biblical studies interests and will be interested in the sorts of conflictual encounters with spirits or those involved with them depicted in the Gospels and Acts (cf., e.g., Mark 1:21–28; 5:1–20; Acts 8:5–13; 13:8–11; 19:13–20). Missiologists frequently approach spirit phenomena very differently than nonmissionary anthropologists, often from the standpoint of what they call “power encounters.”³⁸⁷ Historically, Irenaeus attests that many nonbelievers in his day became Christians after experiencing successful exorcisms.³⁸⁸

More specifically missiological encounters are reported of ancient and medieval missionaries such as Patrick in Ireland, Columba in Scotland, and Boniface in Germany.³⁸⁹ Boniface, for example, felled Thor's sacred oak and suffered no harm (a setting resembling “trial by ordeal”).³⁹⁰ Although the Enlightenment was increasingly viewing the speaking of other voices through individuals as mere deception,³⁹¹ John Wesley encountered persons he believed genuinely possessed,³⁹² and was reported to have cast out demons from those involuntarily possessed,

386. Hiebert, “Excluded Middle,” 43. This omission of the preternatural that he notes is traced more fully in Daston, “Facts,” 100–113.

387. Because missiologists' accounts are normally told from the Christian perspective and with Christian interests, they normally describe the advance of Christian faith rather than the advance of other, often competing movements.

388. Barrett-Lennard, *Healing*, 229. Barrett-Lennard concludes an examination of exorcism in Irenaeus and Athanasius by noting that in both sources full-scale exorcism seems to have been limited to nonbelievers (228, Athanasius allowing that Christians could be attacked but not possessed). But some ancient sources suggest that a spirit might remain until “the time of the final exorcism on the day before baptism” (266); the bishop functioned as the chief exorcist (274). Cf. also the probably fourth-century *Sacramentary of Sarapion* (277–323), in which Christians could “suffer from less serious forms of demonic attack,” though probably not possession (323). The grandfather of fifth-century historian Sozomen was converted through the family witnessing a Christian instantly exorcise a spirit in Jesus's name, whereas pagans and others had failed to accomplish this by any means (Frend, “Place of Miracles,” 11, citing Sozomen *H.E.* 5.15.14–17).

389. De Wet, “Signs,” 87.

390. See Neill, *History of Missions*, 75; Latourette, *History of Christianity*, 348; Tucker, *Jerusalem*, 47. In the East, in Central Asia, the missionary Elijah likewise felled a sacred tree in a power encounter during the patriarchate of Timothy I (780–823; Young, “Miracles in History,” 112, also noting his effectiveness in exorcisms).

391. Schmidt, “Possession,” 279–92.

392. *Ibid.*, 281; see, e.g., Wesley, *Journal* (1974), 81–83. Earlier, martyrologist John Foxe was known for successful exorcisms (Freeman, “Famous Miracle,” 309). Wesley's father, Samuel, like many of his contemporaries, believed in ghosts (Handley, “Ghosts,” esp. 345, 355); preachers employed these stories moralistically (Handley, “Ghosts,” 348–49). Generally cf. *idem*, *Visions*.

yielding deliverance.³⁹³ Early Methodist preachers in Wesley's day expelled demons from some who were possessed.³⁹⁴ Lutheran pastor Johann Christian Blumhardt undertook a lengthy struggle in prayer until a person believed severely possessed and with an occult background was freed; this deliverance impacted the entire area and, he believed, broke a spiritual barrier.³⁹⁵ Historians document reports of possession and exorcism throughout the history of the church but most commonly "on the border of the church with paganism," that is, when confronting power-related traditional religions.³⁹⁶ Missiologists often cite the relevance of power encounters for reaching cultures today that affirm superhuman powers.³⁹⁷

Modern Examples of Power Encounters

Power encounters appear commonly in modern accounts of evangelization,³⁹⁸ and both popular and academic literature offer numerous fairly recent examples of such power encounter claims, usually yielding conversions. For example, a recent convert to Catholicism, John Chukwu (1902–86), was cursed by witch doctors³⁹⁹ and awoke blind; although physicians could not help him, he was healed when Father John (the priest) prayed and sprinkled on him consecrated water.⁴⁰⁰ In the first quarter of the twentieth century, some villagers in southern Africa during a drought mocked the allegedly foreign Christian god who could not bring rain; Letwaba, the evangelist, promised rain the next day, after which the next day's

393. Tomkins, *Wesley*, 72.

394. Rack, "Healing," 147–49. For Wesley's views about the demonic world in their eighteenth-century context, see Webster, "Terrors." Cf. Baer, "Bodies," 47, for an early Free Methodist exorcism.

395. Ising, *Blumhardt*, 162–89, with clearly therapeutic results (175–76); cf. the gradual deliverance in 327 (and perhaps 327–28). He did not accept all alleged exorcisms, but eyewitness experience opened him to the reality of some (104). See further Macchia, *Spirituality*, 65–68.

396. Skarsaune and Engelsviken, "Possession" (quote from 85).

397. E.g., Hiebert, "Power Encounter," 56; Musk, "Popular Islam," 214–15; Parshall, "Lessons," 255–56.

398. E.g., De Wet, "Signs," 91, notes the following for more examples of power encounters: Johnson, "Authority," 102–11; Klassen, "Fire," 176–82; in Guatemala, Thomas, "Report," 252–55; in India, several studies (Devadason, "Missionary Societies," 179–91; Middleton, "Growth," 109–11; Sargunam, "Churches," 194–95; Shinde, "Animism," 261–62; Zechariah, "Factors," 122–23, 162–65); in Indonesia, Bruckner, "History," 137–87; in Mexico, Aulie, "Movement," 128–85; in Sri Lanka, both Chandy, "Discipling," 117–36, and Daniel, "Labour," 147–72; in the Solomon Islands, Tippet, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 3–19, 42–44, 57–62, 100–111, 190–200; idem, *Verdict Theology*, passim; cf. recent claims of more ambiguous value in Bentley, *Miraculous*, 264, 284, 291, 300. For some recent power encounters in Asia, see Pothén, "Missions," 305–8; Yung, "Case Studies"; Ma, "Planting," 331–35; Khai, *Cross*, 143–44; Gulick, June 8, 13, 2011; cf. the summary about the effectiveness of power encounters in Guthrie, "Breakthrough," 26.

399. For the pervasiveness of witchcraft in Africa (so viewed by fellow Africans), sometimes even among Christians (to the dismay of other Christians), see, e.g., Jenkins, *New Faces*, 110–13 (including stories of conversions from occult backgrounds, some more plausible than others, 112–13). Divination is sometimes used to identify sorcery or witchcraft (e.g., Beattie and Middleton, "Introduction," xxiii; Field, "Possession," 11; Beattie, "Mediumship," 164; Gray, "Cult," 183; Middleton, "Possession," 225; cf. Garbett, "Mediums," 123); on witchcraft accusations, see discussion above. Nevertheless, despite exaggerations and many false accusations, some people do seek to practice malevolent sorcery (Shorter, *Witchcraft*, 99).

400. Protus, "Chukwu."

rainfall generated many converts.⁴⁰¹ Likewise, in early twentieth-century West Africa, Prophet Braide went against traditional religions and competed with the older powers; on one occasion when the dibia challenged him to see if his God could bring rain, he knelt and began praying, and within five minutes the rains fell.⁴⁰² He and the William Wadé Harris both succeeded in winning tens of thousands of their fellow Africans to Christianity especially through power encounters.⁴⁰³

My friend and coworker Dr. Rodney Ragwan recounted a story from his grandfather, Kisten Ragwan, an Indian Baptist tailor in Durban, northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.⁴⁰⁴ One morning a man entered Kisten's tailor shop and said, "Uncle, I will give you some 'medicine.'" (The "medicine" in this case was not merely herbal but related to traditional religion.) Kisten refused, noting that he was a Christian and accepted only the power of God. The man responded that his own power was superior to the power of the God of the Bible, and in the ensuing discussion Kisten agreed to the man's claim that that evening they would see which god was greater. "Around 12:00 tonight I will send a spirit," the man promised, "and you will see which god is more powerful." Being a man of prayer, Kisten fasted that day and then gathered his family around 11:30 to pray. Around 11:45, they heard giant footsteps around the house, which continued for about twenty minutes; Rodney's father remembers these vividly. The steps gradually subsided, and the family went to bed. The next morning at the tailor shop, the man shook Kisten's hand. "Uncle," he said, "my spirits could not get into your house—when they got there, there was fire around your house. Indeed, your God is powerful." Similar, independent reports appear elsewhere.⁴⁰⁵

These accounts fit larger patterns in confrontations claiming to represent competing forms of spiritual power.⁴⁰⁶ Confrontations between different religious groups or individuals with an active view of spiritual power fit into a more general mis-
 siological use of the expression "power encounters."⁴⁰⁷ In many traditional societies, such power encounters in more recent times have, as sometimes earlier, taken the

401. Lindsay, *Lake*, 48–49.

402. Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, *History*, 223–24.

403. Hanciles, "Conversion," 170.

404. Rodney Ragwan, interview, Dec. 15, 2009. Rodney confirmed these details with his father (Kisten Ragwan's son) on Dec. 16, in turn confirming this with me Dec. 17.

405. Koch, *Zulus*, 272–76, reports that another Indian in South Africa, suffering spiritual attacks from a Zulu sorcerer, was being physically "beaten by invisible powers" each night; temporarily delivered but unwilling to submit fully to Christ, he finally died from the spiritual abuse. Ayo Oritsejafor, a Nigerian preacher, reports that a man sent by spirits to disrupt his meeting found himself surrounded by a ring of fire; he gave up his charms and is now an usher in Oritsejafor's church (Oritsejafor, "Dealing," 97). When evangelizing an area known for pervasive witchcraft, Tari and his colleagues regularly heard "strange noises" outside their door, but nothing could penetrate it (Tari, *Breeze*, 136).

406. See, e.g., Olaiya, "Praying," 105–8. Asbury PhD student Samson Uytanlet (personal correspondence, Dec. 15, 2009) recounted two incidents in the Philippines where persons resisted Christians and their ability to free them from the spirits because the people would lose their "power"; in one case the person had angered the spirits by letting the Christians begin to drive the spirits back.

407. Of the three definitions in De Wet, "Signs," 82–83, I include the second (such as burning fetishes) but refer especially to the third, the "challenge-oriented power encounter in public." In traditional thought,

form of burning fetishes or felling a sacred tree or totem, without suffering the promised harmful effects.⁴⁰⁸ Often when those who doubt a religious system defy its taboos and escape unscathed, many insiders are convinced and abandon the taboos.⁴⁰⁹

In one example from Indonesia, it was said that everyone who touched the bark of a particular sacred tree died within twenty-four hours. One Indonesian evangelist cut down and burned the tree; after he suffered no harm, a church was started there.⁴¹⁰ Power encounters are also reported with the spread of the Christian message in other parts of Asia, such as India.⁴¹¹ People have burned fetishes and abandoned witch doctors due to power encounters in African nations⁴¹² and elsewhere.⁴¹³

The number of Protestants grew enormously in Haiti through confronting Vodun⁴¹⁴ and through power encounters there.⁴¹⁵ In one account, fifteen of the children of a polygynous voodoo priest⁴¹⁶ fell sick, and he found his rituals ineffective for curing them. Finally he solicited the prayers of Church of God pastor Edouard Joseph; the children were healed and became followers of Christ.⁴¹⁷ In one relatively recent report from Africa, when shamans gathered around a sacred

tales of power "help connect life narratives to the larger narrative, more holistic than the dominant scientific approach" (Kremer, "Tales of Power," esp. 45–46).

408. De Wet, "Signs," 82–83; Hiebert, "Power Encounter," 52–53; for some African examples, see Numbere, *Vision*, 96, 119, 124–25, 133–37, 142–43, 169–71, 191, 203, 209–11; cf. Burton, "Evangelism" (the final paragraph); William Wadé Harris in Shaw, *Awakening*, 56; Bartels, *Roots*, 174–78 (burning fetishes). For the spiritual power dimension in current missiology more generally (noting negative but esp. positive features), see Pocock, Van Rheen, and McConnell, *Face*, 183–208. For Christian spiritual conflict with Umbanda, particularly involving Christian conversions, see Itioka, "Umbanda"; for conflict when dealing with folk religion, see Burnett, "Conflict."

409. See, e.g., Tippet, *People Movements*, 80–84, 164–67; De Wet, "Signs," 81; an example in Anderson, *Pelendo*, 49–55, 71–76, 139–43, 146–55, 158–59. In some cultures, to burn ancestral witchcraft paraphernalia is to invite an effective familial curse (Favret-Saada, *Witchcraft*, 130, 133); surviving such an action thus undermines the entire system of witchcraft belief. Traditional societies often attribute illness to ritual violations (e.g., Lake, *Healer*, 118).

410. Crawford, *Miracles*, 144–45.

411. Pothen, "Missions," 305–8.

412. In Uganda, see, e.g., Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 86; in an East African AIC, see Githieya, "Church," 241; in West Africa, see, e.g., Burgess, *Revolution*, 151 (among Igbo revivalists of the 1970s); Merz, "Witch," 203; Mayrargue, "Expansion," 286; in southern Africa, Koch, *Zulus*, 148, 152, 153, 199, 279; Braun, *Here*, 160–61. Burning fetishes has a long history (e.g., among nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ghanaian Methodist converts, in Southon, *Methodism*, 99, 150; Joseph Babalola's preaching in 1930 Nigeria, in Davies and Conway, *Christianity*, 118; more recently, cf. the conversion of juju priests in early 1970s Nigeria in Numbere, *Vision*, 96, 134).

413. In some Asian contexts, see, e.g., Danyun, *Lilies*, 331; Park, "Spirituality," 52–53; Jones, *Wonders*, 104; Samuel, "Gatherings," in India; Koch, *Zulus*, 111, digressing on Indonesia; Tari, *Wind*, 27, 43; idem, *Breeze*, 21, 137. For a Western equivalent, cf. Crandall, *Raising*, 78, 86–88.

414. Johnson, "Growing Church," 54–58.

415. E.g., destroying an "indestructible" sacred rock, in Johnson, "Growing Church," 55–56.

416. Although often treated as unique in Western Christian reports, Vodun preserves large measures of traditional African religion from what is now Benin and from the Congo-Angola region (Fleurant, "Music," 47; Clérismé, "Vodoun," 60; Michel, Bellegarde-Smith, and Racine-Toussaint, "Mouths," 75).

417. A report from Lloyd Frazier, among reports sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, Nov. 9, 2009.

tree were cursing the Christians' God (during a meeting of Christians seven miles away), lightning destroyed the tree, apparently producing a widespread response.⁴¹⁸

Such confrontations have occurred in the Philippines. Some mountain families in the Philippines would spend several years' wages to buy sacrificial pigs prescribed by traditional exorcists to seek deliverance for a possessed family member. A local Christian leader began successfully exorcising the possessed without fees, and often accomplishing what traditional exorcists could not.⁴¹⁹ Traditional Kankana-eyes (a tribal group in the northern Philippines) practice animism and ancestor worship, but when people are healed through Christian prayer rather than through contact with ancestors, families and even communities sometimes turn to Christian faith.⁴²⁰

In Manila in 1953, the possession of seventeen-year-old Clarita Villanueva, who had been repeatedly bitten by spirits in the Bilibid prison, attracted national media attention. The observed and well-documented exorcism that followed was likewise publicized, resulting in what some estimate were many thousands of conversions.⁴²¹ In a church known for healings and exorcisms in Mindanao, Philippines, one informant who saw some other miracles firsthand related an incident he heard about from shortly before his arrival there. A possessed person announced, "We will come at 7:00 p.m." At 7:00 p.m., the power went out, and the person declared, "See, I told you, there are more of us now." But despite their show of power, the spirits were all cast out.⁴²²

418. Chavda, *Miracle*, 9–10, 128–29, including photographs (between 78 and 79) and the claim of eyewitnesses. In Nigerian evangelism, extraordinary lightning attacks have also been construed as power encounters (Numbere, *Vision*, 165), as also storms and other phenomena for which wizards claimed credit (Numbere, *Vision*, 209). Koch, *Zulus*, 157, portrays some witch doctors as able to cause storms (cf. Rev 13:13), though here countered by Christ (with lightning). One of my students, Paul Mokake, has shared several eyewitness accounts of power encounters in his homeland of northern Cameroon (noting demonstrations of supernatural power from both sides, including those involving weather conditions). Claims of weather conditions changing during some traditional religions' rituals also appear (Turner, "Advances," 43, although the connection between the ritual and the weather is only implicit, and only one case is cited; cf. Kinnear, *Tide*, 92–96).

419. Cole, "Model," 264, regarding his friend, Rev. Antonio Caput Sr., who also demands the destruction of fetishes (265).

420. Ma, "Encounter," 136; see more fully idem, *Spirit*. The forms of Christianity most relevant in such traditional religious contexts emphasizing spiritual power are those that also emphasize spiritual power (Ma, "Worldviews," 20).

421. The ministry of Lester Sumrall in May 1953, in Johnson, *History*, 77–78 (brought to my attention in idem, personal correspondence, Feb. 20, 2009); Stewart, *Only Believe*, 94–97. The reports claim that a physician, police, and reporters were in attendance at the time of the exorcism and name some of them. Sumrall, *Story*, 7–36, extensively quotes Manila newspapers by name and date, including concerning the biting phenomenon, which many took to be genuine spirit activity. Dr. Mariano B. Lara, then chief medical examiner of the Manila Police Department and a university professor of pathology and legal medicine, was convinced of the genuineness of the possession and exorcism and provided his own description, recounted at length in Sumrall, *Story*, 37–83; more concisely, see Lara, "Report." For spirit-afflicted persons being assaulted by the spirits elsewhere, see also the brief accounts by Dr. H. C. Moolenburgh (*Meetings*, 154). More recently in Manila, see "Priest in war."

