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The Soteriological Design of Miracles

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THE SOTERIOLOGICAL
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ABSTRACT

The eighteenth century marked a critical point in the history of the biblical subject of miracles. It ushered in the Enlightenment Movement which initiated and fostered a scientific mentality. Under the guise of deism, the movement claimed that, in a scientific age, so-called divine revelation was inadequate for values, faith and conduct. On the other hand, the Church contended that divine revelation was indeed adequate and that reason and science did not in any way invalidate that claim.

This response by the Church did very little to quench the escalating heat of biblical criticism. The critics' assault continued even over into the twentieth century. It pre-determined the scope of concentration and study by the pro-miracle advocates. The result was the development of a limited scriptural view of miracles which was chiefly apologetic. The view asserts that miracles as supernatural deeds are designed to authenticate and to distinguish Christianity as the sole guardian of religious truth and faith. Like the critics, such a view undermines miracles, but unwittingly. It suggests that there is no need for miracles now that Christianity has been universally recognized. This undoubtedly is erroneous and constitutes the underlying motive for the burden of this study.

The study is an attempt to show then that miracles serve some wider design--an apologetical as well as a soteriological one. They are employed by the Godhead to implement his redemptive plan, to unfold it

and to conclude it. Also, they are employed for the purpose of enlisting followers and adherents into the kingdom of faith. As such they served an evangelistic end. The accomplishment of this task is facilitated by a simple structure. The study is divided into two main parts for proper development. The biblical dimension surveys and explains both the concept and deeds of miracles, while the theological analyzes and develops the main conclusions on the soteriological value of miracles.

Out of this study emerged a number of important themes or major findings. Dominant among them is the doctrine of revelation. In this respect, it is observed that miracles are utilized as a medium. They serve to mediate divine truth pertinent to God's saving work for mankind. Thus, they reveal salvation as deliverance from sin, darkness and death. Also they serve to signal the time and arrival of salvation. They reveal to the Jews the fulfillment of prophecy and thus conform to their expectation and hopes. In addition, miracles reveal God as the author and means necessary for man's salvation.

Secondly, redemption as a theme is very prominent. This is connected with the more spectacular and famous miracles such as the incarnation, the crucifixion and the resurrection. The primary role of these miracles consists of providing and effecting the main acts of redemption. The incarnation provides the divine agent, the Lamb of God. The crucifixion slays him and accomplishes the act of atonement, while the resurrection defeats death, despair and their powerful agent the Devil. Lastly, it is quite evident that miracles are associated with the themes of evangelism and discipleship. They call upon men to accept God's offer of salvation and to surrender to him in faith.

Finally, the writer believes that this extensive and strategic

use of miracles declares their indispensable and fundamental character to salvation. He believes that it is an error to ignore or reject their relevance, and that instead they must be given a place of prominence in the doctrine of salvation. He believes also, that they must be allowed to play their catechitical and didactic roles, both in the life and conduct of the Church.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.	1
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction to the Problem.	1
Statement of Proposition	7
Limitation of Study.	8
Theoretical Framework.	9
Definition of key terms.	9
Statement of personal position	11
Procedure.	11
II. THE CONCEPTION OF MIRACLE; ITS NATURE	13
Introduction	13
Etymology.	13
Definition	14
Use of the Word, Miracle	16
Synonyms	17
Power.	18
Signs, signs and wonders	22
Work	29
Summary.	39
III. THE INTERPRETATION OF MIRACLES: A COMMON VIEW	40
THE INCARNATION AND INFANCY EPISODES	40
The Messages of the Angels	41

The hope of the people	46
THE MINISTRY EPISODES.	52
The Synoptic Episodes.	52
The Johannine Episodes	58
THE RESURRECTION EPISODES.	74
The Disciples' Commitment and Life	75
Prejudice and Misunderstanding	78
Disappointment and Despair: the Crucifixion	83
The Appeal and Impact of the Resurrection.	90
Restoration of the disciples' faith and morale	90
Transformation of their messianic outlook.	92
Recommitment and piety	94
Summary.	95
IV. THE DESIGN OF MIRACLES	96
Introduction	96
Miracles Are a Medium of Divine Revelation	96
The nature and message of salvation	97
Miracles Signal the Advent and Dispensation of Salvation .	107
Miracles Reveal the Author and Means of Salvation.	109
Miracles Are the Efficient Means of Redemption	113
Miracles Are Tools of Evangelism and Discipleship.	119
Summary.	122
CONCLUSIONS.	124
BIBLIOGRAPHY	127

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

Over the last three centuries, the subject of miracles has been an issue of considerable theological debate. Earlier, it had appeared occasionally and had demanded the foresight and wisdom of such renowned theologians as Augustine and Aquinas. Both men championed its cause. Apparently, however, it received no significant attention during the Reformation. The chief concern of this period was the restoration of New Testament Christianity.

Nevertheless, it did not long remain in obscurity. While the Reformation, in its theological and ecclesiastical struggles, did not make it an item of specific interest, it nevertheless set the stage for its future spotlight. The emphasis on education, the Bible and New Testament Christianity quite clearly established the trend. By the eighteenth century, when Protestant Christianity had been established and society had begun to realize the "wonders" of the scientific age, the subject moved into prominence.

During this period, the secular movement of the Enlightenment¹

¹ James C. Livingston, Modern Christian Thought (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), p. 3; Earle E. Cairns, Christianity Through the Centuries (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), p. 444, describes the movement as rationalistic, individualistic, romantic and idealistic.

emerged supreme and, apart from its amelioration, was a definite challenge to society generally. Specifically, from the standpoint of religion, the movement precipitated an assault on Christianity. This assault brought to the fore the philosophical division of the Church. The one group, the liberals, felt that, in a scientific age, revelation was inadequate as a basis for faith and conduct. The other group, the conservatives, which had the teachings and the traditions of both wings of the Church behind it, taught that indeed, revelation was adequate. The liberals were dissatisfied, and so they attacked Christianity through the humanistic and naturalistic philosophy of deism. Contrary to Christianity, deism teaches that God who had created the universe, does not control or supervise it. It teaches that consequently, there was no need for contact or so called "special revelation"² such as Scripture, Christ or miracles, as Christianity teaches.

Instead, it teaches that, in creation, God had established a set of immutable laws³ designed to run and maintain the universe. Predominant among these laws was reason, which not only teaches man how to care for his physical needs but for his spiritual as well, through the means of "virture."⁴ This means that the universe by nature is self-sufficient and therefore has no need of divine contact nor of special revelation. In practical terms, it means that contrary to Christian teaching, the

²Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1953), p. 1004.

³The theories of natural laws were introduced and popularized by such scientists and philosophers as Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Bacon and Locke--See Cairns pp. 406-408.

⁴Ibid, p. 409; See also Latourette.

Scripture, Christ and miracles were indisputably irrelevant. Their reality and necessity would mean a violation of natural laws, and this according to scientific principles, was impossible. This was the position of Hume, the deistic rationalist.⁵

During the second half of the eighteenth century however, and continuing on into the twentieth, the focus and assault continued, though from a different and more deadly foe. This foe was biblical criticism. According to Cairns, the movement which was a natural outgrowth of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, was a "historico-critical approach"⁶ to the Scripture. This approach secularized the Scripture and regarded it merely as an ordinary book to be judged by the standard of literary canons.⁷ On this basis, the movement charged that the Bible was "the record of the subjective evolution of religion in human consciousness"⁸ and, therefore, was to be repudiated as "absolute authority" "for faith and life."⁹

This rejection of biblical authority was not only persistent and radical, but widespread and particular. Less than a century earlier, Reimarus and Lessing had respectively denied the possibility and necessity of miracles. They claimed that the witnesses were unreliable and their reports merely historical, that is, not empirical.¹⁰ Similarly, in the

⁵David Hume, in his essay "On Miracles," An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1927), p. 120 contends that miracles are a violation of the laws of nature.

⁶Cairns, p. 444. ⁷Ibid., p. 445. ⁸Ibid., p. 447.

⁹Ibid., p. 444.

¹⁰According to Cairns, Lessing published in 1778 Hermann Reimarus' work The Fragments in which he both denied the possibility of miracles

nineteenth century, Strauss who was the outstanding figure, denied in his book, A New Life of Jesus, the historicity of miracles, charging that they were mythological.¹¹

This attitude and trend did not wane with the close of the century but was carried over into the twentieth century in which it was even intensified. Here men like Dibelius and Bultmann, famous for their form critical methodology, made a vigorous assault on the Gospel accounts. In the process, they not only reduced the Gospel accounts to tales humanly fabricated out of the Sitz im Leben of the Early Church, but totally rejected the miraculous.¹²

Meanwhile, the pro-miracle advocates had been busy, yet their voice and effort had fallen far short of their opponents' whose historical interpretation of miracles had been heralded with vigor, brilliance and persistency. Indeed, they responded to their rivals, yet, over the three-hundred year period, only few, like many of the opponents, had dealt with the issue on as large a scale as a book, and of those, none

and denounced the New Testament writers as "pious frauds"--p. 448. See also Latourette, pp. 1050-1051.

¹¹ David Friedrich Strauss, A New Life of Jesus, I and II (14 Henrietta Street, Convent Garden, London: Williams and Norgate, 1885), I, p. 201ff and all of volume II which is sub-entitled "Mythical History of Jesus."

¹² See their works: Martin Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf, Greenwood (S/outh C/arolina: The Attic Press, Inc, 1971), pp. 70ff, 104ff, 266ff; Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, trans. John Marsh (rev. ed., New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), in his "Conclusion" refers to miracles as "mythical" pp. 371, and "legendary" or "legends" pp. 302, 374; Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Rundsinn Form Criticism, trans. Frederick C. Grant (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), pp. 67ff. See also: Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (3rd rev. ed., Box F, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515: Inter-varsity Press, 1970), p. 196.

attained the force and popularity of any of their rivals. Instead, most wrote articles, essays or chapters and the like.

Moreover, although they were countering their rivals' historical approach to the subject, their theological substitute was stereotyped, largely polemical and journalistic. A review of their various works and articles written over the period shows that the general topics discussed, apart from definition, concern the possibility or probability of miracles, miracles as proofs of Christ's person and Messianic office and of the Christian religion; miracles not contrary to the laws of nature and miracles of beneficence.¹³ There is no concern for the soteriological dimension. The most that is evident is the instinctive drive to defend their faith.

This preoccupation with miracles as an apology for Christianity poses a definite problem which concerns the writer. First, the emphasis

¹³See the following works: Joseph Butler's Chapter "Of the Supposed Presumption Against a Revelation Considered as Miraculous," The Analogy of Religion . . . (Cincinnati: L. Swormstedt and A. Poe, 1847), p. 192ff; Richard Chenevix Trench's book, Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1857); see especially the section on "Preliminary Essay" p. 9ff; Charles Hodges' Chapter on "Miracles," Systematic Theology, I (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), p. 617ff; William Burt Pope's section on "The Credential of Miracles," A Compendium of Christian Theology, I (2nd, rev. and enl. ed.; New York: Hunt and Eaton, n.d.), p. 63ff; Francis J. Lamb's book, Miracles and Science (Oberlin, Ohio: Bibliotheca Sacra Company, 1909); Clement F. Rogers' book, The Case for Miracles (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936); C. S. Lewis' book, Miracles (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1947); H. Orton Wiley's contribution: One of four sections under the title, "The Credentials of Revelation," Christian Theology, I (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1949), p. 150ff; J. A. MacCulloch's: Two sections of an article on "Miracles," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, VIII (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), pp. 686-689; H. Wace's article on "Miracle," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, III, ed. James Orr et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), p. 2062ff.

is harmful to its own cause. It proposes that miracles are intended to authenticate Christianity. They must prove to the world that Christ and his new order are respectively the ultimate source and means of reality. Viewed in proper perspective, this is no mistake. However, in a sense it is self-defeating. First, while the emphasis is intended to promote miracles, it actually frustrates its own purpose by implying that miracles are no longer necessary. Currently, Christianity is recognized as a world religion without any miraculous display. If, as it is claimed, the primary function of miracles is to authenticate Christianity, the question remains to be asked, of what further use are miracles, after they have effectively accomplished that end?

Herein lies the weakness of this argument. As Lessing affirms in his essay, "On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power,"¹⁴ it means that miracles have outlived their intended usefulness¹⁵--an attractive rebuttal indeed but nevertheless one which is contrary to the total truth. Secondly, it seems that a consciousness of the dynamic role New Testament miracles played in recommending Christianity to the largely suspicious world of its inception tends to remove the desire to discover more. There is a trend of irresponsible confidence that prides itself in the feeling, "we have the truth of Scripture and that's enough." Consequently, over the three hundred year period, the pro-miracle advocates have, instead of exploring further and building their case, remained virtually static and repetitious. Their arguments are essentially the same.¹⁶

¹⁴Henry Chadwick, Lessing's Theological Writings (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956), p. 51ff.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 55. ¹⁶See the works of footnote # 13.

Moreover, the single emphasis is a matter of concern, not only because it is vulnerable, but because it uncovers and exposes only part of the truth, namely, that miracles validate Christianity as the true and bona fide religion of the world. That miracles constitute the gospel in action, confronting men with the revealer and deliverer is not, unfortunately, a part of this emphasis. That is a distressful omission, and reduces the Church's discipling and teaching resources. The result is a soteriological loss and deprivation which the Church can ill-afford.

Nevertheless, this brief survey of the continuing debate provides a clear picture of the magnitude and intensity of the problem relating to the subject of miracles.

Statement of Proposition

This persistent and relentless debate indicates that on both sides the subject is considered crucial. Yet, it is felt that the position of both sides is unsatisfactory. Destructive, the one denounces the historicity and credibility of miracles and thus undermines the faith it admits to be vital. The other side, which is deprivative, fails to uncover and expose the total truth, the apologetical as well as the soteriological truth, designed to recruit and build the Church.

However, while disenchantment exists with both positions, interest at the moment is not divided. Concern is primarily restricted to the pro-miracle advocates' position which regrettably has failed to extract the soteriological element as well from the kernel of Scripture. This soteriological dimension is a matter of great significance and like the apologetical, needs not only to be unveiled but declared.

Consequently, this study attempts to demonstrate that the miracles, associated with Christ at his infancy and in his ministry and mission, do

indeed affirm a soteriological design. This affirmation is based on the fact that, according to the Gospels and the Acts, the God-head intended to deliver men from evil through his message of physical deliverance. This was the explicit teaching of the angels, the Evangelists and of Christ himself who all established that the miracles associated with Christ were messages of the spiritual experience that was in the offering.

Secondly, the affirmation is grounded on the fact of Jewish belief which explains that miracles and those, in particular, of Messiah are ordained to bring about salvation. The Scripture shows that the pious as well as the rank and file of Israel held to this view. Nor is this true only with respect to Christ. The miracles in the life and ministry of the disciples show that they too were instruments of salvation. They too performed miracles that led thousands into a relationship with Christ.

Limitation of Study

Although associated with the subject of miracles are many debatable issues, and although there is much that needs to be said both for and against biblical criticism, the limit or scope of the study has been more or less determined by the nature of the hypothesis. The burden of the hypothesis is to demonstrate the soteriological dimension of the miracles of Christ and his disciples. To accomplish this end requires that the type of literature be biblical and not historical although it may be hardly easy to separate the two. In direct consequence, the biblical material is further limited, focusing chiefly on the Gospels-Acts corpus. Here only are recorded those miracles that are associated with both Christ and his disciples.

Moreover, on the same basis, the field of literature has also

been determined. A Bible-related hypothesis as well as a biblical text naturally requires biblical sources. These sources are basically of two kinds--the primary and the secondary. The primary source which is represented mainly by the Greek text, a gospel parallel and four translations consists only of the Bible. The Greek text is The Greek New Testament (GNT) edited by Kurt Aland and others and the gospel parallel, Throckmorton's Gospel Parallels. The four translations are: The Authorized King James Version (AV), The Revised Standard Version (RSV), The New American Standard Bible (NASV), and The New International Version (NIV). The New American Standard Bible is the primary version and therefore is quoted in study without reference. The other versions are identified by initials when cited.

The secondary sources, which are mostly reference tools, comprise an extensive group which include Lexicons, Concordances, Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, Greek Grammars, Histories and Atlases. A final miscellaneous group covers theologies, related books and articles.

Theoretical Framework

In order to promote clarity and comprehension in this study, two important factors must be established: (1) the definition of some key terms, and (2) a statement of the writer's own position on miracles.

Definition of key terms. In relation to the first, three terms which need to be defined include soteriology, eschatology and design. As used throughout this study, the words with their particular meanings must be made clear. "Soteriology" for instance, denotes variably, the doctrine

or experience of being saved or delivered from sin.¹⁷ It is used synonymously with the word "salvation" which according to Edwin Lewis, "means deliverance from sin and its consequences."¹⁸ The adjectives "soteriological" and "salvific" are used in connection with these meanings.

Although an important and popular word in modern New Testament writings, the term "eschatology"¹⁹ is not used interchangeably with soteriology. The former refers to the historical salvation in which a unit of time, the final epoch of history will be completely transformed through the supernatural work of God in Christ. The latter is mainly ecclesiastical salvation which constitutes the divine recruitment and nourishment of the Church. In more specific terms, the former is general and inclusive and depicts the universal conquest of evil, its agency and effects, in which process the work of the Church is only one of the continuing events. The latter which is particular and exclusive, refers primarily to the conquest of evil in individual lives collectively.

Lastly, another word that must be defined is "design." Unlike its dominant sense of plan, pattern or model, the term is employed here to mean intention, aim or purpose.²⁰ It suggests a motive, a moving

¹⁷A. Merriam Webster, Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, ed. William Allan Neilson et al., (2nd ed.; Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1954).

¹⁸Edwin Lewis, "Salvation," Harper's Bible Dictionary, ed. Madeline E. Miller and J. Lane Miller (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1952), p. 636.

¹⁹James L. Price, Interpreting the New Testament (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 72.

²⁰Webster.

cause such as the desire to save from personal evil, as the driving force behind the working of miracles. It is a specific and sublime intention that exists behind these divine actions or events. That intention is salvific.

Statement of personal position. Secondly, in addition to definition of terms, the writer presents his personal position on miracles. Already, that position has been suggested, nevertheless a further statement is in order. The writer's concern for the soteriological dimension of miracles certainly suggests belief in the miraculous. That is indeed the case.

An evangelical, he strongly believes in the philosophy which C. S. Lewis calls in his book, Miracles, "Supernaturalism."²¹ God not only exists on his own and by himself, he created the universe; and unlike the deistic claim, he supervises its history with purpose. This purpose which consists of his redemptive will for mankind, he reveals to man. This revelation requires contact and therefore in an effort to attain it, he interrupts the business of human history and declares his will. In this process, he speaks not only through the voice of Scripture, through the voice of his Son but through the voice of miracles. This is not only his prerogative, it is his ability. He can and does work miracles.

Procedure

The extent of the study recommends that the procedure be explained. Apart from the Introduction, the study is sub-divided into two major sections: the biblical and the theological. In the biblical section, the

²¹Lewis, p. 15ff.

material is sub-divided into two segments. The first of these is Chapter II and deals primarily with "The Conception of Miracle. . . ." It seeks to define the word "miracle" through a study of various terms peculiar to the designated literature. The second segment which is discussed in Chapter III covers "The Interpretation of Miracles . . ." and seeks to identify the consensus of several characters concerning the significance of miracles. This is attempted through the study of seven miracles categorized in three sections as the Incarnation, the Ministry, and the Resurrection Episodes. These are dealt with rather elaborately.

From the biblical, the study turns to the theological dimension. This dimension is dealt with solely in Chapter IV and is entitled "The Design of Miracles." Here an attempt is made to develop and to demonstrate the expressed thesis. This calls for an analysis of scattered conclusions and a construction of obvious themes.

The study ends with a number of conclusions.

Chapter II

THE CONCEPTION OF MIRACLE: ITS NATURE

Introduction

Although selective, the study of the biblical material consists of an extensive treatment. It covers a large body of material broadly divided into two parts. The one part deals with the nature of miracles and the other the perception of miracles. In this chapter, consideration is given to the first part, while in the following chapter the second is treated. This approach allows for both quality and variety.

The chapter itself then has a definite aim. Its object is to determine the biblical conception of miracles. To accomplish this, study is made of the word "miracle" from its etymology to its current use. This is followed by an in-depth study of the Gospels-Acts terminologies representative of the biblical concept of "miracle." At the conclusion, the findings are examined and a workable definition is formulated.

Etymology

The English word "miracle" represents a popular and dramatic term in contemporary usage. It has enjoyed a history of great attention and has been a personal and extraordinary word for many. The term is nevertheless, of uncertain origin. Lexicographers agree that its oldest root form can be traced only as far back as the Latin word miraculum which is a noun derivative of the verb mirari meaning to wonder. The adjective

mirus means wonderful.¹ Some researchers, desirous of capturing more cultural and historical flair, add the Greek noun thuamasion (a wonder)² as a possible root. The basis of this decision may be due to the marked similarity of meaning between the two roots. This however, has not been satisfactorily established and must therefore remain conjectural. Nevertheless, some biblical scholars have gone ahead and associated the concept of miracle with the root thuamasion.³

Definition

The subject of miracle does not lend itself to a common understanding among scholars. Exact definition is evidently debatable and has given rise to division, not only between biblical and non-biblical scholars, but even among biblical scholars themselves. One group of biblical scholars, holding the more popular view propagated by the deists, stresses the "anti-nature" element and therefore defines miracles as a violation of the laws of nature.⁴ This is the group consisting of such men as Spinoza, Hume and many contemporary scholars. Directly opposed to this view, a second group contends that, unlike the popular charge, miracles

¹ Jean L. McKechnie, ed., Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary (2nd ed.; Collins World, 1975); See also A. Merriam Webster; Jess Stein and Laurence Undang, eds., The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Random House, 1966).