422. Chester Allan Tesoro, interview, Jan. 30, 2009.

A missionary doctor reports that someone who wished to stab him was unable to withdraw the knife from its scabbard, and that such incidents convinced many locals that Christ was more powerful than the spirits.⁴²³ Cameroonian Christians exorcised a person known to be insane; his immediate and full recovery led to many conversions in the community.⁴²⁴ Many Indian evangelists pray and fast, then minister to those who are held to be possessed; word of deliverances from spirits spreads, opening the community to the gospel.⁴²⁵ After Micronesian pastor Steve Malakai began to rebuke the spiritual powers dominant in the ruins of an ancient sacrificial site, widespread healings, deliverances, and conversions followed.⁴²⁶ A Sri Lankan evangelist notes that he cast out demons, and converts turned over talismans and charms; people expected him to suffer harm, but he did not.⁴²⁷ *Jesus Film* workers around the world have also frequently reported power encounters.⁴²⁸

Power Encounters That Persuade Religious Competitors

Some accounts involve conflict between religious practitioners or narrate the superiority of one over another. I noted above the report of Garrick Braide's success against the dibia.⁴²⁹ In 1971, when a juju priestess was influencing his family, young Nigerian Christian Geoffrey Numbere confronted her in Jesus's name. She began staggering, lost her powers, and permanently lost her mind; Geoffrey's family was converted.⁴³⁰ In an account not involving direct confrontation, a South African witch doctor told a mute, new Christian that he could not help her, but when her Christian friends prayed for her, she was healed.⁴³¹

Displays of spiritual power have sometimes led practitioners of one religion to switch allegiances. Thus, for example, in the late 1940s, a Congolese evangelist named Peter faced opposition from a witch doctor named Kasumba. When Kasumba fell sick and his fellow witch doctors could not help him, someone robed in white instructed him in a dream to have Peter pray for him; although Kasumba was healed, he immediately reverted to his opposition. The pattern was repeated three

423. Lees and Fiddes, "Healed," 25.

424. Paul Mokake (interview, May 13, 2009), as one of the people who prayed and witnessed the healing. Other societies can also associate possession with "madness"; see, e.g., Kasule, "Possession," 299, 303 (for Uganda); Mbiti, *Religions*, 227; for ancient Mediterranean associations, see appendix A.

425. Dunkerley, *Healing Evangelism*, 169–70; in many of these communities, this is the only available inroad for teaching a message differing from the traditional one. Yohannan, *Revolution*, 21, 30, also notes frequent deliverance from demonization in India.

426. Wayne and Judy Cagle supplied me with their written reports from fall 1992, which they confirmed for me orally (Jan. 25, 2009).

427. Daniel, "Labour," 158–59.

428. E.g., Eshleman, *Jesus*, 108 (Indonesia), 110–11 (India), 111–12 (Thailand).

429. Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, *History*, 223–24.

430. Numbere, *Vision*, 40–41. For other encounters, see 125–26, 170.

431. Johns, "Name." I include the story here and not in the part of the book recounting healing narratives because no organic cause for her six months of muteness was found.

times, but the third time Kasumba became a committed Christian and eventually an elder in the young village church.⁴³²

Albert Bissouessoue told us various accounts of spiritual conflict, including one already recounted (where Jesus raised a dead girl in Etoumbi that traditional spirit practitioners could not).⁴³³ Here I focus on his account from Etoumbi, March 1987, when an anguished man confessed that he belonged to a traditional cult and had made a pact with the spirits to have a good life provided they could take his life on a particular date and time. Now the date was three days away, at midnight, and he wanted to confess to someone because he lamented leaving behind his family. Papa Bissouessoue explained that Jesus Christ could free him from this evil bondage; the man returned in twenty minutes with all the objects related to the pact, and Papa Bissouessoue burned them. When the appointed time came, Papa Bissouessoue and his wife experienced a deep spiritual battle, and Papa Bissouessoue says that he witnessed the devil himself. But they were crying out to Jesus, and the time passed with no harm to the man, who quickly entrusted himself to Christ. Today he is an influential lay leader in the Catholic parish of Brazzaville.

Likewise, Korean shaman Bok-hee Lim viewed the prayers of Christians in her neighborhood as a confrontation between their God and her “demigods.” Ultimately persuaded that the one God of the Christians is greater, she finally gathered five carloads of “the clothes and equipment that she used for her practice and burned them all,” and then she “destroyed the little temple for her god of shamanism in her backyard.”⁴³⁴

Similarly, when a woman in northern Thailand became the first Christian in her village in 1963, the traditional priest mocked her as she fell sick and apparently died. When the Christians who had joined her prayed, however, she recovered and began telling villagers “their previously unknown secrets”; the priest’s son became a Christian and eventually an elder in that church.⁴³⁵ In Tibet, a former priest (once attached to a lamasery) was dying after seven years of sickness, unable to eat; when a Christian invited to pray did so, and the family responded to his admonitions to destroy ties with other spirits, the man recovered and all his friends attributed this recovery to Jesus.⁴³⁶ In Myanmar, it is reported that a village priest close to death was healed and converted.⁴³⁷

432. Hodgson, “Sorcerer” (referring to Belgian Congo, now the Democratic Republic of Congo). On the second occasion, the recovery appears natural, but the protection from death appears supernatural.

433. Another account involved his recognition, in late 1986, that something was wrong with the pastor in training; eventually the man began to lose his mind and was delivered only when he confessed and allowed Papa Bissouessoue to burn the fetishes he had kept for protection. He now has a thriving ministry (Papa Bissouessoue named the man, his location, and many details that I am not using here). All of these accounts are from the interview by Emmanuel Moussounga, Dec. 17, 2009.

434. Park, “Spirituality,” 52–53.

435. Remaining an elder at the time of writing in Gardner, *Healing Miracles*, 138.

436. William Christie (the person who prayed) in Fant, *Miracles*, 110–12. The restored man joined the missionaries in evangelizing and lived healthily twelve years until his sudden death, which some attributed to poisoning (Fant, *Miracles*, 112–13).

437. Khai, “Pentecostalism,” 269.

Early in the Timor revival in Indonesia, many destroyed their charms and fetishes.⁴³⁸ Indonesian Christians tell of a traditional priest who saw the spirits with which he had worked depart after visiting Christians prayed; the priest and village were converted.⁴³⁹ One powerful witch doctor in central Java, who claims that her magic had killed at least a thousand people and describes the normal manner of their death,⁴⁴⁰ was informed of Jesus through a vision, never having known Christians or about Christianity. When she became a Christian and faced hostility from her relatives, she sold everything that she had.⁴⁴¹ When a witch doctor stood against a Maasai believer's witness, the witch doctor fell to the ground and was converted.⁴⁴²

During the healing campaign of black South African evangelist Isak Thlape in Viljoenskroon in 1978, an influential shaman knotted many charms into his hair, then got in the healing line so he could see what was happening. When Thlape prayed, everyone in line fell to ground at the same time—including the shaman. He was semiconscious for more than five minutes, and when he recovered full consciousness, he found "that all his hair into which the amulets and charms were knotted, had literally fallen out of his head." He quickly became a public follower of Christ.⁴⁴³

Converted to Christianity, a witch in West Africa destroyed his witchcraft paraphernalia⁴⁴⁴ and eventually experienced greater spiritual power, which he claims to have used to deliver others from witchcraft.⁴⁴⁵ Ineba Ojuka, a priestess of the sea

438. Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 278–79, 282; York, "Indigenous Missionaries," 250–51. Indonesian shamans converted to Christianity burned their fetishes (Tari, *Breeze*, 21, 24).

439. Tari, *Wind*, 37–40.

440. In Knapstad, "Power," 84, she mixed "black magic" with verses from the Qur'an and a mantra "and use[d] the spirit of the dead to cause the persons to die. After I said the mantra, the people would vomit blood and then die." Two other informants also confirmed her description of killing by witchcraft (84). The daughter of a witch doctor, being trained to be his successor but converted to Christianity, attested that her father had killed many through witchcraft (89).

441. Knapstad, "Power," 83–85 (based on his interview with her).

442. Eshleman, *Jesus*, 14–15.

443. De Wet, "Signs," 84–85, noting (91n2) that the evangelist narrated the event to him and eyewitnesses later confirmed it. For southern African conversions of those confessing that they had practiced witchcraft, see also stories in Koch, *Zulus*, 136–37, 143–44, 144–45, 147–48, 150, 153. Venter, *Healing*, 253, notes the exorcism of some African spiritists, effective only once their fetishes were burned. Pothén, "Missions," 189, reports that in Gujarat and Maharashtra in the 1980s, many sorcerers turned instead to Christ; in Africa, Baker, *Miracles*, 53, notes occasions (including six former shamans in one church); also the conversion of shamans mentioned in Alexander, *Signs*, 89, 110; those converted in Anderson, *Pelendo*, 119, 155–58; a case in *Miracle Investigation*; another apparent case in Marszalek, *Miracles*, 160; hundreds of Alauts (local practitioners of witchcraft) converted in Tari, *Breeze*, 136. A report sent to me by Asian evangelist Vasanth Edward (March 10, 2007, about events of the preceding weeks) notes that one day he warned against witchcraft; one woman, long paralyzed by witchcraft, was healed as she heard that message, and that night someone known for witchcraft died, leading to many conversions. Eshleman, *Jesus*, 108, describes the inversion of a witch doctor's curse (harming opponents rather than supporters of the *Jesus Film* workers). Some market witch conversion testimonies (Ukah and Ehtler, "Witches," 77–79).

444. Merz, "Witch," 203.

445. *Ibid.*, 213. In his cultural worldview (but not in Scripture; cf., e.g., Acts 8:19–23), he had a sort of spiritual charisma naturally, which could be used for evil witchcraft or God's service (213–14, Merz warning also on 214 that some Nigerian Pentecostals have acted in ways very much like the witches they condemn).

goddess Akaso, was instantly healed of long-standing ailments (arthritis, a decade of chronic coughing, and near blindness) and converted in an evangelism meeting in southern Nigeria.⁴⁴⁶ Converted through a dream, a witch doctor in Borneo burned his charms, and, against his culture's traditional expectations, he remains well.⁴⁴⁷ Finding himself and his colleagues unable to attack a Cuban evangelist, the leader of an occult group publicly converted.⁴⁴⁸

When Indian village priests who had previously used witchcraft to kill found themselves unable to harm an Indian Christian, they became believers.⁴⁴⁹ One local priestess in India, though known for power to inflict sickness and death, became completely paralyzed below the neck for three years. Sacrifices and petitions failed to alleviate her condition, but when an Indian Christian prayed for her, she was instantly healed, and soon was running, praising the Christian God. She was the first of many in her village to become a believer in Jesus.⁴⁵⁰

Readers in contexts of confrontation with traditional power religions thus find valuable relevance in ancient power encounters like those described in Acts 8:9–13; 13:8–12; 19:11–20; or other narratives like Exod 7:10–12.⁴⁵¹ Ancient Christians accepted the reality of spirits besides God but believed that in any confrontation, their God would readily overcome all other spirits not submitted to him.⁴⁵²

Some Personal and Family Experiences

While I personally believe that God often works with people in terms that they understand, I also find much current discussion about spiritual warfare inconsistent with biblical teaching and am uncomfortable with the explanations of many who practice “deliverance” routinely in popular settings. (I do not deny that some experience these occasions positively for psychological or spiritual reasons.) Nevertheless, to simply reject the possibility of genuine spirit experiences because of plentiful abuses, as many do, risks an uncritical overreaction.

I long resisted including any of my or my family's accounts here, because for some reason some consider experiences from one or one's immediate circle (like those of Pascal) more of a bias than extrapolation from nonexperience (like that of Hume's circle). Nevertheless, I have ultimately decided to follow the example

446. Numbere, *Vision*, 189–90. She maintained her new faith despite the hostility of other members of her former religion.

447. Green, *Asian Tigers*, 108.

448. Alamino, *Footsteps*, 34–35; another dramatic power encounter and deliverance of an occult priest appears on 40.

449. Yohannan, *Revolution*, 21. The priests reported fire and angels protecting the believer.

450. *Ibid.*, 204–5.

451. That the Egyptians would have understood Moses's signs so differently from the Israelites (as more like a circus performance) suggests the importance of perspective (or “faith”) in power encounters (cf. LaCocque, “Competition,” 95). For ancient Egyptian snake charming, see Currid, *Egypt*, 94–95.

452. On early biblical miracles in competition with claims of other deities, starting with the paradigmatic plagues in Exodus, see, e.g., Tucker, “Miracles,” 378. For the plagues from Egypt's religious perspective (cf. Exod 12:12), see, e.g., Hoffmeier, *Israel*, 149–53; cf. *Pesiq. Rab.* 17:5.

of the experientially oriented anthropologists and offer some experiences, the interpretations of which may be debated by others. I do not care to report all my or my family's experiences that could be relevant, but I narrate some samples here to illustrate why I take seriously some African and other reports about spirits, although these particular examples do not involve possession behavior.

Nearly four years after my conversion from atheism and several years before I had reimbibed much academic skepticism, I was visiting a recently converted widow when I felt that God's Spirit led me to a door, which I found then led me into a dark basement. As I descended the stairs, I felt that the widow's husband's "ghost" was behind another door in the basement, but according to the basic theology I had imbibed, this spirit could only really be a demon. Once I commanded it to leave in Jesus's name, it departed; the widow then informed me that her husband's belongings were stored in that room and that he had been involved with the occult. She also informed me that a year earlier she had dated a man who claimed to have psychic powers, who claimed that the ghost of her husband was in that room and tried to exorcise it; it chased him away instead.⁴⁵³

While that experience fit my theological and cultural understanding at the time, the following experiences of myself or my relatives did not.⁴⁵⁴ In September 2006, one of my Congolese brothers-in-law, Dr. Jacques Emmanuel Moussounga, was the object of hostility from some people openly known to employ witchcraft. During this period, in a dream a snake bit his heels, and he awoke to find two physical holes in his heels. His legs gradually became immobilized as the poison spread up his legs, until he prayed with a person known for her prayerfulness; then he recovered. A PhD in chemistry from a French university, he noted that he never would have believed it had he not experienced it himself.

One of these hostile people insisted that Emmanuel visit him; because he was a relative⁴⁵⁵ and it was therefore a family obligation, Emmanuel went. No sooner

453. See further Keener, *Gift*, 64–65.

454. Lagerwerf, *Witchcraft*, 62, speaks of experience with possession altering a minister's prior theological approach.

455. Although I do not know the full motivation in this case, witchcraft is usually believed to be directed against relatives and neighbors (Bond, "Ancestors," 142; Reynolds, *Magic*, 44; in nineteenth-century Germany, cf. perhaps Ising, *Blumhardt*, 177, though Ising seems skeptical). Binsbergen, "Witchcraft," 243, notes that one very widespread belief in Africa is the assumption that among those who achieve significant power in any domain, political or otherwise, "a close kinsman needs to be sacrificed or to be nominated as victim of occult, antisocial forces," and he further notes that he has "extensive reasons" for viewing this as reflecting real practices. Africans I know cite numerous examples, and it is difficult to believe otherwise: if such a belief is pervasive, then given human nature it is likely that some would indulge in it, especially concerning relatives they do not like. Even without occult connections and a recognized tradition of kin jealousy, many Westerners are ready to sacrifice family for success. The only grandparent my wife knew growing up was her mother's father, after he was reconciled with his daughter. The man had seemed very nice, but the family usually avoided his brother, who openly boasted about practicing witchcraft. One day the brother demanded all the possessions of Médine's grandfather, who was not a Christian. The grandfather refused, to which the brother replied, "We'll see." Her grandfather fell sick with a fever that night and died the next day. This was widely understood as being due to witchcraft. We know more recent, closer and multiply attested examples of witchcraft attempts on family members. Witchcraft

had he left their domicile than he felt so sick that he thought that he would die, recovering only after much prayer. Later, discounting the matter as coincidence, he visited the man again at the latter's insistence and suffered the same overwhelming, nearly paralyzing sickness. Seeking prayer, he stumbled into the home of another member of his church, known for the gift of prophecy. No sooner had he entered than she demanded, "Where have you been that you should not have gone?" Although she had no natural means of knowing about the person who had sought his harm, she declared that the Lord had shown her the person's name; it was the right name.⁴⁵⁶

Emmanuel recounted an incident in which a boy in his Sunday school was dying of the same mysterious sickness that had claimed the lives of the boy's two close friends. Fearful about his prognosis, the boy confessed what the three had done. An older man they met on the street had promised that they would become powerful government ministers, provided they kept this pact secret from anyone else. Then he had taken blood from each of them (not entirely voluntarily, especially for the youngest).⁴⁵⁷ Soon after this event, the oldest of the three boys dreamed that this older man and three others stabbed him; he awoke ill that morning and died in December. The day that the first boy died, the second boy had the same dream, then fell sick; he died in February. That day the third boy had the same dream and fell sick, and he was so afraid that in about May he confessed this information. The Sunday school teachers who knew him, including Emmanuel, fasted during the day for nine days, then came together to pray for the boy. Emmanuel felt the Spirit strongly as they prayed, and the boy was healed that night.⁴⁵⁸

In July 2008, my wife and I spent time in Congo, so our marriage and support for the family became a matter of common knowledge even to those who wished to harm the family. A few months later, on December 6, I was experiencing what felt like such an unusual and unnaturally dramatic spiritual assault I was literally not

claims are not, of course, limited to families. In 2000, my then-future wife told me the story of a church in Congo where the new pastor killed a "sacred" animal being kept for rituals in the sanctuary, and the next day eight or nine deacons, who had syncretistically bound their lives with its life, died. The story, though secondhand, illustrates local beliefs.

456. Oct. 29, 2008 (I believe the visit may have been on Oct. 28). She also said she saw him being "electrocuted." That was not literal, but it was relevant. We had previously warned him not to go, in connection with a nightmare in which I had seen him being detained and being electrocuted. On another occasion (reported to us on Oct. 16, 2008; the events very probably happened that day or possibly the day before), both this woman and a child independently heard the same spiritual warning about the child's safety at the same time; unknown to the woman, the child had fallen very sick, but was able to recover once extricated from the situation.

457. As I discovered later, some other African peoples also appear to report this practice for some witchcraft rituals; see Koch, *Zulus*, 118.

458. Interview (Brazzaville, July 25, 2008), concerning events from that year. On April 16, 2010, we confirmed (phone interview) that the boy remains well. Western Christians who deny the possibility of any non-Christian spiritual power ought not attribute their skepticism to the biblical authors. At the same time, although many texts do link such power with individuals (e.g., Exod 7:12; Mark 13:22; 2 Thess 2:9; Rev 13:13–15), the larger picture considers the powers behind such activity (Eph 6:12). Moreover, Christians can cite biblical limits in Num 23:8; 2 Sam 16:12; Prov 26:2.

sure that I would survive the day. The next day, as I was recovering, I was walking with my wife and son, and we stopped under a particular strong tree, about three stories tall. No sooner had we followed my son's advice to walk a few steps away than the tree fell without warning, precisely where we had been standing, blocking the small road. Had it fallen a few seconds earlier, all three of us would have been crushed to death. I believe that this is the only tree I have ever witnessed falling (though I have of course seen fallen trees), yet out of hundreds of trees in view that day, and all the different ways that it could have fallen, it fell precisely where we had been standing seconds before. We came back and happily photographed the tree before the property owners called in a crew for it to be sawed and removed. The roots had not come up, but it looked as if the trunk had been cut through, and the wood appeared completely healthy.⁴⁵⁹

When Médine's brother went for prayer, the person prophesied that those employing witchcraft had tried to target us, to eliminate our support for the family; when the attack on my psyche proved ineffective, the hostile spirit settled in a tree that was twisting about, an image that made little sense to this woman until Médine's brother explained what had happened. She said that God had protected us, in part because of what God had called me to do. On December 15, 2008, an Ethiopian Pentecostal prophet prophesied about spirits having tried to kill me but being thwarted by God. He also gave various other relevant details about my life, including about this and another book, which something did not want written, without knowing anything about me, that I am an author, or the recent events.

To my recollection, no one had ever prophesied to me previously about spirits trying to kill me, or even about spirits *per se*; certainly no one had prophesied to me about a demon-afflicted tree. While I was fairly unfamiliar with African discourse about witchcraft, however, I was quite familiar with particular individuals who sometimes prophesied quite accurately (as opposed to random persons whose prophecies were more hit-and-miss). These were among the more accurate prophets. I felt deeply shaken by these events and their interpretation, which challenged elements of my worldview. For me as a Western Christian academician, these African-related experiences represented an entirely different world.

Of course there are the terribly frequent abuses, exaggerations, and psychological projections involved in many spirit beliefs and practices; after a few frightening experiences, it is easy for one to begin wrongly reading every mishap as a sign of witchcraft, especially within a cultural sphere that would reinforce that belief. Is it possible, however, that at least some actual spirit experiences lay originally and occasionally behind these wider beliefs? Like any of us when we fit evidence within an interpretive grid, those who invariably prefer purely materialistic explanations regularly prove resourceful and creative and would undoubtedly explain some of the above events as the result of suggestion and the others as mere coincidence. Because it is not impossible to construe them differently if necessary, my examples

459. I recorded the incidents in some notes at the time, in addition to the photographs.

do not offer incontrovertible proof to the contrary. Nevertheless, given our cumulative experiences (including but not limited to those narrated above), I hope that I can be forgiven for personally suspecting that, whatever the excesses, Africa may yet know some things that the West has forgotten.

Conclusion

Possession experiences are documented so widely that their appearance in ancient sources such as the Gospels and Acts should not surprise us. Although some ancient descriptions appear in fictitious sources, even these sources likely depend ultimately on information derived from traditions of genuine possession behavior, and we cannot rule out the possibility of eyewitness traditions in other ancient descriptions. We may interpret these claims in various ways, but they do call into question the curiously modern Western idea, held by some, that exorcism reports (replete with speaking spirits) can represent only legend and never eyewitness claims. Regardless of who stands behind Acts' "we" source, for example, Paul's stay in Philippi was part of it, and the first-person narrator persists at least long enough to know of the pythoness's proclamation (Acts 16:16–17).⁴⁶⁰

The meaning of possession experiences is debated, and possibly multiple, complementary models are helpful for explaining different aspects of such experiences or different kinds of cases. Exorcism is reported in many societies, often with therapeutic effects (at least sometimes due to local expectations, but in some reports possibly involving paranormal factors). Missiologists show, however, that power encounters often occur when worldviews that depend on spiritual power come into conflict. Along with other information, this perspective makes sense of the widespread tradition of Jesus's and his early followers' frequent use of exorcism.

460. The "we" is not explicit on the day of the event (Acts 16:18) but also does not figure into any of the action reported there, so it would not have reason to be mentioned. Even assuming that the narrator had taken that day off (which is not clear but is possible), it is difficult to suppose that he would not have heard the firsthand report afterward (Acts 16:40).

Appendix C

Comparisons with Later Christian Hagiography

The usual historiographic procedure is to examine proposed parallels from the milieu of the works in question, not from a milieu that existed only centuries later. Although I have addressed healing claims in this book from a much later period than those in the Gospels and Acts (most frequently from our own era), these comparisons are for the purpose of addressing philosophic questions specifically regarding miracles and the possibility of eyewitness claims, not for adducing literary parallels. Medieval hagiography is not a genuine literary parallel, nor does it often provide the sociological sort of parallel to eyewitnesses and secondhand sources claiming miracles that the modern reports I have included do. It can illustrate that late accounts can include substantial elaboration or fiction, but that premise is not in dispute, though given the dates of our documents, it is also less relevant than some suppose. I must, however, survey some examples of later Christian hagiography because these have been cited by others as a determinative grid for interpreting first-century miracle accounts.

Methodological Questions

On occasion, some scholars have compared the Gospels and Acts not only with pagan and Jewish accounts from their own time or the centuries immediately following but also with medieval hagiography and later German folktales.¹ The

1. Cf. medieval saints' lives in Dibelius, *Tradition*, 177 (following K. L. Schmidt); anchorite traditions in Dibelius, *Tradition*, 172–76; German and other folktales in, e.g., Bultmann, *Tradition* (1963), 229 (or

nature of these stories' preservation and growth differs substantially from that of first-century biographies (like the Gospels) and historical monographs (like Acts). Scholars have long recognized a significant difference between legends often accumulated over centuries, on the one hand, and first- and second-generation sources, on the other.² As one writer a century ago noted, "As a rule, the miraculous element is exhibited in these medieval biographies of saints very much in proportion to the interval of time between the events and the date of writing."³ He contrasts the more modest claims offered for Martin of Tours nearer his decease with more fantastic claims offered by Ailred centuries after his protagonist Ninian,⁴ though he finds significant oral elaboration even in the life of Columba, written a century after his passing.⁵ Yet stories of Jesus's healings appear in Mark within a generation, and healings appear in "we" material even in the final chapter of Acts, closer in time to that work's composition. As such, closer functional analogies for the rapid rise of claims in the Gospels and Acts should be with the sorts of modern signs claims I cite later in this book, which appeal to eyewitnesses.

One can hardly call such first-generation claims "legendary accretions" such as we have in the hagiographic literature. Even a cursory reading of the healing accounts that I have noted in the book will reveal that some of them, including my own, are recalled years or even decades after the event. While this means that some details will be vague or forgotten, however, it hardly means that the events were invented; neither I nor any of my informants was suffering from dementia. In fact, the more dramatic the experience, and the more often it has been rehearsed, the more that it will be remembered, albeit in the fixed form surrounding the details most often rehearsed.⁶ Records of firsthand memories from the witness's lifetime, particularly recent years, differ from second- or thirdhand accounts often generations later and without identifiable witnesses. The first two generations are far less likely to generate legendary accretions on average than are later sources.

"fairy" stories, e.g., 6, 229, 236); elaboration in Renaissance artwork in Bultmann, *Tradition*, 317; also comparison with a Buddhist tale of water walking in Dibelius, *Tradition*, 116; idem, *Jesus*, 84; Bultmann, *Tradition*, 237. Early form critics readily identified many Gospel materials as legends, often through content criticism (e.g., Dibelius, *Tradition*, 104–32; in Acts, Dibelius, *Studies in Acts*, 24–25). Karris, *Saying*, 41, calls Luke "the first hagiographer," though not necessarily implying that Luke follows the later elaborative techniques. More recently, Borg, *Vision*, 74n37, has compared a third-century bishop who, after his decapitation, carried his head to his church and "sang the mass"; he does not provide a date for the tradition. None of these analogies is as extreme as Schamoni, *Parallelen*, who (according to Sabourin, *Miracles*, 265) uses later practices for canonizing saints as parallels to early Christian miracles.

2. E.g., Bernard, "Miracle," 392, who dates most Gospel reports within a half century of the events narrated (390); cf. Young, "Miracles in History," 115. In the early Roman Empire, biographies of persons from the previous generation or two tend to be substantially historical (see data in Keener, "Otho"; cf. "Assumptions"), as opposed to works involving characters from centuries past.

3. Wilson, "Miracles," 22.

4. Ibid., 22–23.

5. Ibid., 23–26 (esp. 23).

6. See Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 331–34. I can often recall faces, feelings, and other details of such events three decades ago that I never deliberately memorized, though of course I cannot recall all the events and conversations that I would recall had the events taken place only last night.

Of course, we do see hagiographic embellishment in various ancient sources, whether second-century apocryphal gospels and acts⁷ or in pseudepigraphic stories valorizing the patriarchs or *1 Enoch* reporting Noah's miraculous birth. But second-century gospels and acts (using the model of more accurate first-century sources) are generally more than a century later than the characters they depict,⁸ and haggadah about earlier Jewish heroes many centuries after the sources first reporting those characters. Embellishment becomes more common in third- and fourth-century descriptions of earlier works,⁹ and the tendency grew in time. Especially following ca. 1000 C.E., when hagiographic miracle collections became part of the growing canonization process, miracle accounts were used propagandistically by those campaigning for a location's or order's saint.¹⁰ These included not only claims of miracles worked during the saint's life (the greater analogy to be made with the Gospels and Acts) but also claims of posthumous miracles.¹¹ Some of these traditions will be earlier and more reliable than others,¹² but historians must approach them very critically, especially in cases where sources date from many generations after the miracle in question.

Because some scholars have employed medieval hagiography for comparisons (at least pleasantly, since it offers graphic ones), I want to offer the reader here a taste of later hagiography, including at greatest length a case from one of my favorite later stories.¹³ It is admittedly more fanciful than most of the second- and third-century apocryphal works, though even these are far enough removed from our first-century sources about Jesus and his first followers (see the fuller discussion of these sources in the introduction to my commentary on Acts).¹⁴ Clearly hagiographic

7. Cf., e.g., Bultmann, *Tradition*, 241 (citing *Gos. Nic.* 7); Dibelius, *Tradition*, 106 (citing, e.g., *Acts John* 38ff.; *Acts Paul* 33); cf. Dibelius, *Tradition*, 273 (citing *Odes Sol.* 24; Ignatius *Eph.* 18.2; Justin *Dial.* 28.3).

8. Cf. also discussion in Blomberg, *Gospels*, 113–15, and the sources he cites. Their heyday, like that of Greek novels, is the late second and early third centuries (Aune, *Dictionary of Rhetoric*, 322).

9. Frost, *Healing*, 162.

10. See Andric, *Miracles*, 2. Analogous techniques in inquisition procedures show how testimony was often selected and shaped to fit objectives (Goodich, "History," 135–37), though much valuable information nevertheless survived (see, e.g., Goodich, "History," 152–56). For medieval understanding of miracles ca. 1000–1215, see Ward, *Miracles*. For the development of the conception of miracles ca. 1150–1350, see Goodich, *Miracles*; for their apologetic use against theological competitors such as Waldensians, Cathars, and Jews, see Goodich, *Miracles*, 69.

11. Andric, *Miracles*, 3.

12. Cf. also other cautions, e.g., in Goodich, *Miracles*, 87: "in canonization cases the canon lawyers, notaries, and theologians who were charged with determining the authenticity of miracles received a list of questions to which witnesses testifying under oath were asked to respond." The requirement of sworn depositions arose under Innocent III (1198–1216; Bolton, "Signs," 165); note also "vivid local details" in some accounts (Bolton, "Signs," 168).

13. Elsewhere, while hagiographies can echo the Gospels and Acts, they also can include fanciful tales not originally meant to be taken seriously. Such "pure fairy-tale incidents" include "when a missionary crosses the sea on a floating altar, or a monk hangs his clothes on a sunbeam" (Ashe, *Miracles*, 66, noting that such folklore is "often adapted from pre-Christian legend").

14. Keener, *Acts*, introduction ch. 2. Most scholars recognize the similarities of these later works to novels; see, e.g., Aune, *Environment*, 151–52; Lalleman, "Apocryphal Acts," 67; Rebenich, "Historical Prose," 307–8; Bauckham, "Acts of Paul"; Keylock, "Distinctness," 210; Krasser, "Reading," 554; Hofmann,

practices grew over time. Some critics occasionally cite later hagiography against our first-century sources' reliability,¹⁵ but I would cite such material, if at all, to the opposite effect, believing that contrasts should be obvious. That is, while modern Western antisupernaturalists may lump all miracle accounts together, a more critical approach should be able to distinguish among different kinds of miracle reports, including the usual contrast between first- or second-generation sources and later ones that reflect considerable development. I have already argued that the NT accounts preserve the basic core of the events.¹⁶ The tendency of some hagiography to emphasize the saints more than the God who answered their prayers drew some reactions even in antiquity¹⁷ and may reflect the milieu of hero cults in late antiquity.¹⁸

Various Tales

Stories of saints written closer to their time in general carry more historical reminiscences; those written centuries later can sometimes be almost pure fiction.¹⁹ Later accounts were also often contextualized for local interests; Andean culture, which had flying religious figures, envisioned St. Francis as flying.²⁰ Probably an early case of hagiography surrounds St. Helena's discovery of Jesus's true cross at Golgotha. There is very strong evidence that the site of the Holy Sepulchre is near the place of Jesus's original tomb, in the early second century already venerated as a holy site that Hadrian sought to desecrate.²¹ Notwithstanding such evidence, there is no clear connection to Helena having a revelation about this site, or discovery of three crosses, the nails, and the crown of thorns, until at least seven decades later.²² This deficiency is particularly striking in view of the silence of a contemporary source on this matter that describes her pilgrimage to the holy

"Novels: Christian," 846–48; Perkins, "World." Bultmann notes novelistic development of Jesus's miracles in these later sources and retrojects it into first-century sources (*Tradition*, 241). I have offered one more sustained contrast with novels in Keener, "Official."

15. I.e., to argue that if one accepts reports of phenomena attributed to supernatural sources in the canonical Gospels or Acts, one may as well believe such hagiography.

16. See again Keener, *Historical Jesus*; idem, *Acts*.

17. Haldon, "Essay," 46.

18. See, e.g., Philostratus *Hrk.* passim, and comments in Maclean and Aitken, *Heroikos*. Even some specific traditions like halos had ancient pagan counterparts (though one could postulate divine contextualization); see, e.g., Valerius Maximus 1.6.1, 2; Pliny *Nat.* 36.70.204. The veneration of Christian saints apparently developed from the veneration of Christian martyrs, ca. 160 C.E. (Fröhlich, "Saints," 871).

19. See examples in Bentley, *Relics*, 67–68 (esp. comments on St. Ithamar, used to restore English pride in the twelfth century). The story of holy anointing oil brought to St. Remi by a heavenly dove is first attested three centuries after Remi's time (83). Some miracle stories about Brigit (written perhaps two centuries after her) are tamer (see in Davies, *Spirituality*, 127).

20. Much to the disdain of contemporary Protestant critics; see Lara, "Joachim," 268–69.

21. For a number of details supporting the genuine antiquity of the site, see, e.g., Brown, *Death*, 1279–83; Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 124; Wahlde, "Archaeology," 578–79; Keener, *John*, 1134–35, 1165–66; McRay, *Archaeology and New Testament*, 206–17.

22. Bentley, *Relics*, 48–49.

land.²³ In this case, rumor and pious speculation apparently hardened into tradition in less than a century. These conditions differ, however, from the earlier situation of the apostolic church, which remained small enough, with sufficiently identifiable guarantors of the Jesus tradition (as I argue elsewhere). Likewise, the early miracle tradition is on some of the most dramatic points attested early enough (especially in Paul) to render later hagiographic comparisons with the Gospel tradition of Mark and Q tenuous.²⁴ Mark stems to within four decades, and Q probably less, of the events narrated, within not only living memory but probably also the lifetime of, as well as continued leadership of, some eyewitnesses.