² R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Miracle," The New Encyclopedia Britannica, VII (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1974), p. 269.

³ O. Hoffius, "Miracle," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, II, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 620ff.

⁴ S. V. McCasland, "Miracle," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, III (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 395-396.

are not a violation of or contrary to the laws of nature. Rather they are either a part of or "outside the order of nature."⁵ This is the view peculiarly advocated by Augustine and Aquinas as well as the Westminster Confession.⁶ A third group, including scholars like Lewis and Wiley, stresses the divine element in miracle and defines it as a divine interruption or intervention of natural laws.⁷ Differing totally from the previous groups, however, a final group lays the emphasis on the effect-factor, the event-wonder factor, and defines miracle as an "event" or a "happening,"⁸ something that is "astonishing" and "striking"⁹ or that "excites wonder."¹⁰ This group includes most non-biblical scholars as well as a few biblical ones¹¹ who improperly place emphasis on the secondary elements of wonder and amazement. Evidently the original meaning of the root is responsible for this misguided emphasis. Yet, it fails to give due credit to the divine element present and intended in all miracles.¹²

⁵Ibid., p. 396.

⁶Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, I (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1871), p. 617.

⁷C. S. Lewis, Miracles: A Preliminary Study (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 12; H. Orton Wiley and Paul T. Culbertson, Introduction to Christian Theology (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1946), p. 44.

⁸Werblowsky.

⁹J. A. MacCulloch, "Miracle," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethic, VIII (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 676.

¹⁰Edward J. Jurji, "Miracle," Collier's Encyclopedia, XVI (Macmillan Educational Corporation, 1974), p. 345.

¹¹Hoffius, p. 621.

¹²MacCulloch, p. 676.

These various definitions demonstrate the indefinite character¹³ of the subject and should certainly serve to underscore the important elements inherent.

Use of the Word, Miracle

The most popular association of miracle exists in the biblical record. This is especially true of the New Testament, where the primitive history of the Early Church reports numerous and historic miracles. Conclusions on the number of miracles performed by Jesus vary and range from between thirty-three to forty-seven in the Gospels.¹⁴ Nevertheless, translators vary significantly in their numerical use of the term.¹⁵ The Authorized King James Version, for example, employs the term freely in as many as twenty-two instances¹⁶ both in the gospels and in the Acts, while the Revised Standard Version and the American Standard Version reduce the number considerably.¹⁷ In the whole of the New Testament, they utilize the term no more than seven (RSV) to eight times (ASV).¹⁸ This is in stark contrast to the New International Version and the famous paraphrased Living Bible. These two Bibles adopt the term consistently and extensively, whereas the New American Standard Bible, the New English Bible,

¹³Hodge.

¹⁴Herbert Lockyer, All the Miracles of the Bible (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), p. 154.

¹⁵McCasland, p. 393.

¹⁶James Strong, "Main Concordance," The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (1890; rpt., New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946).

¹⁷McCasland.

¹⁸Ibid.

the Jerusalem Bible, the Berkley Version and the J. B. Phillip's New Testament employ the term less extensively but certainly more critically. In John's Gospel this second group consistently use the term "sign," while in the Synoptics and in the Acts of the Apostles they translate it "miracle."

This variation in the use of the term miracle indicates the critical judgment with which translators view it, despite its continuing popularity in many religious circles, Christian and non-Christian.

Synonyms

The tendency by some translators to avoid the term "miracle" is not altogether unwarranted. There are some grounds for their decision. One such ground is the availability of other terms, appropriate synonyms which can be used adequately, though not perhaps as equally effective. Added to this, lexicographers reveal that the term has no real root in the original biblical language of Greek. Its root, it will be recalled, only goes as far back as Latin and is connected to the Greek language only in its meaning of wonder.

Apart from that, the synonyms widely recognized and variably preferred by translators are common English terms. Mainly four in number, they consist of diversely different words such as "powers," "signs," "wonders," and "works."¹⁹ To understand the concept of miracle, therefore, a study of these words becomes necessary. First, consideration will be given to the idea of power.

¹⁹F. Merrill Unger, "Miracle," Unger's Bible Dictionary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), p. 747.

Power. The English word "power" is a direct translation of the Greek dunamis which is a development from the stem duna, meaning "being able."²⁰ Dunamis itself has a fascinating and insightful development. It comes from a large family of words and is described as the "most important" in the group.²¹ This importance becomes quite evident when the historical and cultural contexts of the word are examined. In the Greek and Hellenistic world, for example, the concept was essentially bound up with all of human and cosmic life. In the physical life, for instance, the senses were regarded as powers; hence, reference was made to the powers of hearing and seeing.²² The same was true of the spiritual and intellectual life where these faculties were regarded as powers.²³ Beyond these human powers, however, mention was made of powers characteristic of the worlds of the animals, plants and stars. Even the cosmos had powers attributed to it in the sense of being its "underlining physical force" or "capacities for subsistence."²⁴

To these implications of "ability" and "capacity," the LXX adds some further insights. Here dunamis is described as "'power,' and 'strength' in the sense of 'superior force' or 'dominion.'"²⁵ In the Old Testament, however, the notion of power is perceived differently and is associated with a personal God who is well known for exerting his influence upon history.²⁶ Similarly, Rabbinical and Hellenistic Judaism

²⁰Walter Grundmann, "dunamai/dunamis," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, II, ed. Gerhard Kittel (1964; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 284.

²¹Ibid., p. 285. ²²Ibid. ²³Ibid. ²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., p. 286. ²⁶Ibid., p. 299.

conceived of power as a force inherent in and connected with a personal God.²⁷ In addition, Judaism introduced a new and important element. It initiated the idea that angels and demons also possess power.²⁸ This however, only serves to reinforce belief in a Supreme God who is regarded not only as Creator, but as Lord.²⁹ Since God is supreme and all powerful, whatever he said or did was naturally regarded as possessing his characteristic power. Hence, Rabbinical Judaism came to believe that the Torah contains "saving power."³⁰ This belief was held on the basis of God's personal assurance that, if Israel will obey his counsel, he will save them from the diseases with which he afflicted the Egyptians (Ex. 15:26).³¹

That concept of power was naturally carried over into the New Testament's understanding. Here the predicted Messiah is expected and is thought to be an emissary from the Supreme God. His human origin is determined by the power of God (Lu. 1:35).³² He is called a "mighty hero" and possesses both prophetic and royal power.³³ His power is for the salvation of mankind and is revealed in both word and deed. As such it is thought to be delegated by God and hence expressive of his very nature.³⁴ Moreover, the concept of power is associated not only with Messiah's arrival and ministry. It is evident in the demonic world,³⁵ in Jesus' encounter with evil and in his deliverance of humanity from sin.³⁶

It is with this background that attention is now directed to a

²⁷Grundmann, p. 294. ²⁸Ibid., p. 295ff. ²⁹Ibid., p. 297.

³⁰Ibid. ³¹Ibid. ³²Ibid., p. 300. ³³Ibid., p. 299.

³⁴Ibid., p. 306. ³⁵Ibid., p. 305. ³⁶Ibid.

study of the word dunamis in the Gospels-Acts framework. The word dunamis is used both literally and metaphorically throughout the New Testament. This usage, however, varies in extent. For instance, in the context of the entire Testament, it has been found that the term is less popular than in the Gospels-Acts framework, where the term occurs over forty-five times, as compared with over sixty-five in the rest of the New Testament.³⁷ The reason for this popularity in the Gospels-Acts context may lie in the fact that it is this body of literature that records Jesus' ministry, and that it is in relation to Jesus that the term is mostly used. In its general use, however, the term has a very broad meaning. Based on its root, it signifies "power, strength,"³⁸ "might" and "force."³⁹ In the narrower context of the Gospels-Acts framework and in as many as twenty instances, the word depicts the idea of the miraculous and carries with it the meaning of an "act of power,"⁴⁰ "a deed of power," or a miracle.⁴¹

This narrower definition of the miraculous is the definition represented by the metaphorical usage and is borne out by both the Synoptics and the Acts. Matthew and Luke, for instance, report that Jesus was greatly disappointed when the inhabitants of Chorazin, Bethsaida and

³⁷W. F. Moulton, A. S. Geden and H. K. Moulton, eds., A Concordance to the Greek Testament (4th ed., 1897; rpt. 38 George Street, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975).

³⁸The Analytical Greek Lexicon (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970).

³⁹William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (The University of Chicago Press, 1957).

⁴⁰Grundmann, II, p. 284. ⁴¹Arndt and Gingrich.

Capernaum refused to repent in view of the many dunameis which he had performed among them.⁴² Similarly Matthew and Mark report that Jesus was unable to perform many dunameis in his home-town of Nazareth because of the people's unbelief.⁴³ In Acts 8:13, the situation is reversed. Here Luke the historian reports that Simon the Sorcerer saw the dunameis which the apostles performed in Samaria and was captivated by them. This is how the word is used in its metaphorical sense. It means the miraculous. However, these three references are by no means exhaustive of the metaphorical citations on dunamis. Several more can be given.⁴⁴ These therefore are representative and must suffice to illustrate the fact that dunamis in the above references is generally translated "miracle," or in synonymous language, conveying the sense of the miraculous.

This second point is beautifully illustrated in the AV's rendering of the term in the Synoptics, as compared with that of Acts. In Acts the translation is brief and specific, denoting the term "miracle;" in the Synoptics however, this is not the case. Here dunamis is translated into a dramatic and captivating phrase--"mighty works," which is intended to capture and project the meaning of the miraculous. This however, still does not match the intensity and meaning of the word "miracle," evident in most modern translations, and therefore must be regarded as inadequate. Beyond this however, the study makes two things clear: (1) the concept of power (dunamis) is inseparably bound up with God; and, (2) it embodies not only a literal meaning but the miraculous as well. Power

⁴²Mat. 11:20-23; Lu. 10:13-15. ⁴³Mat. 13:53-58; Mk. 6:1-6a.

⁴⁴Mat. 7:22; 14:2; Mk. 9:39; Lu. 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1; 10:19; 19:37; Acts 2:22; 6:8.

then, is the supernatural work of God.

Signs, signs and wonders. This notion of the miraculous is by no means peculiar to the term power. A similar meaning is to be found in the use of the English word "sign," a meaning which becomes quite evident in a historical and biblical investigation of the word. The word "sign" is a literal translation of the Greek semeion, which according to derivation, stems from the root sema.⁴⁵ This root meaning of "sign" can be traced throughout the literature and language of the Greek world where the word is understood to mean "sign," "characteristic," and "mark."⁴⁶ It is important to observe however, that the term originally had no religious connotation, but gradually acquired such a sense.⁴⁷ This is especially evident in Hellenistic literature, where the use of the word in the LXX adds a strong religious dimension, yet retaining the non-religious meaning. Here the word signifies not only "sign," "mark," and "token," but "miracle" or "miraculous sign."⁴⁸ Hence, Gen. 9:8-17 reports that God decided on the rainbow as the sign of his covenant between him and Noah, that he would never again destroy the world by floods. On the other hand, the context of Ex. 4:8, indicates that signs such as Moses' rod being turned into a serpent were used to solicit faith both on a personal and a national level in God's plan and procedure to deliver Israel.⁴⁹ This is where the religious meaning originated.

⁴⁵Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "semeion," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, VII, p. 201.

⁴⁶Ibid. ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 203. ⁴⁸Hoffius, pp. 626-627.

⁴⁹Ibid.

Moreover, the dual conception of the word sign was not restricted to Hellenistic Judaism but was evident in orthodox Judaism as well. Here the usage of the word broadened and intensified, and offers several new insights. First of all, the word came to be associated with Jehovah's "saving power,"⁵⁰ and is used to describe the events divinely ordained to effect the political and religious salvation of Israel from Egypt. These events are described in a possible liturgical hymn as "signs" and "wonders," (Deut. 26:8, AV).⁵¹ Secondly, in Rabbinical writings, the term gradually assumed the meaning of proof or evidence and came to be associated with the messengers and servants of God, those who were rabbis, prophets and great men of God. These, the Rabbis taught, must demonstrate their divine authority by punctuating their ministry or accompanying their message with signs.⁵² Thirdly, the Jews also believed that the concept possessed ominous and portentous qualities. For this reason, they believed in an eschatology of tragedy and disaster and claimed that horrible and terrifying events would take place.⁵³ Contrary to this view, however, is the belief which emphasizes present benefits such as the matter of security. This is beautifully illustrated in the Rahab-spies episode in which, in return for her protection, Rahab demanded of the two Israelite spies a "sign" or guarantee of security for both herself and her household (Jos. 2:12).⁵⁴ Likewise, the Jews viewed the concept of sign as symbolical. Signs alone in a prophetic announcement were regarded as symbolical of a divine message. Hence, the episode of

⁵⁰Hoffius, p. 627. ⁵¹Rengstorff, p. 213. ⁵²Hoffius, p. 629.

⁵³Ibid. ⁵⁴Rengstorff.

Isaiah's going without clothing for three years in Egypt and Ethiopia is reported as a sure "sign" of divine judgment that was coming upon the said nations (Isa. 20:3).⁵⁵ These, then, constitute the main Jewish ideas in orthodox Judaism.

In the New Testament, there is not only a continuation of the Old Testament understanding of semeion but the meaning of the word increases significantly. In connection with the Old Testament's views, the following examples are provided. Regarding the concept of sign or mark, Luke⁵⁶ reports that the angel, in announcing the nativity of Jesus, gave the shepherds a sign by which they were to determine the babe Jesus. They were to find the "babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger" (Lu. 2:12, AV). Similarly, concerning the Old Testament's regard for the messengers of Yahweh as symbols of divine activity and message, Luke⁵⁷ again reports that Simeon characterised the child Jesus as a "sign" from God that would be resisted and viewed him as the cause for the rise and fall of many in Israel.⁵⁸ Closely related to this idea is the belief in signs as proof of divine authority. Matthew and Luke⁵⁹ point out that it was this belief that led the Jews to press Jesus to authenticate himself by a sign. They then indicate that Jesus denied the immediate request and warned that they would have only one "sign," one proof by which to authenticate him, the resurrection as symbolized in Jonah.⁶⁰ In another sense, however, John⁶¹ shows that the Old Testament view of sign as a

⁵⁵Rengstorf, p. 217. ⁵⁶Hoffius. ⁵⁷Ibid. ⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 629-630. ⁶⁰Mat. 12:38-39; Lu. 11:29-30.

⁶¹Rengstorf., p. 250.

cause of personal and corporate faith obtains in the New Testament as well. Concluding his gospel, he points out that the "signs" Jesus did far exceed his record; nevertheless, those in his gospel were written to produce personal faith and accrue eternal life (20:30-31). One may conclude, therefore, that the Old Testament ideas of sign are certainly found in the New as well.

The other dimension of the New Testament use of the concept must now be surveyed. That dimension not only intensifies, it broadens the meaning of the word. There are several examples. First of all, study shows that the signs of Jesus were intended to demonstrate that he was Messiah. This is implied by John⁶² who observes that, even after Jesus had done numerous signs in their presence, the Jews still failed to accept his witness and to believe in him (12:37). Moreover, according to the study, the New Testament portrays signs as signals or indications of Messianic and eschatological redemption.⁶³ This is the consensus of the Synoptics as well as the Acts and other New Testament passages. The Synoptics, for example, indicate that, following the cosmic and astronomical convulsions of the tribulation period, the "sign of the son of man" (Mat. 24:30, RSV) will appear in the heaven signalling his return for the elect. Also the Acts⁶⁴ indicates that the apostles interpreted the signs of Pentecost eschatologically and viewed them as ushering in the new age of redemption⁶⁵ typified and predicted in the Old Testament economy. Hence, Peter declared, "God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people. . . I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, . . ." (Acts 2:17, 19, NIV). This interpretation of the Early Church is a matter

⁶²Ibid., p. 249.

⁶³Ibid., p. 241.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

of great importance in that it provides a valuable insight into its understanding of the Old Testament's function and the present activities affecting itself.

Beyond this, however, study indicates that the concept of sign is associated with that of "wonder"⁶⁶--an association that is found as many as sixteen times throughout the New Testament.⁶⁷ Thus, association is restricted mainly to Acts and the Gospels with as many as nine occurrences in Acts.⁶⁸ Of the twelve instances in the Gospels-Acts framework,⁶⁹ nine are used in connection with semeion when it designates miracle (Mat. 24:24). Moreover, in the Matthew-Mark usage, semeia kai terata (GNT) refer to futuristic phenomena and depict the supernatural and miraculous events of pseudo-messiahs⁷⁰ (Mat. 24:24; Mk. 13:22). In John, however, signs and wonders are used positively. They are used to stimulate personal faith in Christ. Hence, John reports that Jesus lamented over the Jews' unwillingness to believe in him unless he showed them "miraculous signs and wonders" (Jn. 4:48, NIV).

With the benefit of this general study, both historical and biblical, consideration must now be directed to an examination of the term itself. Although not a very popular word in reference to the whole New Testament, semeion is nevertheless, a very important word in the Gospels-Acts framework. Here it is used about sixty-four times of its total New Testament seventy-seven occurrences;⁷¹ and here it is defined not only as

⁶⁶Rengstorf, p. 240. ⁶⁷Moulton, Geden and H. K. Moulton.

⁶⁸Ibid. ⁶⁹Ibid. ⁷⁰Rengstorf.

⁷¹Moulton, Geden and H. K. Moulton.

a sign but as a miracle as well.⁷² This second element of the definition has been given a theological twist by many modern scholars who explain semeion as "an event that is contrary to the usual course of nature."⁷³ In a sense, the definition is basically a tripartite definition, of which all three elements are exemplified in the established context of this study. However, since the "sign element" has already been illustrated, though in a limited way, consideration will now be directed to the second element which is the main feature of this study. That element is the miraculous.

In the Gospels-Acts framework, passage after passage show that the word semeion carries the metaphorical sense of the miraculous. In the Synoptics, for example, Matthew and Mark report that Jesus, in his apocalyptic discourse, warned that pseudo-messiahs would precede him and would perform great and attractive semeia.⁷⁴ Similarly Luke employs the term in the same sense when he reports that Herod was excited at the prospect of having Jesus fulfil his wish of performing a semeion (23:8). In John's Gospel, not only is the identical meaning expressed, it is given a greater emphasis.

This is particularly borne out by the fact that John uses the word semeion as many as seventeen times⁷⁵ throughout his Gospel--a pattern which undoubtedly underscores the fact that he gives special attention to Jesus' miracles. For instance, on that famous and notable example of turning "water into wine," John particularly points out that this was the

⁷²Arndt and Gingrich. ⁷³Ibid. ⁷⁴Mat. 24:24; Mk. 13:22.

⁷⁵Moulton, Geden and H. K. Moulton.

first of Jesus' "miraculous signs" (semeia, NIV) which he performed in Cana of Galilee (Jn. 2:11). Secondly, at the conclusion of his book, John again indicates that Jesus had performed "miraculous signs" (semeia, NIV) far in excess of his record, and that his record only serves to effect the redemptive design intended by such semeia.

Further, in the book of Acts, the emphasis is no different. Here the miraculous content of semeia is not only stressed but intensified. Eleven times⁷⁶ the word appears in this book, signifying the idea of the miraculous. And seven times⁷⁷ it is used in combination with terata--a noun which generally means a "signal," a "wonder," a "miracle."⁷⁸ It is with this sense that terata is used with semeia, positing twice the notion of the miraculous in the formula semeia kai terata or terata kai semeia (GNT). The result is an intensification of meaning. Illustrating the point, Luke makes several references, of which only a few will be given. First, he reports that many wonders (terata) and signs (semeia) were performed by the apostles (Acts 2:43), that even Stephen "did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people (6:8, NIV), and that Paul and Barnabas declared how the Lord confirmed their preaching by enabling them to perform "miraculous signs and wonders" (14:3, NIV).

In concluding this investigation on sign, one important point must be stressed. The aim here, was first to ascertain the general historical meaning of the word and thereby to provide an adequate background for its New Testament use and popularity. Secondly, the investigation

⁷⁶Moulton, Geden and H. K. Moulton. ⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Analytical Greek Lexicon.

aimed to obtain some insights into the development of the miraculous character of the word and thereby to determine its association with the concept of miracle. This in turn helps establish a biblical understanding of the nature of miracle.

Work. There is yet one more important study to be made which involves the study of the word "work." Previously at the introduction of this segment on synonyms, the word "work" was introduced together with two other synonyms, "power" and "sign." Also, it was pointed out that since the main term "miracle" is not found in the Scripture, it was necessary to study these synonyms carefully in order to obtain a meaningful understanding of the concept of miracle. On this basis, therefore, study has been made of the other two words. Now on the same basis the word "work" will be examined.

The word "work" is the English translation of the Greek ergon. Used widely, the word possesses a colourful and graphic background, made evident in its various cultural and historical uses. This is especially clear in the Greek conception and usage. For example, both the Greek and English roots are credited with having the "same Indo-Germanic stem" and the "same meaning"⁷⁹ as well. In this respect ergon is defined as an "action or active zeal in contrast to idleness . . . or useful activity in contrast to useless busy-ness . . ."⁸⁰ On the other hand, the matter of usage has been widespread from the time of Homer and Hesiod. From

⁷⁹Georg Bertram, "ergon," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, II, p. 635.