Somewhere around 635, Princess Osyth of Essex is said to have resisted pirates' sexual advances and been beheaded. As the story goes, she picked up her severed head, walked three leagues to a holy church, and there offered her head to God.²⁵ Many people were subsequently healed through her relics.²⁶ While some of the subsequent claims to healings may be authentic, most people today would doubt the story of her headless perambulation. Unlike healings, the purported event seems to lack any purpose beyond itself.

Many miracles attributed to St. George are associated ultimately with the holy mother of God.²⁷ Written by St. George's disciple Antony ca. 634, *The Life of Saint George of Choziba* is what its modern editors call "subdued hagiography."²⁸ When an old monk was cruel to George as a boy, the man's arm stiffened; George took him to the tomb of the saints, where they prayed and the man's arm was restored.²⁹ As a young monk, he prayed, and a man's dead only son was restored to life.³⁰ More unusually (though not in tales of monks), George was disturbed by a lion who would not get out of his way and felt around in the lion's mouth before sending it on its way.³¹ An arrogant brother was assailed by ants while resting, as Abba George had warned, and repented.³² A demon who would not cooperate properly was forced to do a chore for a monk and learned not to disobey them.³³ A monk

23. Ibid., 49.

24. See fuller discussion in Keener, *Historical Jesus*, and sources cited there.

25. Bentley, *Relics*, 68.

26. Ibid., 68–69. Cf. an early Muslim saint whose decapitated head was said to perform miracles (Sindawi, "Head"). Relic veneration and miracle claims remained common throughout the medieval period; see, e.g., Denomy and Bruckmann, "Version," on St. Magloire.

27. Vivian and Athanassakis, "Introduction," 28–30; see esp. *Miracles of the Holy Mother of God at Choziba*, e.g., a healing in 1; deliverance from a snake in 4. Antony's work speaks also of more direct faith in God (e.g., Antony *Life of St. George* 5.20). For one artistic survey with many Marian miracle claims, albeit without critical analysis of their dates, see Durham, *Miracles of Mary*. Some are implausible legends (e.g., the sick man healed by milk from her breast in Durham, *Miracles of Mary*, 160–61), but others refer to recent, dated events such as the healing of Sister Agnes's "incurable" deafness (178) on May 30, 1982.

28. Vivian and Athanassakis, "Introduction," 27. For archaeological treatment of the early monastery and known historical context, see 3–27.

29. Antony *Life of St. George* 1.4–5.

30. Ibid., 2.8.

31. Ibid., 2.10.

32. Ibid., 3.14

33. Ibid., 5.20

witnessed the mother of God miraculously put out a dangerously spreading fire by touching it.³⁴ Such accounts are more sober than some of those composed centuries after their protagonists' deaths. The section to which the narrator, Antony, was an eyewitness, however, consists mostly of St. George's teachings.³⁵

Artemios died some time after 360 C.E., a death first recorded or transformed into a martyrdom less than a century later.³⁶ The author of the *Miracles of St. Artemios* probably completed his work between 658 and 668, probably roughly three centuries after Artemios's death.³⁷ The miracles recorded are posthumous ones and thus could be closer to the time of writing; many are similar to, and probably replace, earlier incubation miracles at Asclepius sanctuaries.³⁸ One supplicant with terrible foot pain dreamed that St. Artemios was squeezing his testicles; when he awoke, he found himself cured.³⁹ Another was gradually cured of a painful boil on his testicles through Artemios's gift of a poultice.⁴⁰ Another, unable to be helped by physicians, had seven sores on his male organ; Artemios appeared to him in a dream and prescribed white vinegar with salt on the sore, which cured it in two days.⁴¹ (For some reason, many tales of this saint specialize in restoring the health of this valuable organ.) In yet another case, Artemios appears in a dream as a butcher, slices the patient open, removes and cleans his innards, and restores them, and the man awakes to find himself cured.⁴²

Although the earliest extant source indicates that James son of Zebedee was martyred in Judea no later than 44 C.E. (Acts 12:2), in other words, probably within fourteen years of Jesus's execution, this fate did not spare him from being pressed into hagiographic service in local medieval traditions, in his case associated with Spain.⁴³ According to a popular legend, early ninth-century shepherds dug at a site in Galicia over which a bright star shone and discovered a tomb, which the local bishop attributed to James.⁴⁴ Because this site was the only apostolic tomb

34. *Ibid.*, 5.24.

35. *Ibid.*, 8–10.

36. Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 1–3.

37. *Ibid.*, 6–7 (on 7 allowing for one sign of a post-680 date being an interpolation). Some material may have been added later (33).

38. For incubation here, see *ibid.*, 23–25.

39. *Miracles of Artemios* 2 (Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 78.23–80.20).

40. *Miracles of Artemios* 3 (Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 80.21–82.18). A vast number of the cures involve the touching or curing of testicles (e.g., *Miracles of Artemios* 12, 13, 14, 21, 25, 28, 29, 30, 32, 35, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45; Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 100–103, 124–27, 144–47, 154–63, 166–67, 184–89, 210–11, 216–17, 218–19, 222–23); hernias also appear particularly commonly (e.g., *Miracles of Artemios* 37; Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 192–93; see the index, 313). St. Artemios seems to have specialized in particular kinds of cures.

41. *Miracles of Artemios* 20 (Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 122–25).

42. *Miracles of Artemios* 25 (Crisafulli and Nesbitt, *Miracles*, 144–47).

43. See Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, *Miracles*, xxiii–xxiv. For later development of some medieval miracle-working Spanish traditions, see Lappin, "Miracles."

44. Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, *Miracles*, xxiv. Excavations in 1878–79 uncovered a sarcophagus with bones from three distinct persons; in 1884, Pope Leo XIII officially proclaimed these the bones of St. James and two of his disciples (xxxiii).

farther west than Rome, it became a key pilgrimage site by the middle of the eleventh century.⁴⁵ Miracle tales associated with the saint spread widely throughout the late Middle Ages and subsequent centuries.⁴⁶ Comparing geographically and chronologically divergent versions of the miracle stories attests how they grew over time.⁴⁷ James interceded with the Virgin Mary, and miracles were attributed to the relic of his hand.⁴⁸ Posthumous miracles include a pilgrim hanged on the gallows for thirty-six days, whom St. James kept alive;⁴⁹ a dead boy that James (though himself dead) raised, after the boy's mother threatened suicide if he were not;⁵⁰ a pilgrim who killed himself at the instigation of a demon purporting to be St. James was restored to life by the apostle, with the mother of God's aid;⁵¹ another man, captured by Saracens, was sold as a slave thirteen times yet freed thirteen times by James.⁵²

Another Example: Takla Hāymânôt

But posthumous miracles, especially those accomplished through incubation at a healing site (like those attributed to St. Artemios), bear closer resemblance to the Asclepian tradition than to the charismatic healer tradition, so I return to hagiography about a saint's life. My favorite (and significantly later) example is the story of the Ethiopian saint Takla Hāymânôt (ca. 1215–ca. 1313).⁵³ Takla Hāymânôt very probably was reputed as a miracle worker during his lifetime, but the form in which we have the stories, from at least two centuries after his death,⁵⁴ includes considerable folklore.⁵⁵

45. Ibid., xxix.

46. Ibid., xxxi–xxxii.

47. See *ibid.*, xlv–xlvi, xlix–l.

48. Ibid., lviii.

49. *Miracles of St. James* ch. 5 (in Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, *Miracles*, 69–70). Cf. other hanging survival miracle claims in Walsham, "Miracles," 298–99.

50. *Miracles of St. James* ch. 3 (in Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, *Miracles*, 64–65).

51. *Miracles of St. James* ch. 17 (in Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, *Miracles*, 84–89).

52. *Miracles of St. James* ch. 22 (in Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, *Miracles*, 95–96). Many of the stories claim to reflect eyewitness information, the dominant source being Callixtus, whose reports would not be much earlier than the likely date of this collection (Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, *Miracles*, xlv–xlix). Multiple elements, however, show conclusively that the introductory letter attributed to Pope Callixtus is fabricated (xxxix–xl), which raises questions about the integrity of the collection's editing as a whole. Despite its dependence at many points on earlier tradition, the late authorial claims of knowledge may be as fabricated as the introduction.

53. These are the dates often given; Huntingford, "Takla," 37, gives "the twelfth and thirteenth centuries" and notes manuscript variation in his age of death. Both major versions of the story agree on their central features, despite diverging on details (35).

54. For this time lapse, cf. *ibid.*, 35 (dating the earlier *Life* to the early fifteenth century) with 37.

55. Huntingford finds some reliable information in the accounts. This was a time of literary revival; thus, for example, Ethiopian texts in Ge'ez were reaching a peak in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries C.E. (Ricci, "Ethiopian Literature," 977).

According to a lavishly illustrated story of this Ethiopian saint, his miracles began in his infancy. Three days after his birth he offered praise to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁵⁶ At about the age of one year and three months, he signaled to his mother to bring him the basket with wheat flour, and when he inserted his hand, it suddenly overflowed;⁵⁷ he also turned water to wine as a child.⁵⁸ When judgment came on a person who did evil to his father and himself, Takla Hâymanôt healed him.⁵⁹ St. Michael the archangel appeared to Takla Hâymanôt, who fell before him like a dead man; Michael then promised to be his guardian angel.⁶⁰ Jesus appointed him to be a new prophet,⁶¹ and he drove out demons,⁶² including by dealing with demonized trees⁶³ and serpents.⁶⁴ He also healed the sick,⁶⁵ raised the dead,⁶⁶ and in the course of his conflict with magicians died and returned to life forty times.⁶⁷

Climaxing his conflict with magicians, the earth swallowed them.⁶⁸ Demons stoned him, but St. Michael healed him.⁶⁹ Although his opponents threw him over a cliff more than once, St. Michael rescued him on each occasion.⁷⁰ After King Matalômê had killed thousands of Christians,⁷¹ he was converted through seeing wonders,⁷² and Takla Hâymanôt baptized more than one hundred thousand people.⁷³ Takla Hâymanôt convinced the king to believe in resurrection by raising from death one thousand men—who had died by lightning on an occasion twenty-five years earlier.⁷⁴ Using a chariot of light, Takla Hâymanôt traveled, healing the sick on the way.⁷⁵ He made a nonbelieving woman's "house to be as bright as the

56. *M. Takla Haym.* introduction (in Budge, *Takla Hâymanôt*, 270).

57. *L. Takla Haym.* ch. 22 (in Budge, *Takla Hâymanôt*, 45); more briefly, *M. Takla Haym.* introduction (p. 270).

58. *L. Takla Haym.* ch. 23 (pp. 49–51). For water turned to olive oil, see *M. Takla Haym.* 8, 37.

59. *L. Takla Haym.* 26.

60. *L. Takla Haym.* 29 (after this Jesus appeared to him, on Michael's wings). In Jewish tradition, Michael was Israel's guardian angel (3 *En.* 44:10; 1QM XVII, 6–7 [see further Delcor, "Guerre," 374]; cf. 1 *En.* 20:5 [trans. M. Knibb, 107; but contrast E. Isaac, 24]; certainly he was among the chief angels (1 *En.* 9:1; 54:6; 3 *En.* 17:1–3; 3 *Bar.* 11:2; 1QM VIII, 15–16; *Sib. Or.* 2:214–20; *Gen. Rab.* 78:1; *Lam. Rab.* 3:23, §8; *Pesiq. Rab.* 46:3; cf. 1 *En.* 40:9; *b. B.M.* 86b; *Deut. Rab.* 5:12; *Song Rab.* 2:4, §1; 6:10, §1; *Pesiq. Rab.* 21:9; Coptic charm in Goodenough, *Symbols*, 2:174–88), sometimes the chief angel (2 *En.* 22:6; 33:10; probably *T. Ab.* 1:13A; 2:1, 13–14 and passim A; 4:6; 14:7B).

61. *L. Takla Haym.* 33.

62. E.g., *L. Takla Haym.* 31, 43.

63. *Ibid.*, 37, 40.

64. *Ibid.*, 89, 100 (a sixty-cubit-long serpent).

65. E.g., *L. Takla Haym.* 43; *M. Takla Haym.* 2, 3, 28, 29, 42, 46. Cf. the woman who conceived after drinking rainwater (*M. Takla Haym.* 18).

66. E.g., *L. Takla Haym.* 38, 61, 82. With St. Michael's help, he also walked on a lake (*L. Takla Haym.* 77).

67. *Ibid.*, 44.

68. *Ibid.*, 44–45 (the earth swallows them in 45).

69. *Ibid.*, 45.

70. *Ibid.*, 51–52.

71. *Ibid.*, 53.

72. *Ibid.*, 54–58.

73. *Ibid.*, 59.

74. *Ibid.*, 61. European hagiography also includes raising accounts (Loos, *Miracles*, 563–64).

75. *L. Takla Haym.* 65. He and a monk travel in the chariot of light in 67.

day,” and when she was terrified, he gave her a cross that led her, as if by a pillar of fire, to the land of the Christians, where she was converted.⁷⁶ We also learn of children who emerged unharmed from a fiery furnace⁷⁷ and cattle that spoke.⁷⁸ Takla Hâymanôt became bishop of half of Ethiopia;⁷⁹ miraculously, his monks and nuns could sleep in the same beds without succumbing to any temptation.⁸⁰

It should be obvious that the level of elaboration contrasts with what we find in our earliest Christian accounts; medieval Christians had a much more thoroughly developed tradition of a hagiographic genre than did first-century biographers and especially historians, particularly those about recent characters. Indeed, it tended to be more elaborate even than other narrative genres of that earlier period.⁸¹ The legends develop some miracle motifs from both canonical and later stories about Jesus and others, but their magnitude knows few bounds. (In fact, the combination of elements omits few of the individual sorts of feats of Takla’s predecessors.) Medieval European Christian hagiography also grew through assimilating motifs from various European traditional religions and tales.⁸² Even with medieval accounts, one cannot always arrange versions chronologically based on wondrous elements; some hagiography *reduced* miraculous elements, favoring theological explication.⁸³ Hagiography nevertheless tends to include more elaborate wonders, as we have seen, generally increased over time.

Conclusion

If we read the Gospels and Acts in light of tales developed over centuries and in a milieu with few historical controls, we will read them skeptically (as we should read the majority of these later tales, historically speaking), but this approach is

76. *M. Takla Haym*. 1 (quote from 276).

77. *Ibid.*, 10.

78. *Ibid.*, 30. Cf. the stopped flood in *M. Takla Haym*. 45. For talking animals, see earlier, e.g., Livy 24.10.10; 27.11.4; Arrian *Alex.* 3.3.5; Statius *Silv.* 2.4.1–2; Pliny *Nat.* 10.117; as omens, Homer *Il.* 19.404–7; Livy 24.10.10; 27.11.4; 35.21.4; 41.13.2; 41.21.13; Valerius Maximus 1.6.5; Appian *Bell. civ.* 4.1.4; Lucan *Bell. civ.* 1.561; the talking tree of *T. Ab.* 3:1–4 A; 3:1–4 B might evoke Greek examples like Dodona’s oak (Allison, “Tree”; cf. Apollodorus *Bib.* 1.9.16; Apollonius Rhodius 1.526–28; Ps.-Dionysius *Epideictic* 1.258–59). Yet even statues were held to speak at times (see Aune, *Revelation*, 762–64).

79. *L. Takla Haym*. 96.

80. *Ibid.*, 103. He himself became a hermit (*L. Takla Haym*. 105), undoubtedly following the paradigm of the Egyptian St. Anthony, as also when he gave up his possessions (*L. Takla Haym*. 30).

81. Again, this is not to deny some hagiography in Philostratus’s Apollonius or rabbinic stories of holy sages, but to invite us to keep comparisons analogous. In general, the more generations (and esp. centuries) that pass, the more hagiographic accretions one finds. Our extant first-century Christian biographic or historic documents were composed within living memory of the witnesses of most of their subjects. Also, medieval reports were more fanciful because they employed a genre that had developed conventions accommodating such portrayals, far more than ancient historiography about the recent past would. The genres are quite different, apart from being narratives with theological interest.

82. See Porterfield, *Healing*, 73.

83. See Crostini, “Miracles” (esp. 86–87).

less useful historically than reading the Gospels and Acts in light of sources composed at comparable remove from the events that they depict and of comparable genre. I have suggested in this book that even modern accounts, if they are from relatively soon after the events they depict, offer stronger analogies from a *sociological* standpoint. While medieval hagiography and the Gospels may both involve claims of what is extranormal, an eyewitness account of an extranormal event is historically worth much more than an account from a significantly later generation.

Given the much greater span of time involved in the development of the legends (which tend to proliferate more quickly once the eyewitnesses are deceased or fail to function as successors), I treated early in the book the more pressing issue of ancient Mediterranean parallels, both Jewish and Gentile, and later analogies to first- and secondhand sources. Western children of the Enlightenment are not entitled to blend all miracle accounts together simply because they claim miracles (a procedure that assumes what a critic of miracles claims to prove); it is the denial of the supernatural that is more idiosyncratic historically, and we need to distinguish more critically among various miracle accounts. The premedieval parallels tend to prove closer in chronology, form, and content, though some are closer than others. Thus it is on these earlier parallels that I focused in the book's first section. Historical analogies for first- and second-generation sources, the focus of much of this book, provide the sort of parallels in function most relevant to the accounts in the Gospels and Acts.