⁸⁰Ibid.

this beginning, ergon has developed and has come to acquire a breath of usefulness. Today the word is used in such fields as agriculture, economics, commerce, trade, shipping, fishing, and even in art and poetry. Moreover, it is used in a social and ethical sense "as a burden laid on man" and "as a necessary means of life or support."⁸¹ The word covers both the "domestic task of women" and "the public work of men."⁸² It covers the efforts for peace and the services in public welfare, together with heroic acts of war. There is no religious use in the Greek context, but in the philosophy of Plato, it is a word that "comes from the sphere of civilization," and not from "organic nature."⁸³

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament emphasis is placed on both the secular and the religious sense. Here notice is made of a breath of meaning ranging from "plowing," "weaving," "smelting," to "hewing wood."⁸⁴ Together, these definitions, it must be pointed out, suggest a totally secular orientation and human involvement that completely exclude the religious as well as the divine. These then must be found elsewhere and that unsurprisingly in the dominantly religious Jewish culture.

In the Jewish culture, the change of emphasis in the work-concept is remarkable. Here the emphasis is not one-sided nor misguided. The secular and the religious are held in proper balance. For example, reference has already been made to the secular content of the word "work." This should suffice, especially since it is in the present context that the religious content is given any emphasis. Several points are to be observed. First of all, the Jews regarded the concept of work as "divine

⁸¹Bertram.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid., p. 636.

⁸⁴Ibid.

work and action."⁸⁵ They understood work to be God's creative activities that brought all matter and time into existence as well as his temporal activities in the world.⁸⁶ These divine activities they viewed not exclusively as events of the past as, for example, the six days of work in creation, but looked forward in faith to God's "rule of history, to his wonderful work of judgment and redemption in the present and the future."⁸⁷ Examples of this last point are (1) God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and (2) the messianic kingdom of the future.

In the New Testament, the concept of work climaxed into a soteriological awareness. Here specific reference is made to the "wonderful works of God," symbolising "his saving work and activity on the basis of the divine will to redeem . . . consistently attested in all the individual works."⁸⁸ Moreover, the New Testament views divine activity as evident in everyday events.⁸⁹ As Paul in his Athenian address affirmed, the gift and sustenance of life are surely the works of God (Acts 17:25). The use of the "private lives of men" as channels of his "saving history" is also a part of his daily activities. As such he ordered and utilized the life of Paul in his divine plan and work of redemption (Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 12:7).⁹⁰

Besides this soteriological emphasis from God's perspective, the concept of work is also defined to mean deeds of piety or impiety.⁹¹ Paul warned the Ephesians to avoid "the unfruitful works of darkness," (5:11, AV) and the Galatians, the "works of the law" as well as the works

⁸⁵Bertram, p. 637. ⁸⁶Ibid., p. 639. ⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 642. ⁸⁹Ibid. ⁹⁰Ibid. ⁹¹Ibid., pp. 644, 645.

"of the flesh" (2:16; 5:19, AV). On the other hand, in I Tim. 2:10, he exhorted the women at Ephesus to adorn themselves in "good works" (AV), while he informed the Thessalonians of his gratefulness to God for their "work of faith" (1 Thess. 1:3, AV).

With such fascinating insights of this variable background, ergon must now be considered in the framework of the Gospels-Acts tradition. In its usual context, nothing is extra-ordinary about the word, but in connection with the plan and method of salvation, its significance is indisputable. Viewed in this perspective, particular study will now be made of its literary characteristics and functional value.

Unlike the previous synonyms, ergon appears frequently outside the Gospels-Acts tradition. Here it occurs as few as forty-five times as compared with about one hundred and nineteen times in the rest of the New Testament.⁹² Of these forty-five instances, less than half (about twenty)⁹³ represent the concept of the miraculous, and of this reduced number only about four are found in the Synoptics and the Acts.⁹⁴ This reversed emphasis might be responsible for, directly or indirectly, the decision of some scholars to de-emphasise the miraculous element in their definitions of the word. For instance, Vine, Strong and The Analytical Greek Lexicon define ergon merely as "a deed," an "act" or an "action."⁹⁵

⁹²Moulton, Geden and H. K. Moulton.

⁹³References include: Mat. 11:2; Lu. 24:19; Jn. 5:20, 36; 6:28, 29; 7:3, 21; 9:3, 4; 10:25, 37, 38; 14:10, 11, 12; 15:24; Acts 5:38; 7:22.

⁹⁴Moulton, Geden and H. K. Moulton; See Mat. 11:2; Lu. 24:19; Acts 5:38; 7:22.

⁹⁵W. E. Vine, "Work . . . Wrought," An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, IV (1940; rpt. Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming

Similarly Bauer and his colleagues define it as a "deed," an "accomplishment," "the deeds of God and Jesus," but add finally "miracles."⁹⁶

This tendency, however, does not make void the twenty or so passages, strongly suggesting the miraculous content of the word. A few selections will suffice. First of all, Matthew and Luke report an event that leaves little room for doubt about the miraculous element inherent in the term. They report that, in his prison confinement in the Dead Sea fortress of Machaerus,⁹⁷ John the Baptist heard of "the works of Christ." Immediately John sent his disciples to Christ, enquiring whether or not he was the Messiah. Partly in answer to their question, Jesus there and then performed a series of "deeds displaying his miraculous power."⁹⁸ Following the series, he replied with the instruction to return to the Baptist and inform him of what they had witnessed. They had witnessed an amazing and comprehensive series of miraculous "cures,"⁹⁹ the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor preached to (Mat. 11:4-5; Lu. 7:22). Suggested by this eventful story is a classical and profound insight into the traditional Jewish opinion regarding their expected Messiah. The two Evangelists suggest that it was a firm belief that supernatural activities (miracles)

H. Revell Company, 1962), p. 231; Strong, "A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the New Testament;" The Analytical Greek Lexicon.

⁹⁶Arndt and Gingrich.

⁹⁷Alexander Balmain Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," The Expositor's Greek Testament, I, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 169.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 513. ⁹⁹Ibid.

would accompany him in his national redemptive mission; and surely news of the first series of deeds (Lu. 7:18), and now of the second (v. 22) is indeed ground for both faith and optimism (v. 16).

Secondly, in the book of Acts, ergon designates miracle. In Luke's report of Stephen's famous address to the Sanhedrin, he points out that, in his recapitulation of salvation history, Stephen described Moses as one who was "mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22, AV). The word rendered "deeds" here is the word erga and is a clear reference to the many supernatural acts that both affected Moses (Ex. 4) and were performed by him in his mission as national deliverer for Israel (7-12, 14, 16, 17ff).

Finally, the focus of study now shifts to John's gospel. As has been indicated before, the emphasis on "work" is greatest within the Gospels-Acts framework. Yet here too, the concept itself includes the idea of the miraculous. In validating this point, John gives a number of examples. He reports that, in defending his healing work of "an invalid for thirty-eight years" (Jn. 5:5-16, NIV), Jesus declared to the Jews that his "works" both originated with, and are directed by the Father (vv. 17, 20). He reports that with regard to proof of his Messiahship, Jesus announced to the Jews that "the works that he did" constituted a weightier testimony of that office than the famous John the Baptist's preaching (v. 36). Further, he reports that, when the Jews insisted that Jesus tell them the truth about his claim, he referred them to the "works" that he did (10:25) and appealed to them for acceptance on the basis of those "works" (37-38). John points out, however, that this claim got him into trouble, when the Jews, angered by what they charged to be his equating himself with God, threatened "to stone him." In response, Jesus

merely asked them in apparent uncertainty, "for which of those works do you stone me?" (v. 32).

In another example, John points out that Jesus instructed his disciples that sin and its effects provide good causes for the demonstration of the "works of God." This he implied when, in response to the disciples' question on who was the cause for a certain man's blindness, he replied assuredly that no one was; rather, the man's blindness provided an ideal occasion for the "works of God" to be displayed in his life (9:3).

In these several uses of John, the word translated "work" is ergon. As its contexts show, the meaning is not literal but metaphorical and symbolises the extraordinary deeds of the Godhead in the prophetic ministry of Christ. The description of such deeds may well be expressed in the designation, "miracle."

With the conclusion of the study on work, the last of the three synonyms, it is important that once again attention be focussed on the main question suggested earlier, namely, the biblical definition of the term miracle. The importance of this question is based not so much on the complex nature of the biblical material as such, but on the fact that it is the aim of this chapter to "adequately" define the concept. The question then must certainly be asked: What, in the biblical sense, is the meaning of the word "miracle?" Must the concepts of "power," "sign" or "work" be understood to represent variable definitions? Or, do they together embody a composite or a singular idea? What exactly is the biblical view? The object of these inquiries constitutes not only the immediate burden but represents the cause for a definitive statement as well. Such a definitive statement is by no means an easy task; nevertheless, it is a task that must be attempted, since it is fundamental to the

remainder of the study.

To answer the question, it is necessary to reflect briefly on the synonyms and to identify their more prominent and characteristic features which surfaced in the study. In such a reflection, the synonyms are observed to be characterised by several features. One such feature consists of the "event-factor." When used with the idea of miracle, the synonyms are described as events. Dunameis, for example, are described as "miracles" which "were done" or "occurred" (Mat. 11:20ff), and in a more negative report, as those which "he did not do" (Mat. 13:58). Similarly, semeia are described as miracles which " . . . Jesus did . . ." (Jn. 2:11) or which he " . . . performed in the presence of the disciples, . . ." (20:30). Erga, on the other hand, are described as miracles that " . . . I (Jesus) do . . ." (10:25, AV) or that " . . . had been done . . ." (5:16, AV). From these references therefore, it is safe to conclude that miracles are indeed events, happenings or activities--all realities of the past.

A second feature characteristic of the synonyms is their extraordinary nature. The dunameis, for instance, to which Christ referred in his denunciation of the three Galilean cities certainly consist of an unusual nature. They consist of cures such as instant deliverance from demon-possession, pyrexia, leprosy, paralysis, hemorrhage and death (Mat. 11:20ff).¹⁰⁰ Also, semeia refer to miracles that are reported to be confounding because of their exceptional and extraordinary nature. Such was the case with the miracle wine at the Cana wedding. Its superior quality

¹⁰⁰These are references which explain the summary report of Mat. 11:20ff--Mk. 1:23-28, 29-31; Mat. 8:1-4; Mk. 2:1-12; Mat. 9:18-20.

and taste were incredible and naturally astonished the Master of Ceremonies (Jn. 2:9-10). Similarly, this extraordinary element is characteristic of erga, characteristic to the extent that it not only astounded the inhabitants of Nain, but was itself sufficient to cause the neighbors of the man born blind to wonder at his miraculous acquisition of sight.

Thirdly, studies indicate that the synonyms are characterized by the element of the supernatural. Mainly the reason why the events of powers, signs and works are described as extraordinary is that they are supernatural in origin and nature and are executed through divine agencies. In particular, in Christ's denunciation of the three cities, dynameis are here described as " . . . his miracles . . ." (NIV). In the Nazareth episode, they are again implicitly ascribed to the agency of Christ (Mat. 11:13). In the case of semeia, studies indicate quite clearly that they are divine and supernatural in origin as well. For example, Nicodemus confessed that no one could do the miracles that Christ was doing "except God be with him" (Jn. 3:2, AV), while Peter proclaimed Christ as a "man approved of God among you (the Jews) by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you . . ." (Acts 2:22, AV). In the case of erga, several times Jesus connected them with the Father as well as to himself. His Father works and he works also (Jn. 5:17); his Father determines and directs his works (5:20), while he executes the same works in his Father's name (10:25). Besides connection to members of the God-head, erga are shown to be associated with not only Moses but with Philip as well (Acts 7:20; 8:13).

The final feature prominent and characteristic of the synonyms is that as miracles they serve as channels, channels of divine mercy and goodness. The dynameis to which Christ referred (Mat. 11:20ff) were all

immediately and ultimately beneficent in that they cured sin. They cured humanity from the maladies of demon-possession, paralysis, and even death. They also pointed to a more sublime, meaningful and lasting cure: Christ himself. With semeia the results are identical. Study shows that it was through semeia that the Cana wedding was saved from embarrassment (Jn. 2:1-11); that the Samaritans were delivered from demon-possession and paralysis (Acts 8:6-13), and that deliverance from estrangement and eternal death may be eventual consequences (Jn. 20:30). Similarly, erga are used as vehicles of divine goodness. The incidents of cure from infirmity (Jn. 5:5-16) and from blindness (9:1-7) are by no means the only two examples of divine good resultant from erga, but are indeed notable ones.

The value of this analysis is clearly evident in that it not only establishes better comprehension of the outstanding features of the synonyms but facilitates the construction of an acceptable definition. Consequently, in reply to the initial question--what is the biblical conception of a miracle?--a miracle is here defined as an extraordinary event effected by some supernatural agent as a manifestation of divine goodness or judgment. Such a definition is not without basic support. Merriam Webster, defining the word, describes a miracle as "an extraordinary, anomalous, or abnormal event brought about by supernatural agency as a manifestation of its power, or for the purpose of revealing or manifesting spiritual force."¹⁰¹ Other scholars including Berkhof, Harris, and Brown give general support, yet in view of the previous analysis, it

¹⁰¹ A. Merriam Webster, Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, ed. William Allan Neilson et al. (2nd ed.; Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1954).

becomes clear that their opinions prove to be inadequate, excluding as they do one or more of the distinguishing features of an in-depth view.

Summary

It is clear then, that the word "miracle" is not found in the biblical record--Old nor New Testament. Also, it is clear that disagreement exists concerning its meaning and variation concerning its application. With these detractions aside however, there is evidently no uncertainty with respect to the presence and prevalence of the concept. It may be described in synonymous language, but truly and essentially, the miraculous abounds throughout the Scripture.

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Chapter III

THE INTERPRETATION OF MIRACLES: A COMMON VIEW

Introduction

In the previous chapter, considerable efforts were made to understand the nature of miracles biblically. By and large, it is felt that that has been accomplished. Now efforts will be directed to the study of several episodes, highlighting both the divine and human understanding respecting the significance of miracles. To develop this theme, the study will be focused on, and will investigate three classified groups of miracles. These groups include the Incarnation, the Ministry and the Resurrection miracles which will be considered in the same order.

THE INCARNATION AND INFANCY EPISODES

The Incarnation and Infancy episodes mark the beginning of the study of the significance of miracles. These episodes have a limited reference; and, although several in number, they are not found throughout the Gospels as such but rather exclusively in the Synoptics. Their prevalence here, in turn, is by no means widespread either but is restricted to, and divided between Matthew and Luke, with Luke recording the larger number. Also, it is important to note that none of these episodes designates the incarnation a miracle. As it will be seen, they by and large assume this element, while two of them in particular strongly imply that the event is indeed of a miraculous character.

Apart from their limited reference, however, the episodes do

indeed emphasize a definite soteriological cause. This is very evident in two categories, consisting of a total of five episodes. In the first category are classed the angels' messages to Mary, Joseph and the shepherds. In the second, attention is paid to those reflecting the hope of the people, particularly the two involving Simeon and Anna. In order to uncover the important soteriological theme in reference, the pattern of summary-surveys as well as exegetical and expositional examinations will be followed as a process of study.

The Messages of the Angels

The first category indicates that the angels stressed more particularly the salvific usefulness of the incarnation. This usefulness is first of all highlighted in the episode depicting the angel's message to Mary (Lu. 1:26-38). In Luke's account of this story, he gives a report that is replete with details, and yet, one that does not overlook the essential points. After making his usual editorial introduction, giving the historical background, and identifying essential personalities and relationships, Luke immediately refers to the content of the angel's message. He first points out that, besides making the customary salutation, the angel was forced to relax Mary who had been seized by a frenzy upon the sudden sight of his presence. This having been done, Gabriel announced to Mary that she would conceive and bear a son. He then instructed her to "call his name Jesus" (v. 31, AV). In the remainder of the episode, he depicted the type of personage and kingdom that would be characteristic of the child's future, explained the miraculous nature of her conception, and encouraged her with the news that even Elizabeth her relative was presently affected by a nearly similar miracle.

In Matthew's account of the angel's message to Joseph, concern for details is less evident (1:18-25). Here only the main issues are discussed. In introducing his subject, Matthew like Luke does not ignore the historical background, and gives as its material content the personal crisis of Joseph in his conjugal relationship with Mary. This crisis, according to Matthew, consisted mainly of Joseph's discovery of the fact that Mary was unaccountably pregnant. This discovery, naturally, disturbed Joseph; and with its deep impact, consideration seriously threatened his commitment to the relationship. Matthew indicates that, at this critical stage, "an angel of the Lord appeared . . . in a dream . . ." (v. 20), and counselled Joseph. Although his counsel was circumstantial and shorter, yet it included vital material similar to Gabriel's. He first explained to Joseph that Mary's premarital maternity was divinely occasioned, and that it was needless to succumb to cultural and social pressures. Further, he informed Joseph that "she will bear a son" (v. 21) and instructed him also to name him Jesus. He then explained that, as Messiah, the child "will save his people from their sins" (v. 21). Matthew concludes the episode with an explanation, indicating that the angel's announcement was in direct fulfillment of Old Testament prediction.

The last episode in this category involves the angel's message to the shepherds. Luke alone reports the story (2:8-14). After establishing the historical setting, he indicates that the angel was obliged to restore calm to the lonely shepherds for they were suddenly terrified by his glorious presence. According to Luke, he then announced to them his "good news of great joy . . ." (v. 10). The good news was that "today in the city of David there has been born for you a Saviour, who is Christ

the Lord" (v. 11). The angel then concluded his message with a statement of direction and a beautiful hymn of praise.

These episodes are basic regarding the conception and nativity of the incarnate Christ. In reviewing them, however, it becomes clear that there is a precise redemptive reference evident in all. In the first two, it will be recalled, the angel specifically instructed both Mary and Joseph to name the child "Jesus". In the second episode, Joseph alone is given the reason for the name--the reason being that Jesus "will save his people from their sins." The third episode is different and reveals to the shepherds "a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." The soteriological reference here is indeed unmistakable. To capture its full force, however, it is necessary to explore further, an exploration which entails closer examination of the particular concepts highlighted.

The name "Jesus" for instance, is replete with soteriological significance. By itself and especially as it applies to Christ, it represents the very essence of redemption. This becomes very clear in a textual and historical study of the name. "Jesus," some scholars agree, was a very popular and famous Jewish name.¹ They also agree that as the Greek equivalent (Iesoun) to the Hebrew "Joshua" or "Jeshua," it carries the meaning of salvation.² Initially this concept originated in another

¹Archibald Thomas Robertson, "The Gospel According to Matthew . . . and Mark," Word Pictures In The New Testament, I (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1930), p. 10; Alexander Balmain Bruce, "The Synoptic Gospels," The Expositor's Greek Testament, I, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n. d.), Part I, p. 464.

²John Albert Bengel, "Matthew-Acts," New Testament Word Studies, I, trans. Charlton T. Lewis and Marvin R. Vincent (rev. ed.; 1860-61; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1971), p. 69; Robert Jameison, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, Commentary Practical and

name, "Hoshea" which means "serving."³ Joshua, on the other hand, means the Lord (Jehovah) is salvation; and, in the person of Joshua, Moses' successor and military leader to Israel, the name is construed typologically to represent Christ as deliverer.⁴ In this perspective, the name finds full "expression in the title Saviour, . . ."⁵ and refers directly to "his saving office and work."⁶

Secondly, it is necessary to examine the angel's reason for, and explanation of the name "Jesus." To Joseph he promised, "he will save his people from their sins" (Mat. 1:21). Some scholars indicate that the explanation itself is a mere play on the name Jesus⁷ and essentially signifies a mere repetition of its content. Consequently, very little is said of the explanation per se. It must be observed however, that the verb sozo used here is indeed consistent with the explanation of Iesoun and is a popular New Testament terminology for the concept of salvation or deliverance.⁸ It may be concluded then that Jesus the incarnate son

Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1961; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 882; Sherman E. Johnson and George A. Buttrick, " . . . The Gospel According to St. Matthew . . . ," The Interpreter's Bible, VII, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et. al. eds. (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 253.

³Marvin R. Vincent, "The Synoptic Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, Epistles of Peter, James and Jude," Word Studies in the New Testament, I, (1867; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 16.

⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid. ⁶Jameison, Fausset and Brown.

⁷Robertson; Johnson, p. 252.

⁸James Strong, "A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the New Testament," The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (1890; rpt. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946).

of God is at once the Saviour and salvation of his people.⁹

Finally, to capture the optimal redemptive force inherent in the angel's messages, it is necessary to investigate further this title of "saviour" in the last of his messages. Unusual as a title for Jesus in the Gospels, "saviour" is intricately related to the title of Jesus and his work of salvation; consequently, it is hardly discussed without some reference to them. In particular, Bengel declares that the title expresses the force of the name Jesus, just as the Old Testament expresses it in the concept of salvation.¹⁰ This affinity between the concepts should explain why the title is defined to mean "deliver"--the one who will "truelly release . . . from the bondage of evil, fate, death and corruption."¹¹ Also, it tells why it is defined to mean "Saviour," the one who will save, not in the material and political sense, but in the moral and spiritual.¹² This affinity also removes it from the Greco-Roman concept current at the time of the advent of Christ. According to this concept the pagan dieties and Roman Emperors were saviours,¹³ saviours who could deliver from

⁹Bengel, p. 70; Malcolm O. Tolbert, "Luke . . .," The Broadman Bible Commentary, IX, ed. Clifton J. Allen et. al. (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1970), p. 29.

¹⁰Bengel, p. 395.

¹¹Tolbert; Analytical Greek Lexicon (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970).

¹²Charles L. Childers, " . . . Luke," Beacon Bible Commentary, VI, ed. A. F. Harper et al. (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1964), p. 448.

¹³Robertson, p. 24; S. MacLean Gilmour et al., 'The Gospel According to St. Luke,' The Interpreter's Bible, VIII, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), p. 53; Tolbert.

disease, danger, and human predicaments in the world. This title of "saviour," therefore, though borrowed initially from this context, refers to Jesus himself the universal Deliverer and Saviour of enslaved humanity.