Appendix D

Ancient Approaches to Natural Law

I have critiqued Hume's idea of natural law, but Enlightenment ideas of natural law borrowed, via the humanist and Renaissance emphasis on classical sources, a more ancient vocabulary.¹ While the Enlightenment used the language, however, Hume employed it differently from its normal classical application. Whether or not ancient theorists of natural law believed in the activities of deities, they did not see them as incompatible with the law of nature; if deities existed, their activities belonged to nature.²

The idea of a universal law was widely appealing. The early Stoic Zeno reportedly urged people to live according to nature, following "the common law," that is, the law common to all, which he identifies as the pervasive Logos and Zeus.³ For early Stoics, this law involved motivations that yielded perfect behavior, rather than focusing on particular actions.⁴ In the first century C.E., the Stoic philosopher Seneca uses "natural law" in various ways;⁵ in one of these, nature's law makes virtue evident and attractive even to those who disobey it.⁶ Musonius Rufus claims that

1. Although I have drawn the material in this appendix from material already composed for my commentary on Acts, see in greater detail Grant, *Miracle*, 19–28.

2. Cf. also poets in Saler, "Supernatural," 41–42.

3. Diogenes Laertius 7.1.88. On divine law meaning living according to nature, see also Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.16.28; on one law and Logos in the universe, see Marcus Aurelius 7.9. For a full discussion of natural law in Stoicism, see Watson, "Natural Law." For the connotative difference between *logos* and *physis* (Nature), see Long, *Philosophy*, 120, 148–49.

4. Vander Waerdt, "Theory." For Chrysippus (and later for Epictetus as well) humans had some innate ethical knowledge (Jackson-McCabe, "Implanted Preconceptions"). Thus intentions were important (cf. Seneca *Controv.* 10.1.9; Hermogenes *Issues* 61.16–18; 66.12–13; 72.14–73.3; Porphyry *Marc.* 25.401–2; *p. Ber.* 2:1).

5. Especially related to human physicality; Inwood, "Natural Law." For the wide variety of understandings of "natural law" in antiquity, see, e.g., Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 109–10.

6. Seneca *Ben.* 4.17.4.

the law of Zeus orders a person to be “good.”⁷ For Epictetus, “the divine law” summarizes human responsibility before God.⁸ One epitome of Stoic ethics portrays the law as “right reason,” which only the wise person obeys.⁹

Yet this “natural law” existed in other philosophical circles outside Stoicism,¹⁰ as well as among nonphilosophers.¹¹ Socrates recognized universal, unwritten laws observed by people everywhere.¹² For Aristippus, if all human laws were repealed, philosophers would keep living as they did.¹³ For Aristotle, whereas written laws varied, a law based on nature was constant.¹⁴

A Hellenistic rhetorician defined as “just” customs on which most of humanity agrees.¹⁵ For Cicero, the law of nature implants in people innate religion, including duty to gods, parents, country, and others;¹⁶ what is universally agreed throughout humanity is the law of nature.¹⁷ Justice must be based not on human opinion but on the law of nature;¹⁸ humans share a common sense of justice.¹⁹ This law that teaches what is right based on nature is as old as the divine mind, existing long before being written down.²⁰ For Seneca the Elder, unwritten laws are less changeable than writ-

7. Musonius Rufus 16, p. 104.35–36. Reason is from the gods and enables one to distinguish good from bad (Musonius Rufus 3, p. 38.26–30). A perfect king would embody law in himself (Musonius Rufus 8, p. 64.11–12). Others also opined that kings must have the law of reason within them (Plutarch *Uned. R.* 3, *Mor.* 780C) or that some could embody a living law (e.g., Aristotle *Pol.* 3.8.2, 1284a [in Bruce, “All Things,” 98n7]; the patriarchs in Philo *Abr.* 5).

8. Epictetus *Diatr.* 2.16.27–28.

9. Arius Didymus 2.7.11d, pp. 68–69.1–8; 2.7.11i, pp. 76–77.30–37.

10. In Plato, e.g., Diogenes Laertius 3.8, 86. Porphyry distinguished the law of nature from the law of God (*Marc.* 25.384–86); the former related to bodily need (*Marc.* 25.387–88), and the latter was known by the mind (*Marc.* 25.392–93). Knowing the law of nature helps one ascend to the divine law, which established nature’s law (*Marc.* 27.420–22); they superseded a written law (*Marc.* 27.422–25). The mind knows the divine law (*Marc.* 26.409–11; cf. 26.413–14, 417–20; 32.485–88), though it is inaccessible to the impure (*Marc.* 26.402–3), and the wicked reject it (*Marc.* 16.272–73). The law of nature teaches deliverance from passion (*Marc.* 31.484), and one freed from passion has access to divine law (*Marc.* 26.403–4). Cf. “divine writings” placed in a person (*Marc.* 9.164–65).

11. Cf. Cicero in Frank, *Aspects*, 109; Ovid *Metam.* 15.6; Maximus of Tyre 6.5–6; 11.12 (comparing mind and law; in 27.8 he regards God as pure Mind); even Lucan *Bell. civ.* 7.1. Cf. in Palestinian Judaism, 1 *En.* 72:2; 73:1; 74:1; 76:14; 78:10; 79:1–2; 1QM X, 12–13.

12. Xenophon *Mem.* 4.4.19. Skeptics like Sextus Empiricus would have appealed to exceptions to disprove this thesis.

13. Diogenes Laertius 2.68. The best morality was one not dictated by laws (Virgil *Aen.* 7.204–25, citing instead self-control and divine custom; Gal 5:23; 1 Tim 1:9). In the golden age, a mythographer could claim, people did right without needing a law (Ovid *Metam.* 1.89–90).

14. Aristotle *Rhet.* 1.15.6, 1375ab. Aristotle assigned the universe’s rationality to necessity but not design (Saler, “Supernatural,” 37).

15. *Rhet. Alex.* 1, 1421b.36–1422a.2. Cf. the sense of justice common to humanity in Apuleius *Metam.* 3.8.

16. Cicero *Inv.* 2.22.65; 2.53.161.

17. Cicero *Tusc.* 1.13.30.

18. Cicero *Leg.* 1.10.28. For Cicero, nature was the source of right (*Off.* passim, e.g., 3.17.72; 3.28.101) and itself equivalent to true law (*Leg.* 3.1.3); those who obeyed nature’s laws would always do right (*Off.* 1.28.100).

19. Cicero *Leg.* 1.12.33. Society’s common bonds came from nature (*Off.* 1.16.50).

20. Cicero *Leg.* 2.4.10.

ten ones.²¹ For Dio Chrysostom, it is not the laws inscribed on stone but the law of nature, the laws of Zeus, that matter.²² The idea of natural, universal law became so widespread that some Roman legal codes began by distinguishing laws particular to given states from the law of nature (*ius naturale*),²³ that is, the law due to natural reason (*naturalis ratio*).²⁴ More generally, divine law came to be applied even to days of ill omen²⁵ or heavenly decrees;²⁶ “eternal law” could apply to such natural matters as the sun rising on time.²⁷ It had long been a commonplace that laws of the gods (like burial of the dead) took precedence over laws of the state when the two conflicted.²⁸

Diaspora Jews apparently used the concept of universal law to help shape how they presented their moral convictions.²⁹ Some Diaspora Jews believed that God would establish a common law for all humanity.³⁰ Like Cicero, Philo adopts the Stoic image of universal law of nature, which is essentially identical with reason;³¹ his Logos governs creation as a law would rule a city.³² Although the law of nature was by normal definition unwritten and universal rather than particular, Philo regarded Moses’s law as a written copy of the law of nature.³³ Natural law is widespread in most ancient intellectual sources except the rabbis;³⁴ and as I have observed, expectation of a universal ethic appeared even there (though few Gentiles would have included abstaining from food with blood in it). The Stoic idea of natural law also persisted in late antiquity and is evident even in Aquinas.³⁵ Enlightenment thinkers who applied this language to mechanistic rules ruling the system of nature were developing the language in a distinctive direction.

21. Seneca *Controv.* 1.1.14.

22. Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 80.5–6. For Dio, humans have an innate knowledge of deity reinforced by nature (*Or.* 12.27–29, 32). Customs were “unwritten laws” of particular societies (*Or.* 76.1), but they could differ from universal unwritten laws.

23. Justinian *Inst.* 1.2.1–2 (tr., 36–37), a later compilation of earlier laws.

24. Gaius *Inst.* 1.1 (tr., 19–20). In the Hellenistic period, *Rhet. Alex.* pref. 1420a.26–28 defined law as reason (λόγος) specified by common agreement, a sort of social contract. Stoicism influenced Roman law in looking for a universal, rational basis for law (Jervis, “Law,” 635); Remus, “Authority,” suggests that in the period of the empire “nature” helped sustain or supplant laws, which had been losing their moral authority.

25. Tacitus *Hist.* 2.91.

26. Silius Italicus 6.120 (poetic).

27. Lucan *Bell. civ.* 7.1. Lucan believes that even the Creator is bound by eternal law (*Bell. civ.* 2.10).

28. Sophocles *Antig.* 450–57, 913–14.

29. See Sterling, “Universalizing the Particular.” Cf. LXX translators in Roetzel, *Paul*, 52.

30. *Sib. Or.* 3.757–59.

31. See Horsley, “Law of Nature”; cf. Wolfson, *Philo*, 1:332–47; Tobin, *Rhetoric in Contexts*, 114–15. Koester, *Paul and World*, 126–42, treats Philo’s contribution to natural law as particularly significant.

32. Myre, “Loi.” Stoics also emphasized God’s rule of the universe as a state (Cicero *Fin.* 3.19.64).

33. Najman, “Written Copy”; idem, “Authority.” Whereas Greek epitaphs often spoke of natural law, 4 Maccabees identifies the “law” with the Pentateuch (Redditt, “*Nomos*”).

34. Bockmuehl, “Law.” Unwritten law in Philo resembles Greek concepts more than later rabbis’ oral law (Martens, “Unwritten Law,” on Philo *Spec. Laws* 4.149–50). Rabbis could envision a central unifying principle to the law (as in *b. Shab.* 31a; cf. Zipor, “Talebearers”; Keener, *Matthew*, 249), which some relate to Greek unwritten law (Jeremias, *Sermon*, 3).

35. Mitsis, “Stoics and Aquinas.” Seagrave, “Cicero,” finds in Aquinas’s understanding of natural law a continuation of Cicero’s Aristotelian approach.

Appendix E

Visions and Dreams

Visions and dreams do not strictly count as miracles¹ and therefore do not belong to the primary subject of this book. Nevertheless, I will cover them briefly here to illustrate further how many cultures, including elements within Western culture, demur from the dominant Western academic skepticism about suprahuman, extranormal phenomena. (One could have also addressed claims regarding glossolalia, but I have reserved that treatment exclusively, and a discussion of prophecy almost exclusively, for relevant points in my commentary on Acts.)

Although few critics deny that people experience visions and no one denies that people have dreams, Western academics usually treat them as subjective experiences not to be taken seriously.² A majority of people in the United States do, however, believe that dreams can sometimes foretell the future, and well over one hundred million of them claim to have had a dream that accurately predicted the future.³ (I use these figures as statements of belief, not evidence of paranormal activity; it would be quite surprising if, out of the thousands of dreams the average person has, some of them did not somehow “come true.”⁴) Here I primarily want to reinforce

1. Though most who prayed for the sick surveyed in Tilley, “Phenomenology,” 555, had “visions” or “images” relevant to the healings.

2. See Young and Goulet, “Introduction,” 9, arguing that this approach reflects anthropology’s earlier complicity with Western imperialism. Increasingly a number of anthropologists are taking them more seriously (Young, “Visitors,” 168–69, noting also Jung’s insights on 169–70; in psychology, see, e.g., Blessing, “Psychology,” 97–98); although they appear among all cultures, they tend to be dismissed in Western academia by classifying them with hallucinations (Young, “Visitors,” 190).

3. Alexander, *Signs*, 117 (citing Baylor Institute, *Piety*, 45–46).

4. Indeed, that a higher proportion did not claim at least accidental correspondences suggests that many respondents must have ruled out cases they deemed coincidence, or that they do not remember their dreams. “Paranormal” dreams tend to involve the future, in contrast to paranormal knowledge while awake (McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 49, 54, and sources cited there). Some claims, however, appear

the point that claims in ancient historical sources should not be dismissed simply because they are foreign to Enlightenment expectations.

Cross-cultural studies show that altered states of consciousness are a frequent phenomenon; indeed, brain research suggests that the human brain is open to such experiences.⁵ In fact, from dreams during REM sleep, to sleepwalking, to occurrences of psychomotor epilepsy, and to possession trance, a continuum of altered states of consciousness overlaps at some points with “normal” life.⁶ While such phenomena do not all involve identical external causes, they do suggest that the common wiring of human nervous systems allows for similar symptoms due to a variety of causes, often experienced by the nervous system as something analogous to emotional stresses.⁷ In religious contexts, various cultures often construe such altered states positively.⁸ Heavenly visions in ancient Jewish apocalyptic and mystic sources show some parallels with shamanic sky journeys in various cultures.⁹ Clini-

too precise to be explained as coincidence (e.g., Tari, *Wind*, 146–47). Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 152–53, notes that some have argued for genuine precognition in some dreams (citing Dunne, *Experiment*, 37ff., 50, 59; and esp. Rycroft, *Innocence*, 36); see also Targ, Schlitz, and Irwin, “Experiences,” 219–20 (a Latina’s dream correctly predicted a husband’s death by being hit by a bus two weeks before it happened, though [220] the psychiatric resident attributed this connection to coincidence); McClenon, *Events*, 45–47, 113–14; idem, *Healing*, 121–22; discussion of dreams involving accurate but previously unknown information allegedly from the deceased in Greeley, *Sociology*, 34–35.

5. So Pilch, *Visions*, passim, esp. 158–59; idem, “Trance Experience”; Malina and Pilch, *Acts*, 185–87; idem, *Letters*, 331–33. Wulff, “Experience,” 410–14, notes that mysticism is not in itself psychopathological and surveys some neuropsychological models for it (416–18), as well as other approaches (418–27). Although alternative explanations merit more consideration, Beauregard and O’Leary, *Brain*, argue that such mystic experiences reflect genuine connections with the primordial ground of being (e.g., 293–94). Such hypotheses aside, the brain is susceptible to such experiences; McClenon, *Healing*, 90–91, notes that such experiences can be stimulated artificially. McClenon and Nooney, “Experiences,” 48, cite Persinger and Makarec, “Signs”; Persinger and Valliant, “Signs”; Ramachandran and Blakeslee, *Phantoms*; Newberg, d’Aquili, and Rause, *Brain Science*. Strelan, *Strange Acts*, 131, suggests that ancients were less concerned than moderns to distinguish visual from visionary sight; while that was probably true in some cases, many ancient writers would have recognized the distinction.

6. Bourguignon, “Introduction,” 14; for psychomotor epilepsy, Prince, “EEG,” 122–24; for sleepwalking, 124–25; for hysterical fugue states, 125–27. Lucid dreaming appears especially during REM sleep (LaBerge and Gackenbach, “Dreaming,” 158–60) and bears no connection with psychopathology (167).

7. Whether humans suffering battle fatigue or experimental dogs overwhelmed by stresses, the nervous system may collapse (Prince, “EEG,” 129). Cathartic release of emotion, or at a more extreme level, emotional collapse, seems to reset human emotional circuits; whether ecstasies during Wesley’s preaching (June 15, 1739) or brainwashing techniques, emotional collapse yields a suggestible state to which some also compare possession trance (130). Prince himself (132) thinks that ecstasies in Wesley’s meetings were caused by suggestion, lacking neurophysiological causes as in some other cases. But other studies have shown that intense religious emotion can produce altered neurophysiological states (see, e.g., Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues*; on mystical “call” trances, cf. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 37–44). Prince, “EEG,” 133–34, notes neurophysiological changes due to rhythmic drumming, as in West Africa and Haiti, and in “photic driving,” “light flashing at or near the alpha rhythm of the brain.”

8. Ludwig, “Altered States,” 88. Cf. Goodman, *Trance Journeys*; idem, *Ecstasy*.

9. See Pilch, “Sky Journeys,” including Paul (104) but especially the author of *1 Enoch* (106–10). Extracorporeal and mystical corporeal translocation experiences are reported in various cultures (see, e.g., Berenbaum, Kerns, and Raghavan, “Experiences,” 31). “Hypnotic susceptibility” helps predict these (Alvarado, “Experiences,” 208); while some evidence links these with parapsychological experiences, these

cal studies have shown that anomalous experiences do not by themselves indicate any psychopathology; where experiences formally resemble pathologies, they often involve different causes.¹⁰ For theists who recognize God working in nature, neurological approaches need not prove incompatible with belief in revelation. Thus psychological or physiological factors in understanding need not rule out genuine communication from persons distinct from the recipient, divine as well as human.¹¹

Ancient Dream Reports

I focus more on dreams here because they appear more frequently in the sources. (They presumably appear more frequently because most people dream far more regularly than they see visions.) Throughout history, many people have believed that dreams provided them with divine direction.¹² Whether in Greece and Macedonia,¹³ Rome,¹⁴ Egypt,¹⁵ Carthage,¹⁶ the East,¹⁷ and Palestine,¹⁸ among Diaspora Jews¹⁹ or later rabbis,²⁰

could occur without actual separation from the body (Alvarado, "Experiences," 209). Despite similarities, magic in some cultures does not employ sky-journeys (Musi, "Shaman," 55).

10. Cardena, Lynn, and Krippner, "Experiences," 17; Berenbaum, Kerns, and Raghavan, "Experiences," 32. Noting connections, see Berenbaum, Kerns, and Raghavan, "Experiences," 32–40, but they also note (32) that "there is not good empirical support" for associating some kinds of anomalous experiences with psychopathology. In cases of hallucinatory audition, "inner speech" is projected externally (Bentall, "Experiences," 99–100), with activity in parts of the brain associated with speech production (100–101; note also subvocalization, 100).