The hope of the people. Concluded, the first category involves only one segment of evidence: the messages of the angels. These do certainly indicate that there is a divine redemptive intention, veiled in the miracle of the incarnation. A final category in this respect would provide more evidence and hence must be explored. This category, consisting of the hope of Israel, is beautifully demonstrated in the persons of Simeon and Anna. Before introducing them, Luke establishes as background the general important historical features, making clear that the occasion was related to the presentation of the infant Christ in the Temple, and that the rite itself was in fulfillment of the requirement of the Mosaic law. He introduces Simeon (2:35ff) as a man who was very pious and who was divinely honoured with the promise "that he would not see death before he had seen the . . . Messiah" (v. 26, margin). Consequently, "looking for the consolation of Israel" (v. 25), Simeon was led of the Spirit to visit the Temple at the very occasion of the presentation ceremony. Present then at the time of the parents' arrival, he was able to welcome the babe by taking him into his arms, and thereby experienced the fulfillment of God's promise to him. Satisfied, he then blessed God, according to Luke, declaring what is now known as the Nunc Dimittis.¹⁴ In this song of "adoration," Simeon expressed a variety of sentiments.

¹⁴Ralph Earle, " . . . Luke . . . ," The Wesleyan Bible Commentary, IV, ed. Charles W. Carter et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 224.

First, both in his use of the name "Lord" and in his willingness to accept the course of death, he exhibited a submissiveness to God's will. Secondly, his attitudes of contentment and assurance are manifested very definitely in his testimony. Said he, "my eyes have seen thy salvation" (v. 30) which he further described as "a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel" (v. 32). In concluding his prayer, he turned his attention to the parents whom he blessed and specifically informed Mary that "this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel . . ." (v. 34).

With the Simeon episode now complete, Luke then makes his introduction of Anna (2:36ff). His "description about the aged widow is marked by an unusual number of precise details."¹⁵ Amidst the details, however, he makes it clear that she was a prophetess and that she was a worshipper of extraordinary piety and devotion. In relating her to the occasion, he indicates not only her connection with God as a prophetess but the reason for her being in attendance at the occasion of the presentation of the infant. With the background established, Luke quickly depicts her as entering the Temple at the time of the ceremony. At that moment she immediately perceived, perhaps by "prophetic insight,"¹⁶ that the infant was Messiah. This realization was relieving, and inspired and unburdened her heavy heart to praise God, giving him thanks for the realization of her hope. However, Luke makes it clear, that she did not keep her discovery to herself; she began and continued to proclaim it to all "who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (v. 38).

The survey of these two narratives shows that there is indeed a

¹⁵Tolbert, p. 32. ¹⁶Childers, p. 454.

definite connection between the infant Messiah and the people's hope. Observation indicates that several expressions of evidence as well as the context support this claim. Luke shows that Simeon was "looking for the consolation of Israel" (v. 25), whereas the prophetess Anna was busy informing "those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (v. 38). The significance of these two expressions is comprehended not totally in their explicit references but also in their context and history. In the case of the first, the concept of "consolation" had long been associated with the title of Messiah. Isaiah 9:6 indicates that "a child will be born" and that his name shall be called "counselor." Bruce points out that the Rabbis (perhaps from this prophetic statement) customarily referred to Messiah as "the comforter."¹⁷ This view is also held by many scholars¹⁸ who agree that the expression duly refers to the "fulfillment of the Messianic hope,"¹⁹ the fulfillment of which is textually portrayed in the infant incarnate.

In the case of the context, Luke's literary structure suggests a connection between both Simeon's attitude of expectancy as well as his receipt of the divine promise and the presentation of the infant Messiah in the Temple. He first indicates and justifies the infant's being at the Temple. It was time for his circumcision and presentation, and such duties, were required by law. He also indicates and justifies Simeon's presence at the Temple during the time of the ceremonies. As an ardent

¹⁷Bruce, p. 475.

¹⁸Gilmour, p. 60; Robertson, "The Gospel According to Luke," II, p. 27.

¹⁹Tolbert, p. 31.

and expectant believer in the coming Messiah, Simeon was divinely promised that he would see the "Messiah" before his death. For this reason, he was sent to the Temple at the very time of the infant's presentation. In the course of this visit, Luke shows Simeon not only holding the babe in his arms, but connecting him to his hope, as well as declaring him the Saviour.

That the significance of the second participial construction is not totally suggested by its explicitness is indeed evident from a consideration of the expression and its context. Of the word "redemption," for example, Vine interprets it to mean "deliverance" in the general sense of delivering a nation.²⁰ This sense is synonymous to "liberation"²¹ and consistent with Jewish belief in a political messiah. Yet, scholars concur that the word definitely refers to the infant Messiah who Anna saw in the hands of Simeon.²² The tension here then is not between the definition of "redemption" as such and its immediate designated reference (the infant) but between that designated reference and the Jewish corrupt belief of the redemptive concept. Differently stated, Luke correctly links the word with the infant Messiah; but by associating it with Jewish political jargon (Jerusalem), he thereby makes it equivocal in meaning. Further, it is clear that, from this explanation, Anna and her fellow Messianic believers accepted the idea that the redeemer "of Jerusalem" was in fact the infant Messiah present that day at the Temple.

²⁰W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, III (1940; rpt. Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1962), p. 263.

²¹Analytical Greek Lexicon.

²²Gilmour, p. 65; Earle, p. 225.

This conclusion is further supported by other expressions found in verses 30 and 32. Here the concept of salvation is not only introduced but is given character and perspective. In his song, Simeon declared, "for my eyes have seen thy salvation . . . a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel" (v. 30). Undoubtedly, these expressions are soteriological in nature and to comprehend their full significance, further consideration is necessary. "Salvation," for instance, though neuter accusative, is here used as a proper noun meaning "Saviour."²³ This is a clear indication of the context. Luke shows that Simeon's testimony--"my eyes have seen . . ." (v. 30)--is a deliberate and conscious reference to the infant Messiah, which, at the time, he held in his hands. Besides, scholars²⁴ in various expressions agree that it refers to "Christ" or Messiah,²⁵ and admit also that the infant incarnate is that Messiah.

Apart from the introduction of "Salvation" however, Luke shows that Simeon added two important parallel expressions which serve to reinforce the redemptive theme. These ideas, that the Saviour is "a light . . . to the Gentiles and . . . glory . . . [to] Israel," represent an excellent statement of the nature and scope of the task of Messiah. To the Gentiles who were always thought to be "living in darkness and ignorance,"²⁶ the Saviour here will become their Light and Truth, their means

²³Vine, p. 317. ²⁴Gilmour, p. 61; Childers, p. 452.

²⁵John Wesley et al., One Volume New Testament Commentary (1893; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1972), n.p., Lu. 2:30; NASV.

²⁶Childers.

of salvation. To the Jews, then currently "living in a state of humiliation and reproach,"²⁷ he will become their mighty deliverer, the One who will restore again their national and spiritual glory. In this respect the infant incarnate is salvation, the hope of all, both Jews and Gentiles.

Finally, there is the statement of Simeon to Mary. Said he, "this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel . . ." (v. 34). Although apparent, the soteriological substance of this statement acquires depth by further examination of its particular concepts. The word used here for "appointed," for instance, could also signify "specially set," "destined"²⁸ or "ordained;" while respectively "fall" signifies "ruin," and "rise," "advancement and blessedness."²⁹ In context this means that the infant Messiah is specially ordained and destined for the blessedness and ruin of many in Israel. By implication, this "blessedness" and "ruin" are soteriological in nature. This observation is not without support. Gilmour, for example, renders the statement to mean the infant incarnate is "ordained . . . to separate the righteous from the unrighteous among many in Israel."³⁰ He also interprets the expression causally, that is, those who "accept" the infant Messiah will be blessed, while those who "reject" him will be ruined.³¹ Robertson gives the same impression. Said he, "Jesus is the magnet of the ages. He draws some, he repels others."³² The Peters will repent but the Judases will perish. Consequently, according to Earle, "Christ is for all men either a stumbling

²⁷Ibid. ²⁸Analytical Greek Lexicon. ²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Gilmour, p. 63. ³¹Ibid. ³²Robertson, II, p. 29.

stone, over whom they will fall into judgment, or a stepping-stone into the presence of God."³³

To conclude this first section, featuring the angels' messages and the hope of the people, it must be clearly pointed out that, within these episodes, there is indeed distinctive evidence linking both the divine redemptive purpose and the sublime miraculous feat of the incarnation. Jesus by miracle became man to save man.

THE MINISTRY EPISODES

From the excitement of the nativity and infancy episodes, consideration must now be given to the second group of miracles, the ministry episodes. Here, as in the previous group, emphasis is again given to both the divine and human understanding of the significance of miracles. In order to develop this motif substantially, a total of five episodes will be considered, two in the Synoptics and three in the Gospel of John. Here again the process will involve summary-surveys as well as exegetical and expositional examinations. Consideration will first be given to the Synoptic episodes.

The Synoptic Episodes

The two synoptic episodes selected are "Jesus' woes on the cities of Galilee"³⁴ (Mat. 11:20-24; Lu. 10:13-18), and his rejection at Nazareth (Mat. 13:53-58; Mk. 6:1-6a).

³³Earle, p. 224.

³⁴Burton H. Throckmorton ed., Gospel Parallels (3rd rev. ed.; 1949; rpt. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1967), p. 49.

In dealing with the first, it was observed that both Matthew and Luke record the story; but for some reason, Matthew gives a more extensive account, providing as he does an editorial introduction as well as a vurse and more of additional material. For this reason Matthew's account will be used as the basis for this study. In presenting the story, he first of all, establishes as background the main factors preceding the denunciation. He shows that Jesus was conducting a preaching and teaching tour of Galilee, and that, in the process, he was forced to deal with several issues. First, he dealt with John's question concerning his Messiahship in consequence of which, he demonstrated that he was indeed the Messiah, the expected One. Secondly, he dealt with the people's concept of John, of whom he declared that he was not only his forerunner but the greatest of all prophets. Lastly, he directed his attention to the crowd and in a parable lamented over their critical attitude and gross apathy to both himself and John.

With the establishment of this context, Matthew immediately introduces the contents of Jesus' denunciation. He indicates that Jesus began to reprove the several cities in which he had performed most of his miracles " . . . because they did not repent" (Mat. 11:20). He explains that together he denounced Chorazin and Bethsaida, claiming that, if the miracles which he had performed among them were performed in the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon, "they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (v. 21). For this reason, he informed them that it will "be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for them" (v. 22, NIV). Similarly, he informed Capernaum, the third city, that it was not exempted; and that despite its greatness, it will "descend to Hades." The reason here is that, if the miracles which he had performed

in its midst were performed in the ancient perverted city of Sodom it would have repented too. This act would have saved it from destruction and preserved its existence "to this day" (v. 23). Consequently, he informed it, that it will "be more bearable (NIV)" for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for itself" (v. 24).

From this episode of unreceptiveness and denunciation, the study moves a step further to the consideration of the second episode: Jesus' rejection at Nazareth. Jesus' rejection at Nazareth is recorded by all three Synoptics. In Matthew and Mark, the record is almost identical; but in Luke, there is considerable additional material augmented by a different chronology. These two factors have become the occasion for much debate and have resulted in conflicting views concerning the objective and significance of the account.³⁵ Since, however, the purpose here is not to deal with controversial material and since the Matthean and Markan accounts provide a generally harmonious text, the Lukan account will be excluded and only Matthew's and Mark's will be considered as study material.

After establishing as a background the fact that Jesus had just left Capernaum and had returned to Nazareth, his hometown, both Evangelists at once began to relay the story almost verbatim. They indicate that, while there, Jesus attended a sabbath worship at the local synagogue and was invited to teach the people. However, being quite familiar with him and his family, the people refused to accept him, because they could not reconcile his incredible wisdom and miracles with the ordinary and simple circumstance of his family. This bewilderment, instead of producing

³⁵ Earle, pp. 232-233; Tolbert, pp. 44-45.

faith, degenerated into skepticism in his Messianic claim and disparagement of his person. Consequently, of the origin of his wisdom and miracles, they inquired, where did he obtain such? And highlighting the fact that he is a member of an unpromising and unaccomplished family, they again inquired, "is not this [the carpenter's son (Matthew)]", the son of Mary and brother of James, . . . Simon . . . and are not his sisters here with us?" (Mk. 6:3, RSV). They were certain that he was a local "hometown boy,"³⁶ that his wisdom was inexplicable and his deeds, miraculous. The two, however, they could not accept together, and so "they took offense at him" (v. 3, RSV). Perceiving their attitude of rejection Jesus responded by reminding them that a prophet is always honoured except among his own people. To this sad conclusion, the Evangelists add the significant statement that because of their disbelief he performed only a few miracles among them.

That there is a soteriological emphasis evident in these episodes is made plain by a number of important statements. Jesus claims that, if the miracles he had performed in Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum were performed in Tyre, Sidon and Sodom, their inhabitants "would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Mat. 11:21). The Evangelists themselves also connect Christ's miracles to the concepts of repentance and faith. Matthew indicates that Jesus reproved the cities that had witnessed his many miracles and "did not repent" (v. 20), while both he and Mark conclude that Jesus was unable to perform many miracles in Nazareth because of the peoples' "unbelief" (Mat. 13:58; Mk. 6:6a). These statements,

³⁶Ralph Earle, "Matthew . . . , " Beacon Bible Commentary, VI, p. 139.

with their clear evangelistic expressions, hardly need further consideration. Nevertheless, to grasp their full evangelistic import, such consideration is indeed necessary, a consideration that will involve not only a study of words and phrases but of the contextual sense as well.

The word "repent," used twice here and by no means a popular New Testament word, generally means "to think" or "to perceive" after.³⁷ Consequently, it signifies "a change of mind which issues in regret and in change of conduct."³⁸ Such a change is here regarded as a "[turning] to God in submission."³⁹ This concept of turning to God is vividly intensified by the accompanying phrase--"in sackcloth and ashes" (Mat. 11:21). The phrase itself, which had long been associated with the Jews⁴⁰ and represents the acts of mourning, fasting⁴¹ and penitence,⁴² symbolizes "extreme grief and sorrow"⁴³ and is used here to signify the genuineness and thoroughness of repentance.

Repentance of this nature represented the end results which Jesus expected from the supernatural ministry of his miracles. Unfortunately, he was sorely disappointed; and, according to the Evangelist's report, he in consequence, "reproved" the three cities for their impenitence. This

³⁷Vincent, p. 23. ³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Frank Stagg, ". . . Matthew . . .," The Broadman Bible Commentary, VIII, Clifton Allen et al. (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1969), p. 143; see p. 92.

⁴⁰Albert Barnes, Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, ed. Ingram Cobbin (1st American ed.; 1962; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publication, 1968), p. 54.

⁴¹Earle, "Matthew . . .," Wesleyan Bible Commentary, IV, p. 55.

⁴²Johnson, p. 386. ⁴³Earle, Ibid.

concept of reproof therefore, immediately assumes some significance and as such ought to be examined further. The word itself, translated from the Greek oneidizo, means "to censure,"⁴⁴ "reproach,"⁴⁵ or "rebuke;"⁴⁶ but as used here the sense of the text (woes, Hades vv. 21, 23) it suggests a more solemn tone, namely judgment. The significance of the concept lies in the fact that it represents Jesus' determined reaction to the impenitence of a specially gospel-favoured people. He knew that he had ministered to them effectively through the supernatural ministry of his miracles but they deliberately ignored his ministry. Consequently, he denounced them, charging them with gross impenitence and informing them of their eternal liability.

In the second episode, a different concept is encountered, the concept of faith. This concept marks an important shift from the theme of repentance to that of belief, but as found in the text represents not the positive sense of the word but the opposite, which is aptly expressed by the word "unbelief." Although the word is not a popular New Testament concept, it is quite clear that it is soteriological in reference. This is the sense of the Evangelists' conclusion of the Nazareth episode--they conclude that Jesus was unable to perform many miracles there because of the people's "unbelief." This "unbelief" is the English rendering of the

⁴⁴Analytical Greek Lexicon.

⁴⁵William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957).

⁴⁶Earle, Beacon Bible Commentary, VI, p. 116.

Greek apistos and means "faithless" and "unbelieving."⁴⁷ It is used here to signify the "lack of faith"⁴⁸ and "confidence"⁴⁹ Jesus encountered when he took his prophetic ministry to his fellow-townsmen.

This unbelieving and faithless attitude manifested itself in skepticism and disparagement. The Evangelists indicate that "they [the Nazarenes] took offense at him," (Mat. 13:57; Mk. 6:3), that is, they allowed themselves to be repelled by his familiarity and ordinary circumstance and thus refused to believe that he was indeed the expected Messiah. In short, they rejected him as their Messiah; consequently, he deemed it inadvisable to continue his prophetic and supernatural ministry among them. This he did, not because "he was without power, but they without faith."⁵⁰

In concluding this segment of study, it is important to note that a clear connection exists between the divine redemptive cause and the miracles of Christ the Messiah.

The Johannine Episodes

The study of the Synoptic episodes consists of about half of the ministry episodes in question. The other half of the study is found in John's Gospel where, as was previously stated, three other miracle narratives have been selected for consideration. These miracles, which will

⁴⁷R. Bultmann, "pisteuo," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, VI, ed. Gerhard Friedrich and trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 204-205.

⁴⁸Robertson, p. 307. ⁴⁹Analytical Greek Lexicon.

⁵⁰Wesley et al., n.p. (Mat. 13:58, NASV).

be surveyed consecutively, include the healing of the official's son (Jn. 4:46-53), the healing of the man born blind (9:1-12, 35-38) and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (11:1-46).

Consideration will first be given to the healing of the official's son. In reporting this amazing and dramatic story, John, first of all, establishes the fact that Jesus had shortly returned to Cana of Galilee where he had previously made the "miracle wine." He had gone to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast and had made a stop-over in Samaria en route home. Upon his return to Cana, there was immediate need and demand for both his compassion and ministry. A Capernaum royal official's son had taken ill. Meanwhile the official had heard of Jesus' return to Galilee. Immediately he sought him out and found him in Cana.

In reporting his problem, the official indicated that his son was "at the point of death" (4:47). He requested of Jesus his immediate accompaniment to Capernaum in order that he may heal his son before he dies. In response, Jesus, who intended to stimulate faith in the official as well as in the crowd, charged them with unbelief, stating that "unless [they] see miraculous signs and wonders [they] will never believe" (v. 48, NIV). He then challenged the official to demonstrate his faith by returning to Capernaum unaccompanied, with the belief that his son is already healed and is alive. With this challenge, the official departed, obeying and believing the "word that Jesus spoke to him, . . ." (v. 50). On his way home, he met his servants. They informed him that his son had recovered. This report enabled him to determine that the recovery had indeed occurred at the time Christ had affirmed. The results of the miracle, like the miracle itself, were dramatic and overwhelming and moved the official and his "household" to the extent that they "believed" in Christ

(v. 53).

In the second episode, the subject-matter is not altogether different. Here, as was indicated earlier, the emphasis again involves healing, which in this instance concerns a man born blind. In relating the episode, John first shows that Jesus at the time was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles and in the Temple teaching and debating. In the course of the dialogue, he affirmed that he was before Abraham. This enraged the Jews and immediately they began collecting stones. This portentous reaction caused Jesus to flee the Temple looking for safety. Not quite beyond the danger of their threat, he encountered a man. The man was blind from birth and was a beggar, perhaps at the Temple gate.⁵¹ Suddenly, with an air of curiosity, the disciples inquired whether the man's handicap was the result of sins committed by himself or by his parents.

In reply, Jesus ignored the traditional arguments implicit in the disciples' question.⁵² He explained to them that the problem must not be

⁵¹Harvey G. S. Blaney, "The Gospel According to St. John," The Wesleyan Bible Commentary, IV, ed. Charles W. Carter et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 417; William E. Hull, "John," The Broadman Bible Commentary, IX, ed. Clifton J. Allen et al. (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1970), p. 297.

⁵²The traditional arguments for personal physical evil were mainly three, according to the Jews. First, in the view of Blaney, Barnes and Olshausen, the Jews had believed that the liability of parental sins was transmitted over to the third and fourth generations. This view is particularly supported by the Ten Commandments. (Ex. 20:5; 34:7). Secondly, Blaney and Barnes point out that the Jews also held the concept of pre-natal sins by which an infant may sin before birth and thus be punished as in the case of the blind man. Thirdly, they also indicate that some Jews had believed in the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul--a doctrine which teaches that "the soul of man," because of sin, might be forced to reinhabit other bodies and "be punished there." Blaney, p. 417; Hermann Olshausen, Biblical Commentary on the New Testament, II, trans. A. C. Kendrick (New York: Sheldon and Company, Publishers, 1856), p. 475; Barnes, p. 310.

viewed in terms of its past history but in terms of its potential significance. It was an opportunity for "the works of God" to "be displayed" (9:3) in the life of this man. It was an opportunity for Jesus and his disciples to "work the works of him that sent him" (v. 4) and to become "the light of the world" (v. 5) to the blind as well. With this answer, Jesus turned to the blind man and began to make preparation for his healing. According to John, he first made clay, applied it to the blind man's eyes, then instructed him to go to the pool of Siloam and wash. In response the man departed, "washed and came back seeing" (v. 7). The realization of this miracle immediately led to a series of events. It generated astonishment and amazement among the parents and the neighbors who now realize that suddenly the man can see. Similarly, it gave rise to a whole line of disputes which included issues such as the authenticity of the miracle itself, the propriety of Jesus' working on the Sabbath, his origin as well as his identity. Thirdly, it resulted in the man's confession of faith. Both the synagogue authorities and his parents abandoned the "blind man." Jesus became aware of this and sought him out. When he had found him, he instantly confronted him with the crucial question of discipleship. To the question, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (v. 35), the lonely beneficiary responded with a definite affirmation: "Lord, I believe" (v. 38). According to John, he sealed this moving affirmation with an immediate act of worship. He bowed down in adoration and submission.⁵³

Unlike the previous Johannine episodes, the final one introduces a different subject--the subject of the resurrection. The episode depicts

⁵³Bruce, p. 787.

the raising of Lazarus from the dead. In introducing it, John shows that a certain man Lazarus, who was brother of Mary and Martha of Bethany, was sick. Being aware of the friendship existing between them and Jesus, the sisters sent and informed him of Lazarus' illness. When Jesus received the news, he immediately expressed the assurance that the "sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, [¹that is,] that the Son of God may be glorified by it" (11:4). In consequence, he delayed two days in Perea.⁵⁴ After this surprising and deliberate delay, he and his disciples began the long trip to Bethany. En route the disciples, who initially opposed the return to the vicinity of the capital city, learned that Lazarus had meanwhile died. Nevertheless, Thomas encouraged them to accompany him and to be ready to die with him if necessary. On arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been buried four days and that several mourners from Jerusalem were still present comforting the bereaved sisters.

News of his arrival prompted Martha to run and meet him beyond the village. At this meeting she complained that his absence at the time of her brother's illness had resulted in his death. Jesus responded with considerable tact and purpose. On the one hand, he consoled and assured her that her brother would "rise again" (11:23); on the other hand, when she failed to accept his promise, he instantly confronted her with the challenge of faith. "[¹He] said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me should live even if he dies, and anyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?'" (vv. 25, 26). The challenge, though indeed demanding, was nevertheless

⁵⁴ Jameison, Fausset and Brown, p. 1054.

promising; and so Martha yielded confessing, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world" (v. 27, NIV).

Mary's conference with Jesus was different. Although, like Martha, she complained that Jesus was not present at the time of her brother's illness, she came to him subdued, with tears and deep emotion. Describing her state, Henry states, "she said less than Martha but wept more; and tears of devout affection have a voice, in the ears of Christ; [there is] no rhetoric like this."⁵⁵ The overwhelming impact of her mood, graphically portrayed by Jesus' own weeping (v. 35), impelled him immediately to inquire after and to move towards the grave.

Arrival at the site indicated that the grave was a cave securely closed with a stone. Immediately Jesus ordered that the stone be removed, but surprisingly his order met the protest of Martha who argued that after four days the corpse would doubtless be decomposed. Countering her protest, Jesus simply prodded her memory with the question, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you will see the glory of God?" (v. 40; cf. v. 4, NIV). She surrendered, and Jesus proceeded with his efforts in preparation to raise Lazarus from the dead. According to John, the stone was first removed; then with eyes upward, Jesus turned and publically addressed his Father. He requested that through him Lazarus be raised, so that the crowd "may believe" (v. 42) that he was indeed sent, that he was indeed the Messiah.

With this preparation, Jesus then called upon Lazarus to come

⁵⁵Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible, ed. Leslie F. Church (1961; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 1571.

forth; as he had prayed Lazarus came forth indeed, bound hands and feet and face. Following his exhumation and revivification, Jesus ordered the crowd to "unbind him, and let him go" (v. 44). This they did, restoring to him both freedom and movement. John concludes the episode with a statement on its dramatic ending, pointing out that, while many of the Jews present "believed in him" (v. 45), others left and mischievously reported the matter to the Jewish leaders.

These surveys represent only the first step of the total study involving the Johannine episodes. The second step, an examination of the material surveyed, will now be undertaken. This examination makes it plain that these episodes all contain definite soteriological material. This becomes very evident when consideration is given to the reports both of public professions and of messianic teachings. According to John, the reports in question on public professions show that several people, greatly impressed by the miracles of Christ, actually "believed in him."⁵⁶ The royal official and his household⁵⁷ "believed" because Jesus fulfilled his promise of healing his afflicted son (4:53). The man who was born blind and healed by Christ accepted the call (9:35) to discipleship when he submitted--"Lord, I believe" (9:38). The third and final instance of public profession involves a number of the crowd present at the raising of Lazarus from the dead. John reports that "many . . . of the Jews who had . . . beheld what had been done, believed in him" (11:45).

⁵⁶See: Jn. 4:53; 9:35, 38; 11:27, 45.

⁵⁷Merrill F. Unger . . . points out that "Household" means not only the members of the same "family living in the same dwelling," but servants and dependents as well. Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), p. 506.

The emphasis on belief here is unmistakable. The report shows that on four different occasions, different people believed in Christ--some for what he did, others for what he did and said. Whatever the motive or object, they all believed in him, and this now becomes the matter of immediate concern. The question therefore is asked, what exactly was the nature of their belief?

To answer this question satisfactorily, further study is imperative. The word "belief" occurring almost two hundred and fifty times,⁵⁸ is a comparatively popular New Testament word. The extensive use of the word as well as its general application to the Divine-human relationship makes the concept not only an important biblical subject but a fundamental doctrine of salvation. Nevertheless, study will be made only of the Johannine usage. This will be followed by a study of the various texts in question.

As used throughout the book, "belief," an English rendering of the Greek pisteuo, suggests several prominent meanings. According to Bultmann, it means in one sense "acceptance of the message about Jesus."⁵⁹ This message, variously indicated by hoti and hina clauses, reveals that the "content of belief" here generally consists of "the nature, mission

⁵⁸W. F. Moulton and A. S. Gaster, and H. K. Moulton, eds., A Concordance to the Greek Testament (4th ed.; 1897; rpt.; 38 George Street, Edinburgh: I. & T. Clark, 1975).

⁵⁹Illustrations of this meaning include: 6:69--"We believe and know that (hoti) you are the Holy One of God;" 11:27--" . . . I believe that (hoti) you are the Christ, the Son of God . . . ;" see also 14:11--"He came as a witness to testify concerning that light so that (hina) through him all men might believe;" 9:36--" . . . Tell me so that (hina) I may believe in him" (NIV). See also 11:44; 17:21; 19:35; 20:31--See Bultmann, p. 222.

and status of Christ."⁶⁰ Christ was the Son of Man, the Messiah and the Son of God. In another sense, belief means "to believe Jesus when he preaches," that is, "to believe his word . . . or words. . . ."⁶¹ The idea here is credence, to view his words or preachment as truth, to regard it as divine, and thus authoritative and binding. This constituted belief. Closely related to the accusative use of the word is the dative. Here belief means "to believe in Jesus,"⁶² a sense that is further defined by both Dodd and Bultmann. Dodd claims that belief in Jesus means to have "personal trust or reliance." It means to pay allegiance to, to acknowledge and to accept Christ as God's way of offering salvation.⁶³ Bultmann on the other hand, explains that "'to believe in him' is 'to come to him,' 'to receive him' . . . and 'to love him.'"⁶⁴ The act here is one of

⁶⁰C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (1st ed. 1953; rpt. Cambridge: University Press, 1968), pp. 182-183.

⁶¹Illustrations of this meaning include: 2:22--"Then they [the disciples] believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken;" 8:45--" . . . I tell you the truth [and] you do not believe me" (NIV). See also 5:47 and Bultmann.

⁶²Illustrations of this meaning include: 2:11--"This beginning of his signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in (eis) him" (NASV); 4:39--"Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in (eis) him because of the woman's testimony;" 9:36--"Tell me so that I may believe in (eis) him;" Cf. 11:25, 26; 14:1--"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in (eis) God; trust also in (eis) me" (NIV). Cf. 11:25, 26. See Bultmann.

⁶³Dodd, pp. 183-185.

⁶⁴Examples: 6:35--" . . . He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty;" 6:44--"No one came to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, . . . ;" Cf. 6:65; 1:12--"Yet to him who received him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God" (NIV). Cf. 5:43; Love--8:42; 14:15, 21, 23f, 28; 16:27. See Bultmann, p. 223.

submission and surrender.

Johannine usage also involves other concepts. For instance, Bultmann shows that the word denotes "salvation" or everlasting life.⁶⁵ To believe in Christ means that the believer has life (zoe) in the sense that he will either be delivered from death itself, or be saved from the experience. On the other hand, it means to be acquitted from the final judgment and wrath of God. This is a state of freedom and security for the believer.⁶⁶ To balance this concept of faith in which the nature of a conversion experience is depicted, John introduces the concept of renunciation. According to him belief also means the "renunciation of the world."⁶⁷ He shows that Jesus called upon the Jews, who were searching the scripture for life, to "turn from falsehood to truth;" they must "set aside all their previous standards and judgments" and turn from themselves

⁶⁵Examples: 3:14b-15--" . . . so the Son of man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life;" 3:18--"whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (NIV). Cf. 11:25; 20:31; 6:40, 47.

⁶⁶The Analytical Greek Lexicon.

⁶⁷To explain the point, Bultmann uses a number of negative illustrations. He says that "men cannot believe because 'they receive honour one of another' (5:44), [that is to say], because they seek security in mutual acceptance, because they fortify their world and seal it off from God [whose honour they refuse to seek]. Thus, v. 6 makes it plain that the multitude cannot believe in Jesus as the bread of life because they seek a bread which will assure them of bodily life on earth. Again, 5:1-16; 9:1-34 shows that the 'Jews' will not tolerate any disruption of a form of life guaranteed by legal correctness. 5:17ff. and v. 11 demand that a man abandon his present ideas of life and death in order to be open to the life which Jesus gives and which appears where the world sees only death. It is required that the world give up the notion of a 'son of man,' a bringer of salvation, who will abide forever when he comes (12:34), . . . ," Bultmann, pp. 223-224.

to him.⁶⁸ This act of dissecularization is faith and involves both conduct and aspiration.

In another sense, John portrays belief to mean "spiritual vision," a vision that comprehends "the glory of God"⁶⁹ and his "workings"⁷⁰ in the drama and symbolism of miracles.⁷¹ Dodd explains that the concept (doxa) is used not in the Greek sense⁷² of the word but in the Hebraic, which clearly "means the manifestation of God's presence and power, . . ."⁷³ This manifestation of the divine presence and power symbolized God's readiness and resourcefulness for man's salvation. To perceive and to

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 223.

⁶⁹John reports that Jesus interpreted the illness and death of Lazarus as leading to the "glory of God" as well as to himself. The idea of "glory of God" is variously explained by several commentators. Some regard it as Christ's own victory over death and evil--Arthur John Gossip, "The Gospel According to John," The Interpreter's Bible, p. 638; Bruce, p. 798; Raymond E. Brown trans., "The Gospel According to John," The Anchor Bible, XXIX (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969), I-XII, p. 431. Others see "glory" as a profession of belief in Christ as Messiah--Bruce. Still others perceive it as a revelation of divine power--J. H. Bernard, "The Gospel According to St. John II," The International Critical Commentary, XXXIII, ed. A. H. McNeile (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), pp. 374, 396.

⁷⁰The Amplified New Testament (1958; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973).

⁷¹Examples: 6:36--"But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe;" 11:40--"Then Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?'" 6:46-47--"No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life" (NIV). See also 20:25-29.

⁷²The Greek meaning may be designated 'opinion,' 'good reputation,' and so 'honour,' and 'distinction.' See Dodd, p. 206.

⁷³Ibid., p. 207.

apprehend this was to have faith or belief.

Finally, in its "absolute use," belief is said to be used in the "generally current" "early Church" sense, namely, to become a Christian.⁷⁴ People, challenged by the miracles and words of Christ, not only became convinced that he was indeed their appointed means of salvation but became his followers and his disciples as well. Belief then is the act of commitment.

With this general Johannine study, the concept of belief becomes remarkably clear. It shows that, while the word is used primarily to describe man's response and relation to Christ, it does so with a certain variety and richness that are peculiar to John alone.⁷⁵ This means that not all of his definitions⁷⁶ are applicable to or are illustrative of the professions in question. Nevertheless, two are clearly applicable. The first involves the meaning of belief in Christ. This applies to the professions both of the "blind" man and of the Jews at Lazarus' resurrection. To Jesus' question, "Do you believe in (pisteueis eis) the Son of man?" (9:35), the "blind man" now delivered from his blindness, replied: "Lord, I believe [in (eis) him]" (v. 38). Also, John shows that a number of Jews

⁷⁴Dodd, p. 185; examples: Jn. 4:41--"And because of his words many more became believers;" 4:48--"'Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,' Jesus told him, 'you will never believe.'" 4:53--" . . . So he and all his household believed" (NIV). See also 5:44; 6:64; 10:26; Cf. Acts 16:34.

⁷⁵See Bultmann's excellent study of the New Testament use of the word--Bultmann, pp. 205-222.

⁷⁶Except "renunciation," they are all found in the episodes in question.

"believed in (episteusan eis)⁷⁷ him" (11:45) when they saw at first hand his raising of Lazarus from the dead. As has been pointed out earlier, Dodd and Bultmann associate with this type of faith the moral elements of personal trust and reliance. They interpret it as acknowledgment of and surrendering to Christ. The professions, therefore, are of the highest level of faith; they involve not merely an acceptance of Christ's message concerning his nature, mission and status, but an entrusting and a submission of their lives and conduct to him for salvation. Their faith, then, was more than intellectual assent; it was a moral undertaking with one who had shown himself to be the only answer to the ultimate question of the human heart.

A second definition which involves the concept of becoming Christians, applies to the professions of the royal official and his household. Here, as was indicated earlier, the use of belief (episteusen; 4:53) is absolute and as such is generally representative of the initiation into Christian experience. This is the view that is maintained by many scholars. For instance, Dodd and Barrett who even use the popular contemporary term "Christian," define the act to mean "to become Christian."⁷⁸ On the other hand, Alford and Russell describe it differently but yet in related terms. They interpret the act to mean that the officer and his

⁷⁷ Episteusan here as well as episteusen in 4:53 is the "ingressive aorist" and indicates that the professions of belief represent an entrance into a status. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (The Macmillan Company, 1927 and 1955), p. 196.

⁷⁸ Dodd, p. 185; C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S. P. C. K., 1958), p. 205.

household "became disciples."⁷⁹ Similarly Blaney, in yet another related expression, explains the nature of their belief to be, "to become believers."⁸⁰ Hence, even though expressed differently, it is clear that the common understanding of belief here is that the royal officer and his household established a personal and spiritual relationship with Christ. They became children of God.

The investigation of these public professions, however, does not conclude the examination of the Johannine material. This constitutes only one aspect of the examination. Now, attention must be given to the messianic teachings as well. In two of the Johannine episodes, reports show that Jesus used his miracles as visual-aids to explain and demonstrate his redemptive message and mission. This is particularly evident in the narratives surrounding the blind man as well as Lazarus. In the blind man's narrative, Jesus who intended to illustrate and confirm his teaching that he was "the Light of the world" (9:5), dramatically gave physical sight to the man. According to John, he made clay and applied it to the man's unseeing eyes and instructed him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The result was startling. The man who went in darkness came back seeing and became a vivid illustration of Jesus' teaching.

The teaching was intended to be understood by the Jews as a

⁷⁹Henry Alford, "The Gospel According to John," The Greek Testament, I (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, n.d.), p. 667; Don Ralph Russell, "St. John," A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, ed. Reginald C. Fuller, Leonard Johnston and Conleth Kearns (London: Nelson, 1969), p. 1045.

⁸⁰Blaney, p. 396.

reference to his messiahship. The Jews had long associated "light" with God⁸¹ and had even taught that Messiah was light. This, according to Bernard, was the belief of the Rabbis themselves who taught that "Light is the name of Messiah."⁸² Now Jesus was declaring himself, both in word and works, to be that very light, the truth (aletheia) which, when mediated to man, becomes the means of eternal life.⁸³

In the other narrative involving Lazarus, John shows that Jesus again employed miracles as a visual message and proof of the Gospel. In assuring Martha that he would shortly raise her brother Lazarus, he revealed to her that he was the resurrection and the life and that in him resided not only the power to save and to deliver from death but to defeat death itself⁸⁴ (11:25). To Martha the teaching was contradictory and unacceptable. Like her fellow Jews, she had believed in only one resurrection, an eschatological and general resurrection at which all the dead will be raised⁸⁵ (v. 4). Jesus' assurance and teaching, therefore, naturally met with disbelief. To overcome that doubt as well as to illustrate and to confirm his teaching, Jesus simply proceeded to the grave of Lazarus and with a call raised him from the dead. The result was incredible. Many Jews, according to John, believed in him; since she was

⁸¹See Psa. 27--"The Lord is my Light;" Also see Isa. 42:6; 49:6; Cf. Lu. 2:32--"A light to the Gentiles;" Jn. 1:8, 9; 3:19; 8:12; 12:46.

⁸²Bernard, p. 292. ⁸³Dodd, p. 204.

⁸⁴Frederick Louis Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of John, I (3rd ed.; 1893; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), p. 180.

⁸⁵Dodd, p. 147.

present at the event, it may be inferred that Martha also believed in him.

While the Lazarus' miracle demonstrated the teaching that the resurrection in every sense of the word belonged to the "Messianic office" of Christ,⁸⁶ it equally testified to the fact that his ambassadorial mission was both divine and messianic. The Jews had expected Messiah,⁸⁷ their national deliverer and saviour,⁸⁸ to come and to liberate them. His appearance and person they were to determine and identify through his demonstration of supernatural power which was regarded as the chief evidence of divine association and commission.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, oppression by the Romans only intensified their expectation and wearied their patience for his arrival. Jesus was aware of their hopes and beliefs and had often taught that he was indeed that expected and divine One. Now once more at Lazarus' graveside, he called upon his Father publically to validate his teaching with the resurrection of Lazarus. His Father did; and again,

⁸⁶Jameison, Fausset and Brown, p. 1053.

⁸⁷The term "Messiah" found only twice in the New Testament, appears only in John--1:41; 4:25. Yet the concept itself is very dominant. Dodd contends that the fourth Evangelist "shows himself fully aware of the Jewish ideas associated with it. . . ." Among the concepts associated with it are: King of Israel (1:49); "The Holy One of God" (6:69); "Son of God" (1:34, 49); "Son of Man" (1:51; 9:35); and "The Coming One" (11:40; 12:13). This final idea may be differently described as "the Expected One" or "the One Sent." Hence, Jesus prayed--"that they may believe that Thou didst send me" (11:42). Dodd further indicates that in the "primitive Christian usage," these "traditional titles" are all messianic, though for the most part they cannot be shown to have been current in this sense in pre-Christian Judaism. Dodd, p. 228.

⁸⁸Unger, p. 718.

⁸⁹Donald Guthrie, The New Bible Commentary, ed. D. Guthrie et al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 954.

many not only accepted his teaching that he was Messiah but as has been shown earlier also believed in him.

On the basis of these results therefore, it may be concluded that Jesus utilized his miracles to propagate his evangelistic teachings and to bring men to faith in him.

THE RESURRECTION EPISODES

The study comes now to the final section involving the divine-human understanding of significance of miracles. Unlike the previous section in which the characteristic elements were the prophetic, the catechetical and the confessional, this section mainly emphasizes the experiential and the practical. It portrays in particular both the passion-resurrection scene and the faith and conduct of the disciples themselves.

Focus on Christ and the disciples here is definitely inescapable. In the case of the disciples, the entire section is a switch from Jesus and the crowds to Jesus and the disciples. Here the real depth and breadth of their Messianic comprehension is dramatically measured, the color and strength of their character determined, and the intensity of their commitment revealed. Moreover, the section is a switch from Christ's prophetic ministry to his priestly office. He turned from preaching and teaching to suffering and death. It is a switch from Christ the Word to Christ the Truth and Testimony. Certainly, he is the Son of God; he is the Messiah, the Redeemer of all mankind.

This personal and mediatorial emphasis constitutes the primary soteriological material in the resurrection narratives which for this study include the crucifixion, the resurrection itself and the

christophanies. To determine the nature of this material, consideration will be given to the following areas: (1) the disciples' commitment and life; (2) their prejudice and misunderstanding, (3) their disappointment and despair, and (4) the appeal and impact of the resurrection.

The Disciples' Commitment and Life

The call of the disciples resulted in a close and special relationship with Christ. They were first ordinary and common citizens, men who were generally unlearned,⁹⁰ mostly fishermen and tax collectors.⁹¹ Nevertheless, Christ selected them and persuaded them that he was Messiah.⁹² Their response was incredibly radical and positive. According to the Synoptic Evangelists, they left their livelihood, parents, property, friends and followed him.⁹³ They entered into an experience of personal relationship and commitment. By this act they surrendered to his call and committed themselves to become his followers or disciples.⁹⁴

The relationship continued and developed mutually. The disciples who were now learning at first hand of the new Christological order remained faithful and diligent to the call. They continued with him daily, listened to his teachings, witnessed his miracles, carried out his

⁹⁰Acts 4:13.

⁹¹Mat. 4:18, 21; See also Mk. 1:16, 19; Lu. 5:3; Jn. 21:3ff; Mat. 9:9f; Mk. 2:14; Lu. 5:27.

⁹²Jn. 1:45-50; Lu. 5:1-11; Mat. 4:19; Mk. 1:17.

⁹³Mat. 4:19, 22; See also Mk. 1:18, 20; Lu. 5:11.

⁹⁴The Greek word for "followed" here is ekolouthesan from akoloutho which means to become a disciple, to imitate, to be a follower. The Analytical Greek Lexicon.

orders, provided support and even debated his teachings. Indeed, they had left all and followed him.