11. For Martin Buber, signs could come not only from the unconscious mind, but also from God as revelation, while utilizing the same mental forms (Merkur, "Revelation," 294). Neurological features of the experience of communication could be identical whether or not extrahuman persons are involved; for some theists, revelatory inspiration could imply God working in nature, perhaps at a special level of providence.

12. See generally Croy, "Religion, Personal," 927; Theissen, *Erleben*, 138. On Greek and Roman dreams, see also Miller, *Convinced*, 23–39 (noting both acceptance and criticism); Bovon, *Studies*, 145–49; on Jewish dreams, Miller, *Convinced*, 40–61; Bovon, *Studies*, 149–52; on post-NT Christian dreams up through Augustine, see Bovon, *Studies*, 155–61 (e.g., *Acts Thom.* 154; *Acts John* 48); in the ancient Near East, see, e.g., sources noted in Long, "Samuel," 283.

13. Homer *Il.* 1.63; 5.150; Xenophon *Anab.* 3.1.11; 4.3.8; 6.1.22; *Eq. mag.* 9.9; Pausanias 4.19.5–6; 9.26.4; Longus 1.7; 2.23, 26–27; 3.27; 4.35; Appian *Hist. rom.* 11.9.56; 12.12.83; Quintus Curtius 4.2.17; Arrian *Alex.* 2.18.1; Babrius 136.3–4; Achilles Tatius 1.3.2; 4.1.4; 7.12.4; Chariton *Chaer.* 1.12.5; 2.9.6; 3.7.4; 4.1.2; 5.5.5–7; 6.2.2; 6.8.3; cf. *Orph. H.* 85–87; Epidauros inscriptions; Hadas, *Aristeas*, 184–85; Reinhold, *Diaspora*, 35; Oberhelman, "Dreams"; Mackay, "Plutarch," 104–6; Hanson, "Dreams and Visions"; Martin, *Religions*, 48–50; idem, "Artemidorus."

14. Tacitus *Ann.* 2.14; Marcus Aurelius 1.17.8; van der Horst, "Macrobius," 221–22; cf. Virgil *Aen.* 4.556–57; 7.415–20; Ovid *Metam.* 9.685–701; 15.653–54.

15. Ezek. Trag. 68–89; *Sib. Or.* 3.293; Philo *Migr.* 190; Deissmann, *Light*, 154; Lewis, *Life*, 99; Wright, *Archaeology*, 53.

16. Dio Cassius bk. 13, frg. in Zonaras 8.22.

17. Herodotus 1.34, 107, 127; Quintus Curtius 3.3.2–3 (but probably a non-Persian literary invention).

18. Josephus *War* 1.328; 2.116; *Life* 208–10.

19. *Sib. Or.* 3.293.

20. *Ab. R. Nat.* 40 A; 46, §§128–29 B; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 5:2; *b. B.B.* 10a; *Ber.* 55a–58a; *Hag.* 14b; *Gen. Rab.* 17:5; 44:17; 89:5–6, 8; *Lev. Rab.* 3:5; 34:12; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:1, §1; 3:2, §2; 5:2, §1; 5:6, §1; *Lam. Rab.* 1.1.16–18; Zeitlin, "Dreams"; Alexander, "Dreambook."

or in magical papyri,²¹ people often believed that dreams conveyed divine messages. So compelling was trust in dreams' warnings that they could be employed to bolster an army's courage;²² a fabricated dream reportedly precipitated an innocent man's execution;²³ and some found it important to warn of false dream tellers and interpreters.²⁴

God revealed information to biblical heroes in Jewish tradition,²⁵ and later stories amplified the frequency of such revelations.²⁶ Later rabbis believed that revelatory dreams could be secured through fasting²⁷ or their ill pronouncements revoked through fasting.²⁸ Ancients also emphasized dreams experienced in a sacred place. The ancient Near Eastern practice of incubation—receiving a dream by sleeping in a temple²⁹—continued in the Mediterranean world of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.³⁰ On occasion visions or dreams were believed confirmed by two persons having the same vision;³¹ such confirmations are sometimes reported today as well.³²

Still, even in antiquity people realized that not all dreams were divine revelations, and those who were more skeptical dismissed most dreams from being revelations.³³ Thus, what one had been thinking about during the day could cause

21. PGM 4.2076–80, 2444–45, 2625, 3172; PDM Sup. 117–30.

22. E.g., Quintus Curtius 4.2.17.

23. Dio Cassius 60.14.4–15.1; cf. Appian *Hist. rom.* 12.2.9.

24. Juvenal *Sat.* 6.542–47; *Lam. Rab.* 1:1, §14–15; cf. Virgil *Aen.* 5.636.

25. E.g., Gen 28:12; 37:5–9; Dan 2:19; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 2.13–16, 63–73.

26. E.g., 1Qap Gen^x XIX, 14–23; *Jub.* 27:1–3; 32:1; 41:24; Ezek. Trag. 68–89; Josephus *Ant.* 2.216–19; 6.38; 7.147; *L.A.B.* 9:10; 42:3; 4 *Ezra* 10:59; *T. Ab.* 4:8 A; 4:16; 6:1–2 B; *L.A.E.* 23:2/*Apoc. Mos.* 2:2; Endres, *Interpretation*, 207.

27. *P. Ket.* 12:3, §7.

28. *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 28:2. Fasting for revelations appears in a variety of texts (e.g., Dan 10:3; 2 *Bar.* 20:5; 43:30; *Hermas* 1.3.10; 9.2 [*Vis.* 3.1.2]; 18.6–7 [*Vis.* 3.10.6–7]; see sources in Lincoln, *Paradise*, 111; Keener, *Acts*, at Acts 13:2).

29. Cf. Gen 15:12–13; 1 *Sam* 3:3–4 (though this was certainly not deliberate); 1 *Kgs* 3:4–5; Keret in KRT A I (*ANET* 143); Aqhat in AQHT A I (*ANET* 150).

30. E.g., Diodorus Siculus 1.25.3–4; 1.53.8; Pausanias 1.34.5; 2.27.2; Herodian 4.8.3; Grant, *Religions*, 16, 38; Oepke, “Ovap,” 223–24; Grant, *Gods*, 66–67; cf. Rousselle, “Cults”; in Josephus, Gnuse, “Temple Experience.”

31. Plutarch *Alex.* 24.3; Valerius Maximus 1.7.3; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.13; Boring et al., *Commentary*, 319–20, cites Epidauros inscr. 21; Parsons, *Acts*, 129, cites Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 1.57.4; Josephus *Ant.* 11.327; *Jos. Asen.* 14–15; *Hermas Vis.* 3.1.2; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.1–3, 6, 21–22, 26–27; Heliodorus *Aeth.* 3.11–12, 18; Chariton *Chaer.* 1.12; for other examples, see Wikenhauser, “Doppelträume” (cited in Brawley, *Luke-Acts and Jews*, 59, noting esp. Livy 8.6.8–16; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 1.55–59); in Scripture, see Exod 4:27–28; Judg 7:9–15; Luke 1:8–38; Acts 9:1–16; 10:3–16. Less dramatically, visions or dreams could also be doubled to individuals; see Gen 37:7, 9; 41:1–7; Polybius 10.4.5; Valerius Maximus 1.7.7; the inscription in Horsley, *Documents* 1, §6, pp. 29–32.

32. Talbot, “Vision,” 275 (Evan Roberts and a friend involved with the Welsh Revival); Yun, *Heavenly Man*, 28–30, 123, 263–64; Tari, *Breeze*, 25 (three people having the same vision simultaneously), 42–43 (the entire group having the same vision simultaneously), 91 (several, but not all, saw Jesus); Koch, *Zulus*, 221; Fever, “Delegation,” 34 (a public vision); cf. Crandall, *Raising*, 17–18; a parapsychological explanation for one non-Christian example, Emmons, *Ghosts*, 46.

33. Sir 34[31]:1–8; *Let. Aris.* 213–16; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.207–8; Homer *Od.* 19.559–67; Herodotus 7.12–19; Aristotle *De an.*; *Div. somn.*; Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.1; Herodian 2.9.3; cf. *b. Hor.* 13b; Cicero *Div.* 2.58.119–72.150; Diogenes Laertius 6.2.43; probably Polybius 33.21.1–2 (see LCL 6:290–91). See further discussion especially in Miller, *Convinced*, 29–36.

dreams.³⁴ Orators could invent “dreams” for effect,³⁵ even noting that they could be caused by eating particular kinds of food.³⁶ Some considered dreams less likely to be true during autumn³⁷ but more common in spring and autumn, and especially when lying on one’s back.³⁸ Some dreams were even intended or regarded as divine deceptions.³⁹

Biblical dreams typically differed from many of their counterparts in terms of who delivered the message. Pagan⁴⁰ and Jewish⁴¹ dreams often included apparitions of deceased persons; like the biblical tradition, however, the NT writers usually limited apparitions to God and Christ or angels (though cf. Acts 16:9).⁴² Matthew and Luke (exclusively in Acts) stress revelation through dreams more frequently than other extant first-century Christian writers do (Matt 2:12, 13, 19, 22; 27:19; Acts 16:9–10; 18:9–10; 23:11; 27:23–24; cf. 2:18).⁴³ Vision and dream reports feature also in subsequent Christian history,⁴⁴ for example, Augustine’s reports of his mother’s experiences⁴⁵ or experiences in early Methodism.⁴⁶ They occur

34. Artemidorus *Onir.* 1.1. White, *Artemidorus*, 67–68n6, provides many parallels to this conception. Cf. perhaps Eccl 2:23.

35. Menander Rhetor 2.4, 390.4–10 allows orators to invent dream-revelations for effect (cf. the value of *visiones* in Quintilian *Inst.* 6.2.29, though he applies this to emotive, descriptive language, e.g., 2.32).

36. Plutarch *M. Cato* 23.4. Thus a king’s prophets might claim to interpret a dream that he had merely made up (Chariton *Chaer.* 6.8.3; cf. Dan 2:9; of course, political expediency could dictate the outcome of many prophecies, as in 1 Kgs 22:13).

37. Alciphron *Farm.* 2 (Iophon to Eraston), 3.10, ¶3; Plutarch *T.-T.* 8.10, *Mor.* 734D.

38. Pliny *Nat.* 28.14.54.

39. Homer *Il.* 2.20–21; Virgil *Aen.* 5.893–96; *Vit. Aes.* 33; *P. Par.* 47; cf. the prophecy in 1 Kgs 22:22–23. 4Q560 1 I, S is an incantation to protect against dreams, presumably recognizing that not all are from God.

40. E.g., Homer *Il.* 23.65, 83–85; Euripides *Hec.* 30–34, 703–6; Virgil *Aen.* 1.353–54; 2.268–97, 772–94; 4.351–52; 5.721–23; Ovid *Metam.* 11.586–88, 635, 650–73; Plutarch *Sulla* 37.2; *Br. Wom.*, *Mor.* 252F; Apuleius *Metam.* 8.8; 9.31; cf. Homer *Od.* 4.795–839; 19.546–49; Appian *Hist. rom.* 8.1.1; Arrian *Alex.* 7.30.2.

41. *Ab. R. Nat.* 40A; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 11:23; *p. Hag.* 2:2, §5; *Ket.* 12:3, §7; *Sanh.* 6:6, §2; *Eccl. Rab.* 9:10, §1; to my knowledge, the earliest Christian example is *Acts Paul* 11:6.

42. Greek tradition also allowed for apparitions of deities, not restricted to incubation (see, e.g., Plutarch *Luc.* 10.2–3; 12.1; *Sulla* 9.4; 28.6). Christian reports of visions or dreams of loved ones being in heaven (e.g., Bennett, *Morning*, 121) or saying good-bye before departing for heaven (sometimes before arrival of news of their deaths, as my wife experienced at Pastor Ndoundou’s passing) are not uncommon; sometimes they also convey information, as in the early Methodist experience in Webster, “Salvation,” 379. For sociological analyses of apparitions and their contexts, see McClenon, *Healing*, 116–21.

43. On Luke’s dream and vision reports, see esp. now Miller, *Convinced*; for a survey of Lukan scholarship on dreams and visions, see 81–90.

44. See, e.g., Bovon, *Studies*, 155–61; later, Constantine’s claimed vision or dream (for discussion, see, e.g., Price, “Signo”), and later allegedly revelatory dreams (e.g., in 1097 in Hamilton, “Signs,” 98); vision accounts appear even among women who knew that men were skeptical of women’s reports (see Van Dijk, “Miracles,” 248). Sixteenth-century physician Girolamo Cardano found portents in dreams (Duffin, *Miracles*, 22–23); Waldensians accepted visions and prophecies (Toon, “Waldenses,” 1026).

45. Herum, “Theology,” 35–36, cites Monica’s dream of Augustine in *Conf.* 3.11.19; her vision of safety despite the storm in 6.1.1. Augustine’s own ecstasies (Herum cites *Conf.* 7.10.16; 7.17.23; 9.10.24–25) resemble Neoplatonist contemplation of the divine.

46. See Webster, “Salvation”; Asbury’s prophetic dream in Wigger, *Saint*, 188; John Wesley’s reports of visionary experiences of some people he knew (Huyssen, *Saw*, 106–7).

among some noted figures even in recent Western Christian history,⁴⁷ including in foundational periods of even some fairly conservative Christian movements.⁴⁸

Visions and Dreams in Global Christianity

Although in the West consideration of dreams is often relegated to the realm of Jungian psychotherapists⁴⁹ and (more empirically) neurologists, the divinatory or prophetic use of dreams and visions continues to play a role in many societies and religions.⁵⁰ This remains true in Asian and African Christianity;⁵¹ as historian

47. Besides examples in medieval mystics; some mid-eighteenth-century Baptists (revelatory dreams, Kidd, *Awakening*, 246); the Welsh Revival of 1904 (Pytches, *Come*, 133; esp. Harvey, "Agony"; for Evan Roberts, e.g., White, "Revival," 1); and the like. Note, e.g., Salvation Army founder William Booth (Huyssen, *Saw*, 80–82). In some cases, the vision experience is explicitly subjective or appears ambiguous, yet real to the person experiencing it: Charles Finney (91, an extended experience; Prather, *Miracles*, 126–28); F. B. Meyer (Huyssen, *Saw*, 111–12, less subjective); in some cases the language might be partly figurative, but may point to visionary experiences: John Bunyan (109, at conversion); Catherine Marshall (125–26); Reinhard Bonnke (140). Cf. also Alcoholics Anonymous founder Bill Wilson's transforming experience of heaven (Kent and Waite, *Beyond*, ch. 28, citing Robert Thomsen's biography of Wilson).

48. E.g., they were common in early evangelicalism (Noll, *Rise*, 267), a movement that has been in the twentieth century traditionally more shy concerning extrabiblical "revelation." One may note particularly early Methodists' use of "dreams, portents and special revelations" (idem, *Shape*, 46), but early radical Puritans also claimed direct revelations, including in dreams and visions (Kidd, "Healing," 160).

49. Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 152–53, notes Jung's "big dream" (Jung, "Symbolic Life," 556); that Freud conceded his inability to explain accurate premonitory dreams (Freud, *Interpretation*, 61); and that some have argued for genuine precognition in some dreams (citing Dunne, *Experiment*, 37ff., 50, 59; and esp. Rycroft, *Innocence*, 36). On Jung's emphasis on the divine and spirituality, see Rollins, "Wholeness."

50. Dreams have played a part in the Mayan cultural revival in the face of massive displacement and suffering (Tedlock, "Dreams," esp. 453–54, 471); for diagnosis through dreams among the Karanga of Zimbabwe, see Shoko, *Religion*, 75–76, 78; in much shamanism, see Harner, *Way of Shaman*, 99–101. In African tradition, see Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, 137, 378–86; Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 149–61 (esp. 152–54); apparitions of Nkai among the Samburu (resembling biblical accounts but with precolonial origins, Straight, *Miracles*, 47); altered states of consciousness visions in Haitian Vodun in Crosley, "Universes," 9–10. Cf. also attacks from witches in dreams (against a former witch, but noting that they eventually gave up after failing to harm him; Merz, "Witch," 203); a witch could expect to kill by this means (Hair, "Witches," 140). Many Mande "claim to have seen" spirits (McNaughton, *Blacksmiths*, 11).

51. In the late nineteenth century, see, e.g., McGee, *Miracles*, 32, 34, 36; early twentieth century, e.g., Hickson, *Heal*, 149 (cf. Hickson's own visions in idem, *Bridegroom*, 35, 102–5); Sung, *Diaries*, 9–10, 15–16, 28, 55, 99, 102, 109, 110, 189–90; for summaries regarding the Majority World, see, e.g., Mullin, *History*, 279; Pierson, "Context," 21. In African Christian movements, see, e.g., Adeyemo, "Dreams"; Clark, "Challenge," 83; Dayhoff, "Machava"; idem, "Mthethwa"; idem, "Mucavele"; idem, "Vilakoti"; Fuller, "Harman"; idem, "Taiwo"; Gaiya, "Gindiri"; Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, *History*, 221 (on Isaiah Shembe), 222; Mkhize, "Prayer-Healer," 288 (also related to Shembe's movement); Magaji and Danmallam, "Magaji"; Manana, "Magaji"; Menberu, "Abraham"; Odili, "Okeriaka"; Quinn, "Kivebulaya" (on an Anglican, 1864–1933); Daneel, *Zionism*, 13–14; Oosthuizen, *Healer-Prophet*, 27–28 (on southern African AICs); Zvanaka, "Churches," 70 (on the Zion Apostolic Church); Bongmba, "Visions" (an AIC in Texas); Sundkler, "Worship," 552–53; Wodi, "Wodi"; Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 288; Baker, *Enough*, 21, 58–59, 62–65, 72, 76, 142, 157, 182; idem, *Miracles*, 173; Clark, *Impartation*, 208; Numbere, *Vision*, 65–69, 74–75, 493. Dreams and visions characterized part of the East African revival (1935–45; see Shaw, *Awakenings*, 104). In Asia, cf. Prather, *Miracles*, 66; Ma, "Santuala," 66, notes a syncretistic group in which all members seek visions (comparing the visionary emphasis also among mountain Pentecostals); Tari,

Mark Noll points out, African Christians “are not surprised when Jesus speaks to them in dreams and visions,” a pattern consistent with narratives in Acts.⁵² Asian examples appear in a range of countries that include Myanmar,⁵³ China,⁵⁴ India,⁵⁵ Indonesia,⁵⁶ Singapore,⁵⁷ and the Philippines.⁵⁸ For example, dreams and visions figured heavily in the Nias revival in Indonesia in 1916.⁵⁹ They also appear in orphanages and among other groups of children in Asia.⁶⁰ They flourished in China some time ago particularly conspicuously during a particularly intense period of

Wind, 13, 146, and *Breeze*, 87–88, notes guidance through visions in Indonesia. Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 160–61, cites an example of what he took to be accurate African precognition through a dream.

52. Noll, *Shape*, 23–24. In much of Africa, between one-fifth and one-third of Christians claim to have prophesied (“Islam and Christianity,” 212), and even more to have received direct revelation from God (ibid., 213). Koch, *Zulus*, 138–39, 200–201, reports cases where God provided visionary revelation to illiterate new believers who lacked full access to Scripture. These experiences flourish in spite of many early missionaries’ condemnation of attending to dreams (Lagerwerf, *Witchcraft*, 17–18).

53. See Khai, “Pentecostalism,” 269, 270.

54. Yamamori and Chan, *Witnesses*, 9, 39, 59; Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 101; Wagner, “World,” 85; popular-level claims about dreams in China, Yun, *Heavenly Man*, 32, 35, 135, 137, 178, 180, 181, 189, 197, 305–6, 315, 341; Danyun, *Lilies*, 84; Jones, *Wonders*, 75, 103 (recognizing the foreigner, a missionary, seen in a dream); about visions, Yun, *Heavenly Man*, 58, 60, 68–69, 73, 103, 108–9, 122–23, 124, 254; Baker, *Visions* (2006); Danyun, *Lilies*, 43, 49–50, 195, 210, 351–52. For visions in the Manchurian revival of 1908, see Shaw, *Awakening*, 185.

55. E.g., nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century examples in McGee, *Miracles*, 34, 36, 82. See also Sadhu Sundar Singh in Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 82–83, 136, 138 (though it is difficult for a biblical scholar to avoid voicing reservations about the content of some of the later ones, esp. related to Swedenborg; see in more detail here Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 214–19); in some cases information conveyed in his visions seems to have proved genuine when tested objectively (Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 220–21). For contemporary reports of and comments on his visions, based on his own words, see Streeter and Appasamy, *Message*, 86–123, though these writers considered suppressing this information for their Western audience, 87; Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 162–64, 211–21 (for a nuanced evaluation, see Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 165, 221). He distinguished these experiences from his one, converting vision of Christ (Prakash, *Preaching*, 23; Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 212; narrated in, e.g., Adeney, *Kingdom*, 121–22); the visions, sometimes more than ten times a month, included conversations with spiritual beings and started after his fast (Prakash, *Preaching*, 70). These came especially in his later years, in 1926–29 (Appasamy, *Sundar Singh*, 211).

56. In Timor, see, e.g., Wiyono, “Timor Revival,” 284 (following, e.g., Brougham, “Work,” 167); Wilkerson, *Beyond*, 76, 78, 81 (on a popular level).

57. Green, *Asian Tigers*, 56, 96.

58. Ma, “Manifestations”; idem, “Vanderbout,” 135.

59. Dermawan, “Study,” 260.

60. In an orphanage in early twentieth-century China, see also Baker, *Visions* (2006, passim; the vision on 131 is actually more biblically accurate without the footnote, which did not belong to the original edition; cf. also comment in McGee, *Miracles*, 147); among other children in Szechuan, China, see Holder, “Revival” (along with much prophesying); among children in the Philippines, Ma, “Vanderbout,” 135; among young women at Ramabai’s mission for “orphan brides,” see, e.g., Anderson, “Signs,” 201; in Myanmar, see Khai, “Pentecostalism,” 270, noting that the pastor’s theological training has predisposed him against it, but that he was compelled by the unexpected phenomena to accept it; Indonesia, see Koch, *Zulus*, 207 (prophecies); Tari, *Wind*, 51–54 (various experiences, including visions). In Africa, see Koch, *Zulus*, 208–16 (a girl’s accurate visions), 217–18 (prophecy through a child). In the United States, see, e.g., Marszalek, *Miracles*, 43–44; the child’s vision in connection with the Azusa Street Revival, in Olena, *Horton*, 34–36. Children have also proved susceptible to revival phenomena more generally (cf. their presence at Cane Ridge; Wolffe, *Expansion*, 59; Wacker, “Living,” 426–27); traditional cultures also report preteen children being possessed (Southall, “Possession,” 242).

persecution over about three years.⁶¹ Despite skepticism in parts of the society, such claims also do appear in the West.⁶² Visions and dreams seem to proliferate particularly in times of spiritual intensity, for example, the Presbyterian revivals in the Hebrides in 1939.⁶³

Dreams sometimes figure in the rise of new religious movements⁶⁴ and appear in call experiences in various religious cultures.⁶⁵ Not surprisingly, many clergy in Africa, both Catholic and Protestant, are called to ministry through dreams.⁶⁶ For example, Margaret Wanjiru had a vision calling her to ministry; her humble ministry in healing, prophecy, and deliverance gained much attention in Nairobi, and her Sunday morning

61. Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 83.

62. See, e.g., Ten Boom, *Tramp*, 189 (Ten Boom's vision of angels); Malarkey, *Boy*, 94; vision examples (fairly ecumenically distributed) in Huyssen, *Saw*, 24, 79, 118–19 (including for a founder's business), 122, 127, 132–33, 150, 183, 186, 195–201; dreams in *ibid.*, 102–3, 119–20, 137; cf. Llewellyn, "Events," 251–52, 258–59. In early modern Pentecostalism, see, e.g., Woodworth-Etter, *Diary*, 111; *idem*, *Miracles*, 109–10; Menzies, *Anointed*, 30 (a girl in a cataleptic state during Swedish revival meetings in 1896 Minnesota); McGee, *People of Spirit*, 269; cf. Jones, *Wonders*, 17; more recently in the West, e.g., White, *Spirit*, 98 (a call to urban ministry through a vision); Alexander, *Signs*, 124–25 (urging ethnic reconciliation); Rumph, *Signs*, 83–90; Deere, *Voice*, *passim*; Williams, *Signs*, 141–42; Storms, *Convergence*, 60–61, 64, 78–80; Stibbe, *Prophetic Evangelism*, 95; Baker, *Enough*, 49–50, 55, 181; *idem*, *Miracles*, 31, 199; Moreland and Iessler, *Faith*, 198–99; Clark, *Impartation*, 120, 145–48, 200; Anderson, *Miracles*, 94–95; Bentley, *Miraculous*, 185; Alexander, *Signs*, 115–30 (esp. 115–17); dreams in Pullinger, *Dragon*, 28, 106, 123, 135; visions in *ibid.*, 29, 200, 232; dreams in Jackson, *Quest*, 176, 335; visions in *ibid.*, 70–71, 298. Though perhaps rightly suspecting that many vision claims were the product of human imagination, Baxter, *Healing*, 256–57, recounts a genuine and thrice-repeated vision he experienced.

63. Peckham, *Sounds*, 107, 234. Although such phenomena are often associated particularly with Pentecostals today, this revival occurred among strict Calvinistic Presbyterians. Cf. visionary trances during Scottish awakenings in 1859–60 (Bebbington, "Clash," 79).

64. Lanternari, "Dreams"; Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 153; among African Zionist movements and independent churches, see Green, *History*, 318; for the visionary call of Steven Tafa Shava, founder of one AIC, see Shoko, *Religion*, 115; cf. the dream that, according to one tradition, stood behind Sardar Birsas's movement, in Singh, "Prophet," 107.

65. Among Mayans today, see Tedlock, "Dreams," 455–59. Dreams sometimes recruit priests in traditional religions (e.g., Verger, "Trance," 51, though noting that this was not the most common method; one method in Krippner, "Call," 191; after a quest, in Hultkrantz, *Healing*, 62–63) or portend possession (Colson, "Possession," 73); a healer's calling in a dream in Binsbergen, "Witchcraft," 225–26. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 37, notes that mystical call experiences appear in some form of many major religions, as well as in tribal religions (including Eskimo shamans, the focus there); in Majority World Christian movements, see, e.g., Akinwumi, "Idahosa"; Dayhoff, "Vilakati"; Hayes, "Mthembu"; Khai, "Pentecostalism," 269 (the vision of Kam Cin Hau, in Myanmar).

66. Sundkler, *Bara Bukoba*, 98 (cited in Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 153); in Zionism, Daneel, *Zionism*, 13–14; examples of callings in dreams in Burgess, *Revolution*, 160; Adelaja, "Land," 43–44; Walls, *Movement*, 88; Emmanuel Itapson, interview, April 8, 2011; visions in Numbere, *Vision*, 33–34; Adeboye with Mfon, "Preparing," 206; Sammy Wanyonyi's childhood vision in Marszalek, *Miracles*, 237; a Maasai prophet figure in Fischer, "Orishi," 24–25 (esp. 25); an AIC founder in Githieya, "Church," 232; in Latin America, see, e.g., Alaminio, *Footsteps*, 23; Marostica, "Learning," 210 (Annacondia); in India, e.g., Yohannan, *Revolution*, 127–28; Huyssen, *Saw*, 93–94; in Korea, Kim, "Healing," 275 (Yonggi Cho's vision); in the West, e.g., the vision reported in Poloma, *Assemblies*, 73–74; Ten Boom, *Hiding Place*, 234–36; Osborn, *Healing*, 276; Shaw, *Awakening*, 138; Huyssen, *Saw*, 54–55, 80–82 (William Booth), 176; Tallman, *Shakarian*, 147; McGee, *Miracles*, 70; Zagrans, *Miracles*, 4; Seymour's dream in Alexander, *Fire*, 114. Note also a visionary call behind the Indonesian Timor revival in Wiyono, "Timor Revival," 278; the call of Indonesian evangelist Petrus Octavianus by a vision (Crawford, *Miracles*, 73); another in Indonesia in Tari, *Wind*, 159.

services draw about five thousand.⁶⁷ One doctoral student from Burkina Faso whom I interviewed, Elisée Ouoba, was called to ministry through a repeated, audible voice.⁶⁸ Some report that in some regions, large numbers or even most of those converted to Christianity today testify that they were converted through dreams or visions;⁶⁹ individual examples could be multiplied around the world⁷⁰ (with cases from many

67. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 151; Alexander, *Signs*, 123.

68. Elisée Ouoba, interview, March 16, 2009. He is a PhD student at Wheaton College; he is from the Evangelical Church of SIM in Burkina Faso (Église Évangélique SIM au Burkina Faso), which was heavily influenced by earlier cessationist Western teachers. For other callings through an audible voice in Africa, see, e.g., Burgess, *Revolution*, 79; Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 329; in Asia, Tari, *Wind*, 142–43 (noting on 143 that most of the ministry teams in Timor had heard God's audible voice at times); in the United States, e.g., John Stewart, who ministered among the Wyandot people in 1816 (McGee, *Miracles*, 10); Anna Gulick, on her experience (interview, March 10, 2011). Sister Brieger McKenna also felt called to a healing ministry through a voice that she at first thought was from a human, though no one else was present (McKenna, *Miracles*, 5–6); so also Amanda Berry Smith (Pope-Levison, *Pulpit*, 89) and perhaps (the narrative is not quite clear if this occasion was audible) Jarena Lee (Riggs, *Witness*, 6; Pope-Levison, *Pulpit*, 27; Andrews, *Sisters*, 35).

69. E.g., Moreland, *Triangle*, 169; Moreland and Issler, *Faith*, 151–53; Kraft, *Worldview*, 493; Otis, *Giants*, 157–60; cf. Becken, "Healing Communities," 233; Guthrie, "Breakthrough," 26; Morgan, "Impasse," 61; Kure, "Light," 184 (revelations); Hausfeld, "Understanding," 75; cf. Anonymous, "History in Indonesia," 147 (through dreams and other supernatural means, in Indonesia); Crawford, *Miracles*, 92, 94 (in Indonesia, through a dream); for some examples claiming conversions through visions or auditions, see, e.g., Knapstad, "Power," 82 (a vision), 83 (a vision), 87–88 (a recurring dream).

70. E.g., Kwan, "Argument," 499 (conversion through a vision in nineteenth-century China); Goforth, *Goforth*, 216 (a conversion through a dream, after a request for one, in early twentieth-century China); Anderson, *Pelendo*, 33–36 (a voice, in Central Africa, with an attendant sign); Mohammad, "Saw"; Burgess, *Revolution*, 250; Chesnut, "Exorcising," 181–82 (apparently, Brazil); Kim, "Healing," 273 (Korea); Olson, *Bruchko*, 151 (a vision, leading to most of a Yuko village's conversion in South America); Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 53, 62; Yun, *Heavenly Man*, 50; Stearns, *Vision*, 17, 151, 185 (many among unevangelized peoples); Filson, "Study," 150 (a postmortem vision; after the woman returned to life she was converted and [151] engaged in evangelism), 154 (a dream preparing one for a particular witness); Tari, *Wind*, 143–45; idem, *Breeze*, 19; Koch, *Zulus*, 34, 143, 150, 202, 224 (through dreams; converted through visions in 141–42, 159, 225; cf. dreams for repentance in 227–31); Osborn, *Healing*, 298–99; Stibbe, *Prophetic Evangelism*, 5–6, 17–20 (in the West, 101–2), 98 (a vision; in the West, 104–5); McCallie, *Trophy*, 5–6 (a vision, if literal); Pope-Levison, *Pulpit*, 51 (Sojourner Truth); Marszalek, *Miracles*, 57–58 (a Native American's NDE vision, ultimately leading to conversion), 133; dreams in the *Jesus Film* newsletter, Jan. 15, 2010; regarding dreams, Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 54, 62; a dream in Bredesen, *Miracle*, 154–58 (also in Llewellyn, "Events," 249); visions associated with (before, during, or immediately after) conversions in Huysen, *Saw*, 35–36 (Graham Kerr's wife), 42 (ca. 1900), 48–49, 54–55 (for thirty minutes), 89, 104–5, 170–72, 175; Levitt, *Beef*, 1–3, 48; cf. the revelatory light in Guldseth, "Power," 4; a voice in the heart in Steil, "Ears," 8; Eduardo Lara Reyes and Nimsi A. Arcila Leal (interview, Feb. 10, 2010), regarding a contact's new commitment through two persons' independent but same dreams over a period of two days. Jan Nylund, a PhD student, shared with me how a figure spoke words to his Iranian wife, Maria, that she later learned (before becoming a Christian) belonged to Jesus in the Gospels (Nov. 23, 2009). My former student Henry Baldwin, one of the Tuskegee Airmen, also told me of a light that filled the room at the time of his commitment to Christ, but at the time I hoped he would write his entire account and I neglected to record the exact date of our conversation. Cf. an example in early Methodism (Wigger, *Saint*, 93); Ekechi, "Medical Factor," 294, notes the influence of a vision on corporate conversion in 1873 Onitsha. Some argue that some religious experiences can be self-authenticating (as epistemic miracles; Oakes, "Experience").

years, for example, in India).⁷¹ On one occasion, it is reported that many persons who venerated the sun were converted through the Indonesian preaching team when a vision of Jesus appeared just above the sun, seen by everyone present.⁷² On another, a Hausa man recounted that an angel appeared to him three times and read to him from a book, then sent him on a long journey for an explanation to Christians, where he heard the same passage as they disciplined him.⁷³

Healings are also reported in conjunction with visions⁷⁴ and dreams.⁷⁵ For example, when Anna Gulick was a Lutheran missionary in Japan in the mid-1950s, she was receiving penicillin in various forms for her allergies. One night after spraying it in her nose, however, her “heart went into fibrillation due to anaphylactic shock from penicillin.” She knew she had only five minutes to live in this state, and it was too late for her friends to get help, but suddenly she could see only Jesus at the foot of her bed. Without speaking, she communicated from her heart that “if He still had work for me to do, I was willing to stay.” Then the room returned to normal, and her heart was beating fine. The next day the doctor warned her not to take penicillin again in any form. From that time forward she lost her fear of death, knowing that Jesus would be with her again.⁷⁶ That was more than fifty years

71. E.g., McBane, “Bhils,” 139 (two people both having visions the same night urging them to accept Christ, leading to twenty-two baptisms in Nov. 1901); Lynch-Watson, *Robe*, 18 (Sadhu Sundar Singh, Dec. 17, 1904; also in Davey, *Robe*, 23–24); Flint, “Brahman’s Son”; “Healings in India” (probably the same person as “Healeth: in India”); Boehr, *Medicine*, 55–56; Huyssen, *Saw*, 56–58, citing J. T. Seamands (a Hindu priest).

72. Koch, *Revival*, 143. An account is also told of Jesus’s sorrowful face appearing on the wall in sight of an entire congregation shortly before the Great War began, with many witnesses and many conversions (Boddy, “Face,” noting on 114 that nothing was unusual about the lighting).