On the other side of the picture, Christ did much to build and cement the relationship. His interest in their temporal well-being was specifically evident. In the area of their physical and emotional needs, he showed that he cared, by healing Peter's mother-in-law,⁹⁵ by filling, after fruitless nights of toil, their nets and boats with fishes,⁹⁶ and by saving on the perilous seas their boats and lives from disaster.⁹⁷ In terms of personal development, he provided opportunity for growth. Initially, he had called them to be special messengers. Twice with the Gospel, he had sent them to their fellow disbelieving Jews,⁹⁸ and in a separate instance, he had called upon them to resolve a bread shortage out in the desert.⁹⁹ Moreover, on the question of success, he endeavoured to convince them that true success did not consist of temporal happiness and prosperity but in putting God ahead of the world, and others ahead of self.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵Mat. 8:14-15; See also Mk. 1:29-31; Lu. 4:38-39.

⁹⁶Lu. 5:1-11; Jn. 21:1-14.

⁹⁷Mat. 8:23-27; See also Mk. 4:35-41; Lu. 8:22-25; and Mat. 14:22-33; See also Mk. 6:45-52.

⁹⁸The two instances consist of (1) His sending out of the twelve --Mat. 9:35-10:16; See also Mk. 6:6b-13; Lu. 9:1-6 and (2) His sending out of the seventy--Lu. 10:1-16.

⁹⁹Jn. 6:5ff.

¹⁰⁰Mat. 5-7; 19:16-30; See also 10:17-31; Lu. 18:18-30; Mat. 16:24-28; and Mk. 8:34-9:1; Lu. 19:23-27.

In another sense, his encouragement and motivation were strong and attractive. In his new order, he had promised that they will inherit mansions,¹⁰¹ that they will be honoured at his banquet;¹⁰² and that they will be delegated seats of authority to sit and judge "the twelve tribes of Israel"¹⁰³ (RSV). Also, he had assured them that they had his Father's favor because their names were already recorded in heaven;¹⁰⁴ and that whether they had left father or mother, house or land, husband, wife or children, they would be compensated and redressed in excess of their losses.¹⁰⁵ Stated differently, he assured them that they had nothing to lose, for following him.

The fruits of this dynamic relationship were soon evident on both sides. Christ himself, aware of it, revealed much in word and conduct in recognition of that fact. He assured the disciples of his great love and esteem, he called them his "friends,"¹⁰⁶ he wrapped and fellowshiped with them, exchanged opinions and questions and pled for their support of prayer and sympathy in Gethsemane.

The disciples, on the other hand, showed much fruit in conduct as well. They had come to recognize more and more that Jesus was indeed the Son of God as well as Christ¹⁰⁷ the Messiah. They had come to learn of his new ethic and his new Christological order, in which they themselves were to play no mean role. These convictions and assurances had remarkable

¹⁰¹Jn. 14:2-3. ¹⁰²Lu. 22:30.

¹⁰³Lu. 22:30; See also Mat. 19:28. ¹⁰⁴Lu. 10:20.

¹⁰⁵Mat. 19:29; See also Mk. 10:29-30; Lu. 18:29b-30.

¹⁰⁶Jn. 15:13, 14; 11:11. ¹⁰⁷Mat. 14:33; 16:16; Jn. 6:69.

results. They led the disciples to acknowledge Christ as Lord, Master and Teacher;¹⁰⁸ they cultivated a relation of friendship; and provided the courage that would not only refuse to forsake or deny¹⁰⁹ him in sorrow, but which would seek fearlessly to prevent his arrest. Moreover, they generated a feeling of unity and esprit de corps and even gave the disciples a greater sense of commitment and purpose. Surely, together, both parties had built a dynamic, personal relationship--a relationship which in the disciples' case would shortly be tested.

Prejudice and Misunderstanding

One of the benefits that resulted from the disciples' association with Christ was their learning about the new Christological order or the kingdom of God.¹¹⁰ This concept which was by no means new to the disciples was loaded with significant political over-tones. They were not slow to recognize this. The Jews had long believed that, on the basis of

¹⁰⁸Lord--Mat. 8:25; 14:28, 30; 16:22; Master--Mat. 8:19; 26:25; Teacher--Jn. 3:2. All three titles were expressions of honour and respect as their application was made only in reference to leaders--Dan. 2:10; 4:36; II Kings 7:2, 17, 19; Gen. 23:11; 24:18; I Chron. 15:27.

¹⁰⁹Lu. 22:31-33; Mat. 26:34-35.

¹¹⁰The expression, "the kingdom of God," is primarily a New Testament expression although very much an Old Testament concept (II Sam. 7:16). According to Edwin Lewis, it is "primarily a religious conception, not political or economic, though it will have political and economic consequences." He further defines it as "that condition of human life in which the will of God as revealed in Jesus Christ is in complete control." Edwin Lewis, "Kingdom of God," Harper's Bible Dictionary, ed. Madelein S. Miller and J. Lane Miller (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1952), p. 367.

his covenant with Abraham¹¹¹ and with David¹¹² God would some day establish a kingdom on earth.

The nature of this kingdom however, divided the nation into two schools. One school, the orthodox and conservatives, taught that the kingdom would be political and nationalistic and thus would comprise of "the sons of Abraham"¹¹³ alone. The second school, the liberal party, held that, since God was the God of the universe, the kingdom would be spiritual and universal and naturally would consist, not of one people, but of all mankind.¹¹⁴

The two groups, nevertheless, came together on a number of points. They believed that the kingdom would be established and ruled by a deliverer, and that this deliverer would be of the house and posterity of David, yet far greater than he.¹¹⁵ They believed that this deliverer,

¹¹¹Gen. 12:1-3--"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, and from your relatives . . . , to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great; . . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" 17:3-6--"And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 'As for me, behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. . . .'"

¹¹²II Sam. 7:4f--" . . . the same night . . . the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying, 'Go and say to my servant David, Thus says the Lord, . . . (vv. 12f) when your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendants after you, . . . and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever . . . (v. 16) And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.'" Cf. I Kings 2:4; 8:25.

¹¹³Lewis, p. 440. ¹¹⁴Ibid. ¹¹⁵Ibid.

like the kings and priests of old, would be "the Lord's anointed"¹¹⁶ or Messiah; and as such he was to accomplish great political and supernatural deeds. He was "to destroy the world powers in an act of judgment, deliver Israel from her enemies, . . . restore her as a nation" and then establish her as his future kingdom¹¹⁷ in which he was to reign universal in "endless peace and prosperity."¹¹⁸

Rivalry between the two schools continued. Nevertheless, in about the middle of the first century B.C., popular sentiments shifted in favor of the nationalistic movement. The cause was primarily political. From 166 B.C. Judaea was caught up in constant political and civil struggles. In 63 B.C. the end came. The Roman General Pompey appeared in Palestine and after conquering Syria, besieged the city of Jerusalem.¹¹⁹ The result was Roman domination, politically and economically.¹²⁰

This situation of bondage enraged the Jews and together with

¹¹⁶Arnold C. Schultz, "Messiah," The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (1967; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 528.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Andrew C. Zenos, "Messiah," A New Standard Bible Dictionary, ed. Melancthon W. Jacobus, Edward E. Nourse and Andrew C. Zenos (rev. and enl; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1925), p. 575. See Isa. 9:2-7; 11:1-9.

¹¹⁹Charles F. Pfeiffer, Baker's Bible Atlas (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadmas Press, 1961), p. 182.

¹²⁰Judaea--According to Smith, Judaea as well as Samaria was "reduced" to the status of an "ordinary Roman province under a procurator subordinate to the prefect of Syria." He explains that "procurators" were special administrators of the emperor whose duties ranged from revenue collectors, judges and other special assignments. William Smith ed., The New Testament History (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1888), p. 106.

their historical Messianic outlook intensified the longing for Messiah. In about 5 B.C., Christ came, and throughout his earthly ministry, his basic message, although spiritual, was cast in historically political jargon. He taught that the kingdom of God was near¹²¹ and that he himself was Messiah.¹²² He taught that he would deliver and redeem his people¹²³ and with them establish an everlasting kingdom to which all nations would submit.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, he had even announced to his disciples that they themselves would be dignitaries and authorities in his new kingdom. They would both be his guests of honour at his banquet¹²⁵ and be given authority over their fellow Jews as a nation.¹²⁶

Naturally, these teachings were not properly received and served unfortunately only to entrench the disciples' nationalistic biases.¹²⁷ The reason is implicit. The political or monarchical overtones connoted by these teachings coincided well with the nationalistic Messianic beliefs of these patriotic and pastoral men. Equally well, they coincided with

¹²¹Mk. 1:14-15; See also Mat. 4:17.

¹²²Mat. 15:24; 16:16-17; Jn. 4:24-25; 7:29; 8:23; 10:10.

¹²³Mat. 10:5-7ff; 15:21-24; Lu. 15:4-7; 8-10, 11-32.

¹²⁴Mat. 13:24-30, 36, 39-43; Cf. 12:28; 25:31-32.

¹²⁵Lu. 22:30a.

¹²⁶Lu. 22:30b; On the other hand, Lewis points out that Jesus "saw his mission as essentially that of bringing to men a moral and spiritual deliverance, and that to do this he must suffer and die. 'My kingdom,' he said to Pilate, 'is not of this world' (Jn. 18:36)." "He would set up a kingdom, but it would be one of love and good will (Mat. 18:1-4; Cf. 9:35-38; Lu. 12:31-34; Cf. Col. 1:13f)." --Lewis, p. 441.

¹²⁷Lu. 24:21.

their earnest nationalistic desire to be liberated from Roman political and economic bondage. They were a source of motivation.

These, the disciples perceived, and these perceptions consequently led to a series of historical and political conclusions. They concluded that Jesus was indeed the promised redeemer;¹²⁸ that now was the time he would effect their salvation¹²⁹ and that he was the one appointed and commissioned to liberate their nation, restore her as a sovereign state and then to set her up as his kingdom of peace, power and prosperity. So convinced were the disciples about their conclusions that they became zealous and ambitious over the prospect of the kingdom. Peter, for instance, intolerable towards any alternative proposals, rebutted even Christ's announcement that instead of the crown he was heading for the cross. He suggested instead, that the cross was absurd and ludicrous and that there could be no more reasonable option but the liberation and

¹²⁸That it was the general opinion that Jesus was Messiah is evidenced in three main instances--Jn. 6:14-15--(1) The crowd which witnessed his miracle of feeding over 5,000, concluded that he was Messiah, "the prophet" who was to come and thus attempted to make him king by coercion; (2) The Synoptics show that on his entry into Jerusalem, the mass accompanying crowd acclaimed him king and beseeched God through him to save them--Mat. 21:1-9; Mk. 11:1-10; Lu. 19:28-38; Allen whose explanation is based primarily on Mark's account indicates that the word hosanna is derived from the Hebrew hoshaah and means to "give salvation now," a sense portrayed in Psa. 118:25, 26. He indicates that the prayer is addressed to God. Willoughby C. Allen, " . . . Gospel According to S. Matthew," The International Critical Commentary, ed. Charles Augustus Briggs, Samuel Rolles Driver and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 221; (3) The two Emmaus disciples also confessed that they regarded Christ as Messiah. However, as would be seen later, they all had a temporal, not a spiritual concept of his messiahship.

¹²⁹Note the prayer of the crowd which accompanied Jesus on his triumphant entry into Jerusalem--They prayed--Hosanna which as was pointed out means to "save now"--See also The Analytical Greek Lexicon.

restoration of Israel.¹³⁰

At the other spectrum were James and John the sons of Zebedee. Their chief concern centered in what their lot would be in the kingdom. Unable to wait for that moment of honour and the realization of the kingdom, the brothers publically and courageously requested of Jesus the distinction of sitting individually on his right hand and on the left.¹³¹ Their petition called for the positions of high "confidence" and of "highest honour."¹³² They desired the noblest offers.

The request which nevertheless was self-centered and sordid, served like Peter's zeal only to make two important points clear. It served to demonstrate the extent to which the disciple's understanding was culturally and politically polluted so that it was naturally prejudiced against the teachings of the kingdom and of Messiah. Equally so, it served to indicate the direction towards which they were unprofitably and disappointingly motivated. In the words of Christ, they were "not setting their minds on God's interests but man's" (Mat. 16:23).

Disappointment and Despair: the Crucifixion

Throughout the course of their company with Christ, the disciples had encountered challenging and trying circumstances. None, however, had been reported to equal the shock and instability of the crucifixion itself. As has been shown, the disciples had built up a dynamic personal relationship with Christ. This, together with their prejudice and misapprehension,

¹³⁰Mat. 16:22-23; Cf. Mk. 8:32-33.

¹³¹Mat. 20:20-23; Cf. Mk. 10:35-40.

¹³²Barnes, p. 93; Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, p. 972.

had led them to expect Christ to fulfill their temporal aspirations and expectations. They had expected him to build an army and to liberate their enslaved nation from the Romans. Luke, who gives the widest expression to their nationalistic and political sentiments, makes this clear in his report of the Emmaus road conversation.¹³³ He shows that, according to Cleopas' testimony, the disciples had expected Jesus to be their Messiah. In reply to the risen Lord's questioning, Cleopas had confessed that together they had expected their crucified Lord "to redeem Israel"¹³⁴ (Lu. 24:21, RSV). That means they had expected him "[to set] Israel free from the Roman yoke" of political and economic bondage.

Moreover, they had expected him to restore Israel as a sovereign nation and to set up his kingdom in which they themselves were promised honour and authority. Again, Luke alone highlights their nationalism and patriotism. In his Acts report (Acts 1:1-11) which covers the final conference between Christ and the disciples, he shows that the disciples hope for the restoration of their kingdom was still alive. Jesus himself had re-introduced the subject and had held frequent discourses concerning it (1:3). Now, in this final meeting, he made the announcement that the gift of the Holy Spirit was imminent, and that his empowering ministry would specifically and initially involve the disciples themselves. In

¹³³ Lu. 24:13-35.

¹³⁴ According to Vine, the New Testament uses two Greek verbs for the concept of "redeem"--exagonazo and lutroo. The one used here is lutroo which means "to release on receipt of ransom" and "is used in the Middle Voice, signifying to release by paying a ransom price." As used here, the word represents the "natural sense" which means the act "of delivering," (Lu. 24:21) the act "of setting Israel free from the Roman yoke."--Vine, p. 263.

their view, the announcement was Messianic. He had recently been discussing the subject of the kingdom and they presumed that he was at this time announcing its arrival. Immediately, the news aroused their cherished hopes, and at once, they inquired, "Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"¹³⁵ (v. 6). They were interested in whether he, through another miracle like the resurrection, would at once restore the kingdom of Israel, whether he was going to establish his "political theocracy."¹³⁶ This interest was the signal of their lingering expectation for the re-establishment of their kingdom.

Sadly however, these expectations, met with sudden disappointment and disillusionment. Unlike their misconceptions, Christ's Messianic mission consisted not of the nationalistic and political role which they had erroneously assigned to him.¹³⁷ His Messianic role consisted of a universal, spiritual and moral deliverer,¹³⁸ who would save from sin,

¹³⁵Vine shows that three Greek verbs are used in the New Testament to designate "restore." These include: apodidomi, apokathistemi and katartizo. The one used here is apokathistemi (apokathistano) and has more than one meaning. It means (1) to restore to the former condition of health (Mat. 12:13; Mk. 3:5; 8:25; Lu. 6:10); (2) to restore Israel and conditions affecting it through divine means or agencies--(Mat. 17:11; Mk. 9:12; Acts 1:6); and (3) to bring back or give back a person (Heb. 13:19). The sense clearly applicable to the text here is the second which symbolizes a divine restoration or re-establishment of the nation of Israel. This therefore means that the disciples expected Christ to restore Israel to its place of nationhood from under Roman domination--Vine, pp. 289-290; Alford emphasizes the fact that the preposition apo suggests "the sense of completeness" or an "entire restoration"--Alford, "The Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians," The Greek Testament, II (5th ed., London: Rivingtons, 1865), p. 3; See also J. Gresham Machen, New Testament Greek for Beginners (The Macmillan Company, 1951), Sect. 117.

¹³⁶F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of the Acts (1954; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), p. 38.

¹³⁷Tolbert, p. 184. ¹³⁸Lewis, p. 441.

death and eternal judgment. Consequently, instead of becoming a chivalrous military general, Christ, aware of his supreme mission, became a political prisoner and criminal. He submitted himself to be condemned unjustly and to be ignominiously put to death by the Romans.¹³⁹

The event was a horrible and tragic experience for the disciples. According to the Evangelists, it resulted in deep and utter despair which manifested itself into two main areas. First, from the standpoint of the disciples' opinion, the crucifixion was a "fatal blow"¹⁴⁰ to their nationalistic expectations and political aspirations. Again, Luke alone explains how this is so. In his report on the Emmaus Road story, he indicates that, according to Cleopas, the disciples had believed the crucifixion to be an anti-Jewish political "tragedy" which denied them their cherished hopes.¹⁴¹ A disciple himself, Cleopas indicated that they "had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (Lu. 24:21b, RSV); but, instead, "our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him" (v. 20b, RSV). They felt that the event was fatal in that it "quenched" all their fondest hopes.¹⁴²

Secondly, with respect to their relationship with Christ, the crucifixion proved a despondent and demoralizing experience for the disciples. They had lost not only hope but faith. The basis for this

¹³⁹ Mat. 27:11-61; Cf. Mk. 15:2-47; Lu. 23:2-56.

¹⁴⁰ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, p. 1023.

¹⁴¹ Gilmour et al., p. 423.

¹⁴² Henry Burton, "The Gospel According to St. Luke," An Exposition of the Bible, V, et al. (Hartford, Conn[ecticut]: The S. S. Scranton Co., 1903), p. 108.

conclusion lay in the disciples faithless and stubborn attitude towards the reports of the resurrection and the christophanies of Christ.

Excluding Matthew and Mark, the other two Evangelists show¹⁴³ that the disciples rejected the initial reports concerning the resurrection. According to Luke, the "eleven" as well as "all the rest" (24:9, RSV) both doubted and scoffed at the women's report (24:5-11). He indicates that, after the angels had announced to the women that Christ had indeed been risen and had reminded them that Jesus had before in Galilee informed them of his arrest, death and resurrection, the women returned immediately and reported the message to both groups.

The message met with instant doubt and derision. In the case of the Eleven, they at once denounced the message, describing it as "an idle tale" and hence "did not believe" it (24:11, RSV). Similarly, the same obtained in the case of the two Emmaus disciples whose dirge and skepticism are reported in minutiae (vv. 19-24). Again Luke shows that, in relating the passion episode, Cleopas admitted that the women of their company had informed them of the resurrection. He pointed out that, in response to the report, "some"¹⁴⁴ of their company went to the tomb to investigate the matter (v. 24). On arrival, they found the tomb empty as the women had reported, "but him they did not see" (v. 24). Furthermore, he contended that "it is now the third day since" (v. 21) he was crucified and buried and there is yet no visible sign of him. Differently

¹⁴³Mat. 28:8-11a; 16-17; Lu. 24:5-11; 19-24; 36-41; Jn. 20:19-25.

¹⁴⁴John shows that in response to the women's report Peter and John himself immediately went to the tomb to investigate it, Jn. 20:2-10. Note that, unlike the Synoptic Evangelists, John indicates that only one woman was involved--namely Mary Magdalene, Jn. 20:1ff.

stated, the two maintained that the whole story is dubious and debatable and hence does not lend itself to the judgment of reason.

Notwithstanding, from the stranger's point of view, their skepticism and derision were clearly visible and naturally displeased and frustrated him (the risen Lord). Over the three year period of his prophetic ministry, he had repeatedly informed them of his passion and victory, but, filled with nationalistic and political biases, they both opposed and misapprehended his message. Now, when they should have been confident and rejoicing, they were overpowered by doubt and despair. This, the yet unrecognized Lord did not hesitate to make clear. In reproof, he characterized them as "foolish men," men who were "slow of heart to believe," not so much the women's report but all the prophetic teachings concerning him (v. 25).

In other instances, Luke and John report that the disciples persisted in doubting the resurrection reports. In a second case involving the Eleven, both Evangelists provide a supplementary account.¹⁴⁵ They indicate that, during the evening of the day of the resurrection, the Eleven disciples and "those who were with them" (Lu. 24:33) were assembled together behind closed doors (Jn. 20:19). At this assembly, the two Emmaus disciples who had returned to Jerusalem to report Christ's appearance to them, were welcomed with the glowing report of how the Lord had now appeared to Simon. In like manner, they reported their own story, relating how the Lord had also appeared to them and how they recognized him only through "the breaking of bread" (Lu. 24:35).

While they were concluding their report, Jesus himself mysteriously

¹⁴⁵Lu. 24:33-43; Jn. 20:19-20.

appeared in their midst and immediately greeted them (Lu. v. 36; Jn. v. 19). His appearance the likeness of a spirit to them, "startled and frightened" them (Lu. vv. 37, 38); and though they recognized the resemblance to be his, it caused "doubts [to] arise in [their] hearts" (Lu. vv. 37, 38).

In another story peculiar to him, John shows that Thomas, also one of the Eleven (Jn. 20:24) refused to believe the combined report of the larger group of disciples (v. 25) which had collectively seen Christ on the evening of his resurrection. For some reason, he was absent from this meeting and so had missed the appearance of Christ. On their first contact, he was informed of the Lord's appearance and how the group had seen him and his scars. Immediately, he discredited the report and declared that "Unless, I shall see in his hands the imprints of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (Jn. 20:25).

Together the doubt of Thomas and his fellow disciples was characterized by a certain grossness and intensity. This is well indicated by the Evangelists' choice of words. According to Luke, the Eleven "did not believe" the women's report (Lu. 24:11); the two Emmaus disciples were "slow of heart to believe" the prophetic announcements (v. 25) while the group at large allowed "doubts" to "rise in their hearts" (v. 38). The same mood persists in John who indicates that Thomas vowed himself not to believe the combined report of the assembly (Jn. 20:25).

This hardline attitude of rejection is made more graphic by exegesis. For instance, the verb apisteuo used by both Evangelists, means not only to "disbelieve" but to "refuse to believe," that is to say, to

adopt an attitude of disbelief against¹⁴⁶ the reports of the resurrection. The word "slow" (brodus) used by Luke only, is, according to Vine, "used metaphorically [here] of understanding" and suggests an attitude or a moral inability to discern something on time. Finally, for the word "doubts"¹⁴⁷ Luke uses the term dialogismos which means a reflective or symptomatic expression of a more basic attitude--disillusionment. The disciples' doubts were merely reflective or expressive of a more undergirding feeling, that of being deceived by a self-proclaimed messiah.

Nevertheless, although shortlived, their skepticism was impregnable and stubborn and graphically indicates both the severity of disappointment which they encountered and the depth of despair to which they had sunken. Indeed, their grand nationalistic hope had been shattered and in consequence, their buoyant personal faith wrecked.

The Appeal and Impact of the Resurrection

The appeal and impact of the resurrection mark the final subdivision of the resurrection episodes. Here, in contrast to the two previous sub-divisions, the soteriological thrust is largely positive and consists of three main areas. These include one, the restoration of the disciples' faith and morale, two, the transformation of their Messianic outlook and three, their recommitment and piety.

The restoration of the disciples' faith and morale. In the last segment of study, the disciples were portrayed to be in a pitiful situation. Owing to the crucifixion, they had lost both personal and messianic

¹⁴⁶Arndt and Gingrich.

¹⁴⁷Some translations render the word "questionings." See the RSV.

faith in Christ. The buoyant dynamic relation which they had cultivated was now threatened with skepticism and disillusionment. The resurrected Christ was not unaware of this threat and so took steps to correct it. The Evangelists Luke and John make this rather clear. For instance, Luke indicates that the risen Lord appeared to the Emmaus disciples and made himself known to them through "the breaking of bread"¹⁴⁸ (RSV). Also both Luke and John point out that on the evening of the resurrection, Christ endeavoured to assure the disciples that he was their crucified Lord. He appeared at their customary place of meeting; he showed them his scars and called upon them to physically examine them. Finally, to dispel their lingering doubts, he partook of their evening meal before their very eyes.¹⁴⁹ The result was overwhelming. The disciples were filled with great "joy" (AV) and assurance when they truly recognized that it was Christ indeed.¹⁵⁰

In a final case, John indicates that the risen Lord also endeavoured to convince Thomas that he was indeed the crucified Christ. Absent from the first general assembly when Christ appeared, Thomas rejected the disciples' report. Nevertheless, he attended the following meeting. At this meeting, Jesus appeared and immediately he addressed Thomas. He called upon Thomas to come forth and to examine his wounds individually and judge for himself. The result again was overwhelming and humbling. Thomas refused the call and bowed in submission acknowledging and confessing Christ as both God and Lord (Jn. 20:28).

¹⁴⁸ Lu. 24:30-31, 35; Cf. Mat. 26:26; See also Mk. 14:22; Lu. 22:19.

¹⁴⁹ Lu. 24:36-43; Jn. 20:19-20. ¹⁵⁰ Lu. 24:41; Jn. 20:20.

In both of these cases, it is clear that Christ's extraordinary efforts were highly successful. The disciples were satisfied that their risen Lord was the crucified Christ.

The transformation of their messianic outlook. By this time the disciples were convinced that their crucified Lord had indeed come back to life and was presently with them. What was not clear to them however, was the reason for the cross and not the crown. Jesus knew that this was the prime cause for their despair and so he undertook to explain again his redemptive mission. His procedure was both different and more extensive. During his pre-passion-resurrection ministry, he had merely announced the plan. Now he took time to explain further, reviewing and interpreting the Old Testament Scripture.

Two instances of this activity are given by Luke alone. They include one, Christ's conversation with the Emmaus' disciples (Lu. 24:25-27) and two, his first meeting with the general assembly after his resurrection (vv. 36-47). In both cases, his activity and procedure were virtually identical.

First of all, he explained to them that the apparent mysterious turn in the final course of his life was providential. His arrest, crucifixion and resurrection were the expressed plan of God. Moses, he explained further, had announced "that these" (Lu. 24:26) would occur¹⁵¹ (vv. 27, 44); the prophets and the Psalms had predicted them¹⁵² (vv. 27,

¹⁵¹ See Acts 3:22; 26:22-23.

¹⁵² See Acts 10:43; 26:22-23; Also Psalms 22:110.

44) and he himself had informed them of their occurrence¹⁵³ (v. 44).

Secondly, he explained as well the chronology and theology of the plan. He reminded them that Moses, the prophets and the Psalms (vv. 25, 27, 44) had all predicted that he will assume his priestly and prophetic mission before his kingly office. They made it clear that he must "suffer" (v. 26) and atone for the sins of the world. Also, as mediator he must "enter" into the presence of God (v. 26) and through the agency of the Church, preach "repentance and forgiveness of sins" (v. 47).

The result of this reindoctrination was immediate and positive. The Emmaus disciples concurred that his exposition kindled their hearts with truth and emotion. Their hearts burned within them as he "opened" to them the scriptures (v. 32). Luke also indicates that he "opened" the "minds" of the general assembly so that they could "understand" the scriptures (v. 45). He laid the truth bare and simple, segment by segment, in order that they may "comprehend [it] thoroughly."¹⁵⁴

Furthermore, Peter's Pentecostal sermon clearly indicates that they had indeed understood the sequence and meaning of Christ's redemptive mission. He proclaimed that Christ's cross and suffering were to have preceded his crown and rule which were yet futuristic.¹⁵⁵ He claimed moreover, that the whole course of his life and mission was the work of

¹⁵³See Mat. 16:21-22; Cf. Mk. 8:31-33; Lu. 9:22.

¹⁵⁴The verb "opened" used twice here (vv. 32, 45) is not the more common anoigo but the compound dianoigo, from dia-through and anoigo, open. Used metaphorically, the verb could be applied to the eyes, the mind or heart, and the scriptures. Hence, it means to explain completely or thoroughly, to open the sense of a thing or the mind or heart to understanding. Vine, III, p. 141; Analytical Greek Lexicon.

¹⁵⁵Acts 3:19b-21; 2:23.

God himself. His prophetic and miraculous ministry (Acts 2:22), his sacerdotal and mediatorial mission (vv. 23, 24), the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (vv. 16-17a, 18)--all were the "mighty deeds of God" (v. 11) foreordained in eternity (v. 23a). The implication here is evident. Christ was no imposter or deceiver as was charged or had appeared. He was indeed the Messiah the promised One (3:20).

Their recommitment and piety. Finally, the appeal and impact of the resurrection were clearly demonstrated in the disciples' recommitment and piety. Already, it was shown that they had reestablished a personal relationship with Christ. They had acknowledged him as God and as Lord.¹⁵⁶ Their acts of piety and commitment however, went beyond this initial step. They showed persistency and loyalty. According to John and Luke, they attended his weekly fellowship where he continued his teachings on the kingdom of God and on the gift of the Spirit.¹⁵⁷

Moreover, they obeyed and followed his instructions with care. He had instructed them to remain in Jerusalem until they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, 8) and to commence their apostolic ministry in their capital city (v. 8b; Lu. 24:47). According to Luke these instructions were followed (Acts 1:12ff; 2:1ff). They showed also that their commitment was firm and purposeful. They were convinced of "the things" (AV) which they had "seen and heard" (4:20) and were courageous enough to be "witnesses" of the same (2:32), whether by ministry or by martyrdom (4:20). There was no question about their position nor uncertainty about their mission. These were clearly decided.

¹⁵⁶ Jn. 20:28; Acts 1:6.

¹⁵⁷ Jn. 20:26-29; Acts 1:3, 4.

The significance of this commitment is indeed incredible. It became the basis and guarantee for the founding of the Church of Christ, the backbone and thrust of a vibrant and effective evangelistic ministry, a key factor in the writing of the New Testament Scripture and an immortal inspiration to succeeding generations of the Church. Certainly the church is "built" and stands "upon the foundation of the apostles. . . ." (Eph. 2:19-20).

Summary

In concluding this chapter, one point is made clear. The miracles of Christ's incarnation and resurrection as well as those of his ministry all emphasize the doctrine and experience of salvation. In the incarnation, it is emphasized as revelatory and provisional, in the ministry, as prophetic and confessional and in the resurrection as personal and mediatorial.

Chapter IV

THE DESIGN OF MIRACLES

Introduction

This chapter marks the transition from the biblical to the theological dimension. It is the only single unit of this magnitude devoted to the development of this dimension. In the two previous chapters, the aim was to lay a foundation rooted in biblical material. Thus, an attempt was made to ascertain the nature of miracles biblically and how people regarded them in terms of their value and practicality. In this chapter, there is a shift of concern. The task here is to determine and to demonstrate how the miracles associated with Christ are theological. In this attempt, they are shown to be instruments or means, in the divine endeavor to bring salvation to mankind.

This soteriological involvement emphasizes the fact that the primary value of the miracles is evidently functional. They are means to an end. The ultimate objective then is to apprehend and affirm the extent and character of this soteriological element. This requires a perusal of the biblical study in which prominent doctrinal themes are identified and developed. To facilitate this development consideration will be given to the following major findings. (1) Miracles are a medium of divine revelation; (2) Miracles are the efficient means of redemption and (3) miracles are tools of evangelism and discipleship.

Miracles Are a Medium of Divine Revelation

The divine act and process of revelation represent one of the

crucial doctrines of biblical literature. Indeed, the Bible itself is regarded as revelation, yet that is most certainly due to the fact that its constituent parts are undoubtedly and basically revelatory. The crucial element in question however, is veiled in the fact that the doctrine forms an integral part of the divine plan of redemption. God must reveal his will to redeem mankind and the manner in which he would accomplish it. In this endeavor, miracles play a dynamic role.

The nature and message of salvation. That miracles play a major role in mediating divine truth is evident from the fact that they reveal the nature and message of salvation. They reveal salvation as deliverance from sin, darkness and death. With respect to sin, deliverance is explicitly affirmed. The angels announce that the purpose of the Incarnation is to procure salvation from sin. By assuming human nature, the Son of God thereby undertakes the first major step for implementing salvation. For this reason, he is described officially as "Jesus" and as "Saviour,"¹ thus signifying the specific nature of his task.

The choice of the name "Jesus" also suggests that the work of the Incarnation is to save from sins. This is not only affirmed in the angelic announcement but is vividly portrayed in history. According to Vincent, history shows that the name "Jesus" signifies the concept of "salvation."² He offers an excellent explanation which is found in the names and professions of three Old Testament characters. These characters

¹Mat. 1:21; Lu. 2:11.

²Marvin R. Vincent, "The Synoptic Gospels, . . . ," Word Studies in the New Testament, I (1887; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmanns Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 16-18.

all bore the name "Joshua" which is the Hebrew form of the Greek "Jesus" and means saviour or deliverer. Joshua is thus an important name typologically. It prefigured Christ and his work of salvation.

The character to be considered first is Hosea the prophet. The name is the English form of the Hebrew "Hoshea" and means salvation.³ Originally the name was given to the Son of Nun.⁴ He became a member of the Israelite army and was made military commander. On a defensive mission against the Amalekites, Hoshea successfully defeated his foes. To commemorate the event as well as to honor Hoshea, Moses modified his name to "Jehoshua" which means Jehovah is salvation. The name was later shortened to "Joshua."⁵

Centuries later, the original form of the name, "Hosea," was given to the son of Beerl, a possible "middle-class merchant" of the Northern Kingdom.⁶ Hosea became both a minor prophet and a tender loving husband. His wife was unfaithful, dissolute and stubborn.⁷ He sought therefore, to rescue her from her sorry plight by offering her his forgiveness, love and tenderness. Repeatedly, he appealed to her to return to the security of their relationship, but set in her wayward life, she always refused.

Besides, Hosea was a prophet of truth and reproof. Israel, like

³Merrill C. Tenney et al., eds., "Joshua," The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, by J. Barton Payne (1967; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 450.

⁴Num. 13:8; Deut. 32:44. ⁵Tenney et al., eds.

⁶Ibid., "Hosea," . . . by Roland Kenneth Harrison, p. 362.

⁷Vincent, p. 17.

his wife, was at the time in a cesspool of sin. It indulged itself in rampant idolatry and exploitation, in drunkenness and falsehood and in adultery and ignorance (Hos. 4-8). Uncompromising, Hosea warned the nation against its alliance with sin and called its attention to God's plan to punish unless it repents. Meanwhile, he made it clear that God was loving and forgiving and that he was ever ready to pardon on its repentance. Should they repent, he would save and deliver both from their sins and from his wrath.

By this reproof of sin and offering of forgiveness, Hosea was actually offering Israel salvation. If they repent and accept God's offer, they would be saved from their sins and from God's wrath. In this respect, his name and office typify Christ's.

Moreover, another person who bore the name is the high priest Joshua (Jeshua).⁸ He returned with Zerubbabel from Babylonian captivity and was seen in a vision by Zechariah the prophet. In the vision, he "appears in court before God" in filthy garments and under accusation by Satan.⁹ In an inauguration ceremony, he is charged by an angel to administer and to officiate the priestly office. This is followed by the announcement that he should be a "symbol" of the atoning gift. He is called God's "Servant the Branch" (Zec. 3:8). As priest, he was to represent the people before God in making the various sin offerings and to mediate between them and him through his intercession. He was to bring together the people and God for fellowship.

In this ministry of atonement and intercession, Joshua was providing salvation for Israel. By offering up the various sin offerings,

⁸Ezra 2:2; Zec. 3:1ff. ⁹Vincent, p. 16.

he was thereby procuring cleansing and pardon for the people. On the other side, his intercession not only secured the favors and blessings of God but also mitigated his anger and his wrath. In this respect, he also typifies Christ.

The last and famous of all to bear the name "Joshua" is the son of Nun referred to earlier. Joshua was captain and military commander in Israel. He was described as "servant" "of the Lord's host."¹⁰ He led Israel into the promised land, winning battle after battle and conquering all the land. Indeed, he was a deliverer and a saviour. In these positions, he led his people both in the confrontation with evil and in the defeat of its agents. He fought and subdued the evil of paganism as well as its perpetrators. As such he typifies Christ in his military confrontation with sin.¹¹

Moreover, both Christ and Paul agree that the objective of his miraculous condescension is chiefly to liberate sinners. Jesus teaches that he came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" and thus he labors to save those who are "lost."¹² Similarly, Paul contends that Christ was "sent forth His Son born of a woman, . . ." and thus "came" not only "to save sinners" among who he was chief, but "in order that he might redeem those who were under the Law, . . ."¹³

The idea of deliverance from sin however, is asserted by other miracles. According to Jesus, his crucifixion or suffering on the cross

¹⁰Jos. 5:14ff. ¹¹Cf. Vincent.

¹²Mat. 9:13, AV; Lu. 19:10.

¹³Gal. 4:4, 5; I Tim. 1:15.

is a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Isaiah had prophesied that Christ would suffer for the "transgression of my people. . ." and for the satisfaction of his Father.¹⁴ Thus, Jesus endeavors to teach his disciples that his crucifixion or suffering is necessary in order that atonement may be made for the sins of the world.¹⁵ Also, the Baptist and Paul maintain the same view. The Baptist announces that Christ is the divine Lamb "who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). From his perspective, Paul likewise proclaims that Christ is the Lamb who suffered and "died for our sins according to the Scriptures."¹⁶ Moreover, he interprets the miracle of the resurrection as evidence of deliverance from sin. For the Corinthians, it is assurance of their own freedom from sin; while for the Romans, it is their "justification" or righteousness before God.¹⁷

Finally, this concept of deliverance from sin is very clearly taught by both Testaments. In the Old Testament, it is extensively prefigured. The levitical office administered the ceremonial rite of sin offerings which were designed to effect absolution from sin through atonement.¹⁸ The prophetic office was the agency responsible for disseminating divine truth as well as reproof. It thus, promoted both personal abandonment of sin and divine pardon for its guilt and penalty.¹⁹ Though

¹⁴Isa. 53:4, 5, 8, 11. ¹⁵Lu. 24:26ff, 46ff.

¹⁶I Cor. 15:3. ¹⁷I Cor. 15:17; Rom. 4:25.

¹⁸Lev. 1-7.

¹⁹Madeleine S. Miller and J. Lane Miller, "Prophets," Harper's Bible Dictionary (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 582; L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology (1941; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 388.

in a different manner, the kingly office had a similar intent. It provided protection and deliverance from political and civil evils, evils such as aggression, bondage and internal disorder.

In the New Testament, the concept is prominently supported. It constitutes the chief concern of the various writers and spokesmen whose burden consists of promoting the realization of man's redemption. The burden or teaching of these men is reminiscent of the Old Testament economy. It associates deliverance from sin with the three elements of truth, sacrifice and power. The first of these elements, truth, provides a clear motive or an appeal to forsake sin. It promotes a real and proper understanding of God, his will and sin and leads naturally to a personal renunciation and abandonment of sins. Peter thus, calls upon his huge audiences in the Book of Acts to "repent" and receive "forgiveness [for their] sins."²⁰ The beloved John reminds his "little children" that he is instructing them in the truth in order that they "may not sin."²¹ Also, Christ the very truth himself calls upon the recipients of his goodness and message to discontinue their sinful habits because as repentance leads to blessing and mercy, so sinful practices would bring again misery and sorrow.²²

On the other hand, sacrifice provides the remedy for sins. It procures pardon, cleansing and acceptance. The Baptist announces that Christ the "Lamb of God" "takes away the sin of the world."²³ Paul

²⁰ Acts 2:14-37, 38f; 3:11-18; 19, 20-4:1f.

²¹ I Jn. 2:1, 12. ²² Jn. 5:14; 8:11.

²³ Jn. 1:29, 36.

declares that "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" and that he "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil age, . . ."²⁴ The writer of the Hebrews explains that "he has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26). The Apocalyptist John indicates that it is the "Lamb" who "was slain and has redeemed us to God by his blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation, . . ."²⁵ Again, he exclaims that it is he who has " . . . washed us from our sins in his own blood, . . ." (1:5, AV). He is the sacrificial lamb, the price of sin.

Lastly, the element of "power" provides the assurance that there is immediate and ultimate freedom from evil. Christ claims that "all authority has been given him in heaven and on earth."²⁶ Consequently, he has "authority on earth to forgive sins."²⁷ He gives to "the twelve" "power and authority over all demons, and . . . diseases."²⁸ He saves the disciples from the peril of the sea, many from the torture and misery of physical suffering and promises to save the "elect" from the "great tribulation."²⁹ Hence, from the application of these three elements, it is clear that the New Testament also emphasizes the concept of deliverance from sin.

Moreover, the biblical study indicates that miracles reveal salvation as deliverance from darkness. Simeon testifies that the Incarnation is a light of revelation to the Gentiles (Lu. 2:32). Also, Christ

²⁴Rom. 5:8; Gal. 1:4; Cf. Eph. 5:2. ²⁵Rev. 5:9, AV.

²⁶Mat. 28:18. ²⁷Mk. 2:5, 10. ²⁸Lu. 9:1.

²⁹Mat. 8:25; 9:21; 24:21, 22.

himself teaches that his gift of sight to the blind symbolizes his work of enlightenment and spiritual truth to the world.³⁰ Although limited in reference, the significance of these expressions must be fully realized. They are not only the teachings of God's servants; they are the teachings of his Son--Truth Himself. Besides, the teachings are sown in the fertile soil of history which makes an important distinction between light and darkness.

The Jews had always regarded darkness as moral and spiritual bondage. They regarded it as sin, evil and wickedness.³¹ They pronounced it as "woe," "punishment" and judgment.³² Added to these, darkness was judged as a state of intellectual demerit in that it was viewed as ignorance, lack of perception or blindness and moral baseness.³³ On the other side, "light" was regarded as liberation. It was regarded as a state of holiness and goodness, a state of blessedness and piety.³⁴ It was viewed as righteousness and salvation,³⁵ as truth and direction.

³⁰Jn. 9:5; 3:19, 20; 8:12; 12:35; See instances of the gift of sight--Jn. 9:6-7; Mat. 9:27ff; 11:5; Lu. 7:21; Mat. 15:31; 20:29ff; Cf. Mk. 10:46ff; Lu. 18:35ff.

³¹See Mat. 4:16; Jn. 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35; Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:11; Isa. 5:20.

³²W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, I (1940; rpt. Westwood, N~~ew~~/J~~ersey~~/; Fleming H. Revell Company, 1962), p. 268; Miller and Miller, p. 127; See also II Sam. 22:29; Job 18:18; Psa. 88:6; Mat. 8:12; II Pet. 2:17; Jude 13.

³³Vine; See also Rom. 2:19; Acts 13:11; Isa. 42:7; Psa. 82:5.

³⁴J. D. Douglas et al., eds., "Light," The New Bible Dictionary, by E. E. Ellis (1962; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 739; See I Tim. 4:16; Lu. 16:8; Jn. 3:19ff; 12:36; Col. 1:12; I Thessa. 5:5.

³⁵Vine II, p. 340; See I Pet. 2:9; Rom. 13:12; II Cor. 2:14, 15; Jn. 2:9, 10.

This "ethical dualism"³⁶ mushroomed and acquired existential significance. A life of suffering and misery was looked upon as darkness. A godless and indulgent lifestyle³⁷ as well as a lack of divine knowledge was also considered darkness. Such a life needed enlightenment, the divine truth which delivers from darkness and its evil. It needed the liberating and transforming power of the logos, the light which "enlightens every man" (Jn. 1:9). It was on this basis, that Simeon as well as Christ made their respective declaration--salvation is spiritual enlightenment. It is deliverance from darkness.