73. Talbot, “Vision,” 276–77, from her interview with Sue Davis, who had interpreted for the man (who became a pastor). Talbot compares as analogous an independent account in Bede.

74. E.g., Duffin, *Miracles*, 172–74; Zhaoming, “Chinese Denominations,” 450–51; Yamamori and Chan, *Witnesses*, 59–60; Young, “Miracles in History,” 117; McGee, *Miracles*, 219; Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 51, 61; Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 55; Beadle, “Healings,” 6; Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 87–88; Glew, “Experience,” 81; Tari, *Breeze*, 58–59 (raising); Anderson, *Pelendo*, 111–12; Hiatt, “Vision”; Eusbarina Acosta Estévez, interview, Aug. 7, 2010; Wilson, “Miracle Events,” 271; Karnofsky, “Vision,” 15–16 (a medieval example); Bredesen, *Miracle*, 24; DeGrandis, *Miracles*, 89–90; Anderson, *Miracles*, 179–81; Huyssen, *Saw*, 27–28, 144–48, 157–62; Moolenburgh, *Meetings*, 72–84 (though none here are naturally inexplicable); Schiappacasse, *Heals*, 20 (cf. also 60); a non-Western testimony sent to me by Douglas LeRoy, Nov. 9, 2009; cf. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 87–88; Jones, *Wonders*, 73; Marszalek, *Miracles*, 19–21; in other circles, Beard, *Mission*, 10. It is reported that Julian of Norwich, thought to be lying on her deathbed, saw visions of Jesus and recovered in 1373 (Llewellyn, “Events,” 244).

75. For dreams and healings (or prescriptions or instructions where to seek healing), see, e.g., Shorter, *Witch Doctor*, 153–54; Zempleni, “Symptom,” 119; Duffin, *Miracles*, 170–72 (incubation, 168–69); Bush and Pegues, *Move*, 51, 61; Szabo, “Healings”; Tomkins, *Wesley*, 60 (Charles Wesley’s healing); Burgess, *Revolution*, 224; Alexander, *Fire*, 114; Salmon, *Heals*, 131–32; Ikin, *Concepts*, 106–7; Woodard, *Faith*, 94; Koch, *Zulus*, 76, 121 (marital reconciliation); Hodgson, “Sorcerer,” 5. Cf. Jacques Moussounga, Sept. 8, 2005; Joshua Obeng, interview, Jan. 28, 2009; Antoinette Malombé, interview, July 13, 2008; Jeanne Mabiala, interview, July 29, 2008; Lakshmi Devi, personal correspondence, Oct. 29, 2010; Anonymous, “History in Indonesia,” 137. Cf. also the Muslim physician alerted to the lymphoma in his body at stage 1, when it was treatable, through a dream he attributes to Allah, in Matthews and Clark, *Faith Factor*, 74–75.

76. Anna Gulick, personal correspondence, Aug. 10, 2009; further details, Aug. 13, 2009; interview, March 10, 2011. I was introduced to Anna through our mutual friend Onesimus Asimwe. Dr. Nicole

ago; Anna is still going strong, now an Anglican deacon with a lively and articulate sense of humor, at age ninety-two.⁷⁷

Similarly, Australian Markan scholar Rikk E. Watts recounts an incident that followed an extended time of prayer when he was about eighteen years old. A man visiting his family's church noted that he was not a Christian but that he had seen the church's name in a dream, in which he also heard that he would be healed there. Although the man had not identified his specific health problem and Rikk had not observed his entrance, he felt led to pray for the man's lower legs. Suddenly the man began shouting that he was healed, and afterward inquired how Rikk knew that the problem was with his feet.⁷⁸

My wife, a second-generation Christian from Central Africa, collected in her journal various examples of Christians' dreams and visions that were taken very seriously and often proved (albeit in retrospect) strikingly accurate. Such dreams included those portending imminent war, before it was commonly known that war was coming, and only shortly before war came. (One may observe that some such dreams continued after the war as well, though this time they might have reflected posttraumatic stress syndrome.) When my wife was a girl, another person had a vision of her leaving the country, not a common practice in Congo for people of her family's means at the time. She was seen returning while the airport was being bombed, also an uncommon thought at the time, since the nation had long been at peace, so the family prayed that God would avert this crisis. Some twenty years later, when she finished her PhD and was returning to Congo, her flight plans were diverted while shooting and bombing occurred in the airport where she would have landed.⁷⁹ Others had visions when she was in her country, including when she was a refugee in the forest, that she would eventually marry a white minister from the West. They did not know about our friendship, and we became engaged only after the war ended; nor did she reveal the prophecies to me until we were engaged.⁸⁰ Not all dreams are taken as predictive, however, and even many who regularly look for meanings often find their sense obscure.

Matthews notes that the arrhythmia can often be reversed medically through electric shock or high-dose steroids, but it would not normally reverse itself spontaneously, as here (personal correspondence, Aug. 16–17, 2009).

77. At the time she shared the testimony with me, she was only about one month shy of ninety-one (personal correspondence, Aug. 14, 2009).

78. Rikk E. Watts, interview, Nov. 17, 2010.

79. Coco Moïse still remembered her especially by this prophecy when they talked around Nov. 30, 2008. Among other long-range prophecies, one might compare the prophecy given to Moses Tay's mother when she was pregnant with him about his significant future ministry; he became a doctor but eventually became the Anglican archbishop of the province of South East Asia (Green, *Asian Tigers*, 101–2). Many Christians could offer many reports of even such long-range prophecies, although again many prophecies are uttered that do not come to pass. One could dismiss many examples as coincidence, but some are precise and come from those who regularly prophesy accurately. Nevertheless, I lack means to quantify the relative probabilities.

80. As of the time she supplied this information to me, she has never been charismatic or Pentecostal; she belonged to her country's major Protestant church. I could cite additional examples of this sort of

Such reports are frequent. Thus Dr. Horace Russell, mentioned in chapter 9, shared the recent experience of a Baptist deacon he knows near Philadelphia, originally from Trinidad. She dreamed that her approximately twelve-year-old grandson was abducted by a white man and taken away, yet remained safe. Not knowing what the dream meant, she simply prayed. Four weeks later (and less than two months before he shared the account with me), a white man claiming to be a police officer told the boy to get in his car. The boy complied, yet was released unharmed; the police afterward insisted that none of their officers would have done that and promised to investigate. The dream, it is suggested, may have invited prayer to protect the boy in a coming dangerous situation.⁸¹

Besides visions and dreams, accurate prophecies are widely attested (with a higher degree of accuracy apparently in some circles than in others),⁸² although

experience that I have witnessed firsthand (even from my own journal over the years), but the above examples should suffice to illustrate that many people do take such experiences very seriously.

81. Horace Russell (interview, Oct. 26, 2009).

82. For popular modern claims of charismatic Christian prophecy, sometimes accurate to the detail, see, e.g., Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 71–72; White, *Spirit*, 185–86 (noting both accuracy and inaccuracy), 213; McKenna, *Miracles*, 6–7, 9–13, 23; Libersat, “Epilogue,” 140; Gutierrez, *Mujer de Milagros*, 76–77 (including a severe hurricane); Jones, *Wonders*, 67; Crandall, *Raising*, 137–38 (a vision); Tari, *Wind*, 31–32, 54, 147; Breeze, 15; Martell-Otero (interview, April 22, 2010, regarding her father); Koch, *Zulus*, 219–20, 232 (vision), 234–35, 240–41; Marszalek, *Miracles*, 43–44, 166, 244–45; Bennett, *Morning*, 105; Deere, *Power of Spirit*, 36–37, 133, 210–12; Alexander, *Signs*, 121; Jackson, *Quest*, 179, 197–98, 211 (but also inaccurate ones, 208, 236–37); Pytches, *Come*, 97–100; idem, *Thundered*, 10–11, 18, 20–21, 82–84, 136 (some more controversial than others; inaccurate ones on 4–10, 109, 113–14, 150–51; and in Buckingham, “Afterword,” 150–51); Storms, *Convergence*, 52, 60, 64, 66, 76–77, 78–80, 86–87; idem, *Guide*, 37–38, 44, 45–47, 81–84, 85, 94, 100; Yun, *Heavenly Man*, 79, 81; Stibbe, *Prophetic Evangelism*, 1–3, 4–5, 14–17, 49–50, 59–60, 62–64, 66–67, 70, 107, 129–30, 134–35, 159, 163, 166, 167, 195; Baker, *Enough*, 27; Moreland and Issler, *Faith*, 198–99; Best, *Supernatural*, 54–57, 92–93, 101–2, 107, 109–11, 125, 127–28, 199; Clark, *Impartation*, 134, 200; Johnson, *Heaven*, 102; Venter, *Healing*, 127; Numbere, *Vision*, 453; Robertson, *Miracles*, 57; Anderson, *Miracles*, 232–34; Osborn, *Christ*, 83 (firsthand experience with John Sung’s prophetic gift); cf. Brownell, “Experience,” 218; Pullinger, *Dragon*, 129; Malarkey, *Boy*, 175; Brian Stewart (interview, Aug. 7, 2010); Kayon Murray Johnson, interview, Oct. 14, 2010; Simon Hauger, phone interview, Dec. 4, 2009, about another person; note also false prophecies (for two among many possible examples) in Alnor, *Heaven*, 102; Numbere, *Vision*, 436. Storms also points to occasions in history (here Spurgeon’s ministry) where the phenomenon of prophecy occurred by other names (*Guide*, 89–90, citing Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:226–27; also in Storms, “View,” 201–3); see Lloyd-Jones, *Spirit*, 45, 88, for prophecy among the Scottish Covenanters. For claims of accurate non-Christian prophecy, see, e.g., Ashe, *Miracles*, 165–66 (attributing the accuracy not to the tarot cards but to “unconscious” knowledge; but McClenon, *Events*, 139, argues that statistically tarot readings seem to prove correct only coincidentally); Harner, *Way of Shaman*, 97–98 (accurate shamanic precognition); Kibicho, “Continuity,” 381 (Aikuyu prophecy); Salamone, “Bori,” 18 (knowledge of the anthropologist’s thoughts); Grindal, “Heart,” 72 (mysterious knowledge, in northwestern Ghana); Scherberger, “Shaman,” 60 (mysterious knowledge, among a people in Guyana); Turner, “Advances,” 36 (a Native American divining where an archaeologist would find material); Turner, “Actuality,” 7 (her experience of what she afterward viewed as precognition, through shamanic meditation, also in Turner, *Healers*, 161); McClenon, *Events*, 135 (a Protestant Chinese psychic claiming the help of Buddhist spirits, with extraordinary knowledge, sometimes including diagnosing problems before medical tests had done so); see Montefiore, *Miracles*, 23–24, on arguments for telepathy; 41–42, for clairvoyance; 51–52, for precognition; and 107–9, on veridical hallucinations. Although the laboratory basis for psychic ability seems questionable to me, even some scientists as respected as Freeman Dyson accept human psychic abilities (Herrick, *Mythologies*, 152).

these must be balanced with prophecies that did not prove accurate.⁸³ In such settings, people may use the predictive element as a warning rather than assuming an unalterable future;⁸⁴ the retrospective component may also be used at times to interpret dreams and presumably to distinguish what are believed to be accurate dreams (more apt to be revelatory) and revelations from inaccurate ones.⁸⁵

Some predictions, however, are specific and narrow enough to seem more unusual.⁸⁶ For example, in some cases prophecies have been said to expose government agents secretly infiltrating services.⁸⁷ I have no way to provide a statistical comparison,⁸⁸ but I can at least say that the probability of coincidence seems very low when (as in one example above) various persons independently prophesied to my future wife that she would marry a white minister.⁸⁹ Very few white people lived in her country, and at least one of the several, independent prophecies was given to her while she was a refugee in the forest, with little natural prospect of the prophecy being fulfilled. (Those who offered the prophecy independently did not even know one another.)

I offer just one of a number of dreams that could be considered significant that occurred during the course of working on this book, which I happened to write down in my calendar: on November 10, 2008, I dreamed of a truck from the oncoming lane forcing Médine off the road; I warned her and then prayed. As she was driving to the university, a car from the oncoming lane pulled out from behind a truck and nearly hit her. Out of thousands of dreams, of course, some will coincide with events; moreover, it was not precisely a truck that almost struck her, and I must concede that we do have quite a lot of reckless drivers in this area.

Divination is typically a matter of probabilities, requiring repetition of the procedures to achieve greater confidence (among the Mande, see McNaughton, *Blacksmiths*, 56).

83. Examples in McGee, *Miracles*, 106–7, 125; and often. On the problems of coincidence within large samples and confirmation bias, see, e.g., Shermer, “Miracle,” although some events are too improbable or difficult naturally to be explained in such terms, and such an approach can discount larger patterns among particular people and groups of people.

84. E.g., Burgess, *Revolution*, 161. Cultures that regard some dreams as revelatory usually do not regard the revelations as irreversible (in the ancient Near East, see, e.g., Walton, “Genesis,” 121); similarly, omens in Pliny *Nat.* 28.4.17.

85. Cf. the experiment in Charpak and Broch, *Debunked*, 2–3, where 69 percent of students thought their “individualized” personality profiles based on their dreams were fairly accurate—though all the assigned profiles were identical.

86. Koch, *Zulus*, 232, notes that he had preached for years against visions, dreams, and the like until he encountered genuine revelatory ones in places of revival.

87. In postwar Nigeria, during a military government, in Numbere, *Vision*, 81.

88. Chandra shekar, “Possession Syndrome,” 89, observes that many prophecies of Indian spirit mediums are vague; the medium elicited praise if the prediction came true, and if it did not the recipients blamed their own fate rather than the medium. In such cases, accuracy is not readily falsifiable; one might draw analogies for some prophecies in Christian circles.

89. E.g., her journal on Feb. 27, 1999. On other occasions, two different people without direct contact independently prophesied the same thing about one of our family members on the same day (e.g., two prophecies recounted to us around Nov. 13, 2008).

Statistically, even specific and unlikely coincidences are likely to happen sometimes. Thus some critics offer the example of thinking about someone one has not seen for a long time just a few minutes before learning of the person's death, and they point out that we would expect, out of a U.S. population of (at the time) some 295 million, for this coincidence to happen to about seventy-seven people each day.⁹⁰ Such observations are especially important with vague dreams, low-level coincidences, and so forth; it does not, however, easily explain the coincidence of such events within our particular sample size. (For example, out of roughly 300 million people in the United States, the odds of a given person being one of those seventy-seven in a given day over the course of one's life, even just once, are less than one-tenth of 1 percent. For it to happen multiple times to the same person, or the same event to multiple persons at once, as in the example below, makes the odds *significantly* lower.⁹¹) One could appeal to a variation of the gambler's fallacy: If one comes across a roulette wheel that always yields a particular number, is it more probable that one has chanced upon the one roulette wheel of putative millions that yield this number, or that the wheel is fixed?

Regarding the particular sort of example offered by critics, examples might be provided. In one case in our family, when Pastor Ndoundou, known in Congo for miracles, passed, my wife, then a student in France, and many others dreamed of his passing.⁹² Not knowing of others' dreams, my wife dreamed of his passing the night that it occurred, hearing about his passing only the next morning; in the dream, Pastor Ndoundou gestured farewell to her and those with her. On the other side of the discussion, everyone knew that Pastor Ndoundou had been ill, so for some this factor could mitigate the unusual character of the possible revelations. Such coincidences are difficult to quantify. Similarly, on January 23, 2011, I dreamed that I visited my first pastor and his wife and found them very happy. I cannot recall dreaming of them in the roughly thirty-five years since I had met them; I had not been in contact or received information about them for a long time, except hearing perhaps a year earlier that the wife had passed away. That evening his granddaughter wrote to inform me that he had passed away two days before.⁹³ Again, how would one quantify this probability?

When, however, inexplicably accurate knowledge happens repeatedly in the same circle or to the same person (as is the case with some persons I know), we

90. Shermer, "Miracle." He adjusts the "premonition" probability calculations in Charpak and Broch, *Debunked*, 61–62, who argue that a premonition of this sort is statistically likely to happen sixty-five times a day in the United States. I suspect that the odds may be higher but work with their odds, since the cumulative, exponential weight of multiple cases with a particular person would render the improbability significantly greater than what I note.

91. I work generously from an eighty-year lifetime with about 29,200 days.

92. Médine learned about one of the many cases only years later, when a family friend, Papa Nzouhou, reported that dream (roughly five days before Pastor Ndoundou's passing) on the occasion of the only other time he had such a dream, about Médine's father perhaps two months before his passing. She learned of many others' dreams, however, soon after Pastor Ndoundou had passed.

93. Lisa Prysock, personal correspondence, Jan. 23, 2011.

are talking about an extremely improbable occurrence, difficult to account for purely naturalistically. In such cases, it might seem more probable that the “roulette wheel” is “fixed.” Those who prophesy accurately most regularly inspire the most trust, though even the intensely pneumatic early Christian movement apparently recognized that prophets remained fallible (1 Cor 14:29).

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Note: I agreed with the Chinese pastors I interviewed in May 2007 to omit information about them to protect their privacy; also another Chinese minister on Jan. 30, 2009. A medical source (phone interviews, Dec. 17, 2008; March 27, 2009, and medical documentation that I received on Feb. 13, 2009) also asked that I withhold his name for the sake of his privacy; some other persons also requested anonymity (including conversation and correspondence, May 22, 26, 2010; June 7, 9, 2010). The other interviews and several transcriptions of others' interviews and correspondence appear below. I have included only the fraction of correspondence most relevant to the book, not a much larger range of correspondence for the book that did not ultimately prove as relevant.

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