Finally, the biblical study points out that miracles reveal salvation as deliverance from death. Christ claims that the Lazarus' miracle symbolizes deliverance for the spiritual dead and "the dead in Christ." The same principle is highlighted in the miracle of his own resurrection. Here he surrenders his life and summons it again (Jn. 10:15), thus defeating death.³⁸ The message then consists of the provision of life for the spiritual dead and "the dead in Christ."³⁹ The former is spiritual life and the latter eternal.

The basis for this divine action--the provision of life or deliverance from death--consists of two important factors. One is the spiritual condition of man, defined by Christ and Paul. Jesus teaches that the men of the world are "dead."⁴⁰ They are preoccupied with temporal things

³⁶Douglas et al. ed. ³⁷Mat. 4:16; Jn. 3:19, 20.

³⁸Heb. 2:14, 15. ³⁹I Thessa. 4:16.

⁴⁰See Mat. 8:22; Lu. 9:60.

and have no interest nor concern for the "kingdom of grace."⁴¹ Also, Paul teaches that they are "dead in . . . trespasses and sins, . . ."⁴² They are devoted to the aspirations, values, and life-styles of a temporal world, ignoring entirely the things of the spirit.

The result of this spiritual insensitivity and rebellion is divine isolation and personal misery. Man is cut off from God who is the source of life and happiness and is in desperate need of help. Jesus and other New Testament writers thus show that such a help or deliverance is available to him. He teaches that he is the "life" of men, that he has come in order that they "might have life, . . . abundantly" and that they "should not perish, . . ."⁴³ John the Beloved also teaches that believers "have passed out of death into life, and that they have the assurance that commitment to the Son means life and not death."⁴⁴ In emphasis of this truth, Paul on the other hand, rejoices that God has "made us alive together with Christ . . ." by his grace.⁴⁵

Secondly, the divine action of deliverance from death is based on the severe and perpetual nature of ultimate or eternal death. Eternal death is "regarded as the culmination and completion of spiritual death."⁴⁶ It is defined in the New Testament as the "second death."⁴⁷

⁴¹Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1961; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 913f; Albert Barnes, Barnes' Notes on the New Testament (1962; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1968), p. 39f; See Mat. 8:22.

⁴²Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13. ⁴³Jn. 11:25; 10:10; 3:16.

⁴⁴I Jn. 3:14; 5:12. ⁴⁵Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13.

⁴⁶Berkhof, p. 261. ⁴⁷Rev. 21:8.

The nature of this death is a dreadful and awful conception. It is a state and experience of irreversible alienation, misery and affliction.⁴⁸ It is a place where the wicked are consigned eternally with a final and merciless dismissal: " . . . depart from Me, . . ."⁴⁹ Thus, it is a place of the condemned, of evil forces and agents.⁵⁰ It is a place of fire and brimstone,⁵¹ a place of constant punishment and torment.⁵²

Aware of this horrible and terrifying experience, God provided deliverance. Paul proclaims that for believers Christ has "abolished death and brought life and immortality . . . through the gospel, . . ."⁵³ He made it possible that "the dead in Christ shall rise . . ." and " . . . never see death."⁵⁴ He has provided an important alternative--an alternative of faith and life. On this basis, there is assurance. God not only "will . . . give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you" but you "'shall not be hurt by the second death.'"⁵⁵

Miracles Signal the Advent and Dispensation of Salvation

More than any other single element, the miracles associated with

⁴⁸H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology, II (1941; rpt. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1947), p. 95.

⁴⁹Mat. 25:41. ⁵⁰Mat. 25:41; Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8.

⁵¹Rev. 20:14, 15; 21:8; Mat. 13:42.

⁵²Jn. 3:16, 36; Mat. 25:46; Lu. 16:23, 24.

⁵³II Tim. 1:10; Cf. I Cor. 15:21, 22.

⁵⁴I Thessa. 4:16; Cf. Jn. 5:28, 29; 8:51.

⁵⁵Rom. 8:11; Rev. 2:11; 20:6.

Christ signal the advent and dispensation of salvation. They conform to the long-standing Jewish belief that supernatural deeds or miracles would accompany the ministry of Messiah. Like Moses, Joshua and Elijah,⁵⁶ he would perform miraculous deeds, signifying his debut and purpose. He would deliver the poor and oppressed in Israel, the blind and incapacitated, the sick and the demented.⁵⁷ He would deliver Israel from her enemies whom he would destroy and restore and establish her both as a nation and as his kingdom.⁵⁸ Commitment to this belief survived until the time of Christ when it surfaced intermittently. The Jews repeatedly called upon Christ for signs as the official means of determining whether he was indeed the Messiah.⁵⁹

Apart from conforming to Jewish belief, the miraculous deeds of Christ announce and proclaim the promised Messiah as the agent of salvation. He is introduced as the Saviour of his people and as Saviour from sins.⁶⁰ He is proclaimed as "the one who is to come, . . . ," who liberates the poor and oppressed and possesses immense supernatural power over evil and its agent.⁶¹ In addition, he is proclaimed as the one who

⁵⁶Moses--Acts 7:36; Cf. Ex. 7:3; 4:1-10; 7-11, 12, 14, 16, 17ff; Joshua--10:12-13; Elijah--II Kings 4:1ff, 18ff, 38ff; 5:1ff; 6:1ff.

⁵⁷Isa. 35:1f; 61:1-3; Cf. Lu. 2:51-53; 4:18-19.

⁵⁸Psa. 106:10; Joel 3:2-17; Isa. 9:4; Amos 9:11-15; Zec. 9:9-10; 14:9.

⁵⁹Mat. 12:38; 16:1f; Cf. Mk. 8:11f; Lu. 11:16; Jn. 3:21; 6:30; 14:11.

⁶⁰Mat. 1:21; Lu. 2:11.

⁶¹Mat. 11:3-6, RSV.; 20:24; Jn. 11:27, 42.

has met the national and official standard for messianic acceptance,⁶² but unfortunately he is rejected.⁶³

Nevertheless, his miracles constitute an important means whereby his saving mission is apprehended, admired and acclaimed. He is recognized as "the horn" and "prophet of salvation,"⁶⁴ the "salvation" of "revelation to the Gentiles," and the ultimate deliverer of Israel.⁶⁵ In nationalistic terms, he is described and regarded as "the consolation . . ." and "redemption of Israel,"⁶⁶ and is perceived and acclaimed the national expected Saviour or Messiah.⁶⁷ As such, he is proclaimed the agent of personal salvation as well.⁶⁸

Finally, this emphasis by miracles--that the dispensation of salvation has come--is reverberated by Scripture. At the beginning of their public ministry, both the Baptist and Jesus proclaim that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand."⁶⁹ Adding to this, Jesus teaches that he "'did not come to call the righteous, but sinners'" and thus his work is "to seek and save" those who are lost.⁷⁰ Paul also teaches that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, . . ." and that consequently, "now is 'the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation.'"⁷¹

Miracles Reveal the Author and Means of Salvation

⁶²Jn. 10:37-38. ⁶³Mat. 11:20-24; 13:53-58; Jn. 11:46.

⁶⁴Lu. 1:69, 76, 77. ⁶⁵Lu. 2:30-32, RSV. ⁶⁶Lu. 2:35-38.

⁶⁷Jn. 6:14; Lu. 19:37-38; Cf. Mat. 21:1-9; Mk. 11:1-10.

⁶⁸Lu. 2:34b-35. ⁶⁹Mat. 3:2; 4:17. ⁷⁰Mat. 9:13; Lu. 19:10.

⁷¹I Tim. 1:15; II Cor. 6:2; See also Gal. 4:4.

The work of salvation itself is perhaps no greater than the work of creation where deity is concerned. As such it may require no extra energy on God's part. To the mind of the Jew however, acquainted as it was with the rigors and evil of his world, salvation is not only an imperative experience, it is a costly proposition. No human instrument could procure and maintain it, as history so readily agrees. Instead, it requires another instrument whose office and resource are far superior and thus is well capable of ensuring salvation. This instrument is here described as the author and means of salvation.

The author or sponsor of salvation is none other than God himself. He is so identified by the explicit and implicit testimony of several miracles. Explicitly, he is credited with some very important miracles. He is credited with the act of effecting the incarnation of Christ,⁷² the events of the crucifixion and resurrection and with the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁷³ Jesus himself proclaims him as the one who initiates his miraculous ministry and who determines and directs it.⁷⁴ Also, he is regarded by Nicodemus as the one who supports the work of Christ. He indicates that "no man can do these signs that [Christ] does unless God is with him" (Jn. 3:2).

Secondly, the sponsorship of God is suggested by attributes characteristic of his nature. The "mighty works" of Christ are a display of his supernatural power. The cure of illnesses and diseases⁷⁵ long

⁷²Lu. 1:35; Cf. vv. 68-69; 2:29-30.

⁷³Acts 2:17, 23, 32; Cf. 3:15, 18; 2:11. ⁷⁴Jn. 5:17, 20; 9:3.

⁷⁵See Jn. 5:5-16; 9:1-7; Mat. 9:1-8, 18-26, 27-31.

abandoned by physicians as incurable are symbolic of his mighty power and holiness.⁷⁶ The control and ordering of demonic forces and natural elements show clearly his supreme and immense power.⁷⁷

At the same time, the miracles are a revelation of his infinite love for mankind. Deliverance from demon-possession, infirmity, blindness, grief and other ailments and disasters⁷⁸ attest to a heart of great compassion and mercy.⁷⁹ Equally, the signs and works of Christ declare the divine properties of light and life. The gift of sight to the blind⁸⁰ signifies an expression of the light so characteristic of divinity.⁸¹ His restoration of physical life to the dead⁸² symbolizes the very life of deity, the life which has no beginning and no end.⁸³

⁷⁶Jere. 32:17; Psa. 115:3; Gen. 17:1; Ex. 6:3; Mat. 19:26; Eph. 3:20, 21; Rev. 1:8; I Pet. 1:2, 16; Heb. 13:12, 13. See Wiley, I (1949), pp. 349, 375ff.

⁷⁷Karl Rahner, ed., "Power," Encyclopedia of Theology, by Klaus Hemmerle (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. 1263; W. T. Purkiser et al., ed., Exploring Our Christian Faith (1960; rpt. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press . . . 1968), p. 132; See also Mat. 8:23-27, 23-34; 9:32-34.

⁷⁸See Acts 8:6-7; Mk. 3:9-12; Jn. 5:5-16; 9:7; Mk. 7:11-17; Jn. 11:43-45.

⁷⁹Jn. 3:16; See Wiley I, p. 378ff; Berkhof, p. 72; Merrill C. Tenney and Steven Barabas, eds., "Love," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, III, by G. B. Funderburk (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 990f.

⁸⁰Jn. 9:3-7; Mat. 9:27-3; Mk. 8:22-26.

⁸¹Wiley I, p. 316ff; See I Jn. 1:5; Ja. 1:17; I Tim. 6:16.

⁸²Jn. 11:43-45; Lu. 7:11-17; Mk. 5:35-43.

⁸³Jn. 1:4; 6:57, 58; See Wiley I, p. 314ff.

This message of divine involvement and sponsorship is both historically and Scripturally supported. Historically, God is known for his dramatic saving work. His deliverance of Moses and the people of Israel from Pharaoh and his army, his work of conquest and victory for Joshua and the twelve tribes, his successive defeats of the enemies of David and his nation all exemplify instances of his supernatural involvement in the provision of salvation for mankind.

Similarly, from the perspective of Scripture, divine involvement is most certainly affirmed. The Bible shows that, before the foundation of the world, God conceived both the idea and plan of salvation. There he chose the saints according to his foreknowledge and foreordained them unto salvation.⁸⁴ From there he "sent forth" his Son whom he "gave" to deliver men from damnation and to provide them with salvation and eternal life.⁸⁵ Also, the Bible claims that God himself is concerned about, and executes his work of salvation. He does not wish for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. He "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."⁸⁶

Finally, this sponsorship of salvation by deity signifies an important guarantee. It provides assurance of the availability and adequacy of the necessary means. Now, salvation could be attained through divine mercy and supernatural power. No force or foe could obstruct the outworking of God's intension and plan. He is well able to save from the penalty of sin, its bondage and its corruption. As such,

⁸⁴Eph. 1:4, 5; I Pet. 1:2. ⁸⁵Gal. 4:4; Jn. 3:16, 17.

⁸⁶II Pet. 3:9; I Tim. 2:3f.

he is not only the sponsor, he is the very means by which salvation may be acquired and appropriated.

Miracles Are the Efficient Means of Redemption

The divine decision to resolve the sin problem consists indeed not only in the revelation of the redemptive plan but equally in its implementation. The plan calls for further divine action which would both conquer sin and provide salvation. This type of action obviously entails a major undertaking and involves fundamental steps. The action is evidently of an efficient mode. It provides the redemptive agent, executes the atoning act and defeats the enemies of redemption. These basal activities are entirely the work of miracles. They are effected through the classical miracles of the incarnation, the crucifixion and the resurrection.

The task of the incarnation⁸⁷ consists mainly in the provision of the redemptive agent. The divine-human figure is introduced and characterized as Saviour. He is "Jesus" the Lord who will "save."⁸⁸ Thus,

⁸⁷J. I. Packer provides a helpful definition and explanation of the word and concept of "Incarnation." He explains that "neither the noun 'incarnation' nor the adjective 'incarnate' is biblical, but the Greek equivalent [en sarki] of [the] Lat. in carne (. . . 'in flesh') is found in some important New Testament statements about the person and work of Christ. Thus the hymn quoted in I Tim. iii.16 speaks of 'he who was manifested in the flesh.' . . . John ascribes to the Spirit of anti-Christ any denial that Jesus Christ is 'come in the flesh' (1 Jn. iv.2; 2 Jn. 7). Paul says that Christ did his reconciling work 'in the body of his flesh' (Col. i.22, Eph. ii.15), and that by sending His son 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' God 'condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom. viii.3). Peter speaks of Christ's dying for us 'in the flesh' (sarki; dative reference: 1 Pet. iii.18, iv.1). All these texts are enforcing from different angles the same truth: that it is precisely by coming and dying 'in the flesh' that Christ secured our salvation. Theology calls His coming the incarnation, and his dying the atonement."--Douglas, pp. 557-558.

⁸⁸Lu. 1:31; Mat. 1:21.

he is "salvation" and the "horn of salvation."⁸⁹ As Logos he is described as saving truth. As such he is the "light of the world."⁹⁰ He is the "light of revelation."⁹¹ He is the "truth" that makes men free and the "light of life."⁹²

Also, this theanthropic⁹³ being is proclaimed as deliverer. He delivers from the curse of the law,⁹⁴ from the bondage and fear of death⁹⁵ and from the enemies of the kingdom.⁹⁶ Besides, as the creator condescended, he is rightly conceived as life. He is the "bread of life" from heaven⁹⁷ and the living water which springs "up to eternal life."⁹⁸ He is the restorer and preserver of life, the life-giving Saviour.⁹⁹

As Saviour, the Son of Man is declared the "mediator . . . between God and men."¹⁰⁰ He is the only "way" by which perdition may be avoided.¹⁰¹ His is the only "name" by which salvation may be obtained.¹⁰² He is the "door" to salvation and the "vine" of spiritual energy.¹⁰³ He is the bearer of the "gospel of God," the "offering for sin" and the

⁸⁹Lu. 2:30; 1:69. ⁹⁰Jn. 9:5; 12:46. ⁹¹Lu. 2:32.

⁹²Jn. 8:32, 12.

⁹³William G. J. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, II (1888; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), p. 261ff.

⁹⁴Gal. 4:4, 5. ⁹⁵Heb. 2:14, 15. ⁹⁶Lu. 1:71.

⁹⁷Jn. 6:31; Cf. vv. 33, 41, 48, 58. ⁹⁸Jn. 4:10ff; 7:37.

⁹⁹Jn. 11:25, 27. ¹⁰⁰See I Tim. 2:5.

¹⁰¹Jn. 3:16, 17, 36; 14:5, 6. ¹⁰²Acts 4:12.

¹⁰³Jn. 10:9, Cf. vv. 1-7; 15:1ff.

Messiah and ruler of his kingdom.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, the role of the crucifixion involves the execution of the work of atonement. The event, brutal and ignominious as it was, represents the decree and action of deity. It is a decision made in eternity and foreordained as a divine requirement in the plan of redemption.¹⁰⁵ Christ must become the Lamb of God and by God's will and direction, be slain by sinful men for the sins of the world. This plan is later revealed by Moses, the prophets and the psalmists¹⁰⁶ who in varying expressions all emphasize the concepts of suffering, death and glory. During his prophetic ministry, Christ himself predicts the physical factors of his crucifixion and resurrection.¹⁰⁷ After the resurrection, he is forced to explain the plan theologically. He indicates to the disciples that both his crucifixion and resurrection exhibit the plan of God to which Moses, the prophets and the psalmists gave testimony.¹⁰⁸ The plan requires his suffering for sinful humanity as well as victory over the enemy of death.¹⁰⁹ This doctrinal perspective later became the basic message of the New Testament writers and spokesmen.¹¹⁰

Since the crucifixion was the decree of deity, it was only natural to describe the event as a divine undertaking. It is a divine undertaking

¹⁰⁴Rom. 1:1-3; 8:3; Lu. 1:32-33; See also I Jn. 2:1--where he is "advocate."

¹⁰⁵Acts 2:23. ¹⁰⁶Lu. 24:27,44.

¹⁰⁷Mat. 16:21; Cf. Mk. 8:31; 9:22. ¹⁰⁸Lu. 24:27, 44.

¹⁰⁹Lu. 24:26,46.

¹¹⁰Acts 2:24; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; Rom. 4:24.

not in the sense of a direct involvement as in the events of the incarnation and the crucifixion but by proxy, that, by the means of wicked men. God himself acted on the basis of his own character and plan, but in his action he utilized the hatred, rejection and cruelty of men. Realizing this, Peter thus declares the crucifixion as an act of deity. In his catalog of God's "mighty deeds"--the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the miracles of Christ's prophetic ministry, the resurrection and the ascension¹¹¹--he judiciously incorporated the event, not merely as a barbarous expression of "godless men" but as a supernatural and sovereign act of God.¹¹²

Relative to the work of atonement, the crucifixion meets a number of demands. First, the event provides expiation for sin. It provides purity and the removal of guilt. This process is loosely but definitely affirmed by New Testament writers. Paul, for example, refers to it when he affirms that Christ "gave Himself for our sins, . . ."¹¹³ and again, that he "died for our sins . . ."¹¹⁴ In similar language, Peter declares that he "died for sins once for all, . . ."¹¹⁵ The writer to the Hebrews maintains that "He offered up Himself" "for the sins of the people, . . ." and that his self-offering is "one sacrifice for sins for all time, . . ."¹¹⁶ The Baptist brings it closer to the point. He defines the sacrificial act as one which "takes away the sin of the world."¹¹⁷ In this perspective expiation meets the demand of holiness.

¹¹¹See Acts 2:11, 17-36. ¹¹²Acts 2:23. ¹¹³Gal. 1:3, 4.

¹¹⁴I Cor. 15:3. ¹¹⁵I Pet. 3:18. ¹¹⁶Heb. 7:27; 10:12.

¹¹⁷Jn. 1:29; See v. 36.

Concomitantly, the crucifixion is a work of propitiation.¹¹⁸

While it expiates the sins of the world, it simultaneously satisfies duty for violations of his laws. The execution event is of necessity an experience of excruciating suffering. Isaiah declares that Christ is "smitten of God, and afflicted. He was pierced through for our transgressions and . . . was crushed for our iniquities; . . ."¹¹⁹ In less vivid language, Peter indicates that he "bore our sins in His body on the cross, . . ."¹²⁰ Paul and the writer to the Hebrews proclaim the same message. They describe Christ as an "offering" or a "sacrifice."¹²¹ He is the lamb of God and consequently he has not only been slain but has suffered the agony of death, thereby providing the ransom for the justice of God.¹²²

Finally, the crucifixion represents a vicarious act. It is a substitutionary death submitted to "in the place"¹²³ of humanity and not merely on its behalf. New Testament evidence is not lacking. Paul asserts that God "delivered" up "his own Son" "for us all, . . ." Again, he maintains that Christ himself "died for us" and "for the ungodly."¹²⁴ He "lay his life down" for "his church, his sheep and his friends."¹²⁵

¹¹⁸See Purkiser et al. for a brief but helpful statement on "propitiation"--p. 247.

¹¹⁹Isa. 53:4, 5, 10. ¹²⁰I Pet. 2:24.

¹²¹Eph. 5:2, 25; Heb. 10:10, 12. ¹²²Mat. 20:28.

¹²³Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, III (1872; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), p. 475.

¹²⁴Rom. 8:32; 5:6, 8; Cf. Eph. 5:2.

¹²⁵Eph. 5:25; Jn. 10:15; 15:13; See Hodge, II, p. 549.

Peter, on the other hand, reveals that his death is not only substitutive, it is meritorious. Indeed, "Christ . . . died for sins once for all" but inasmuch as he is innocent and just, his suffering and death were submitted to for the sake of the guilty and the "unjust."¹²⁶

Finally, the resurrection is the supreme act of assurance. It provides victory and guarantee not only over sin and death but over their agent, the Devil. This is borne out by a number of factors. The event is an attestation of the conquest and control of death. It has not only effected the dethronement and abolition of death¹²⁷ but has acquired and secured "the keys" of its domain.¹²⁸ It is irrefutable evidence that in the risen Lord resides "all authority" "in heaven and on earth."¹²⁹

Also, the event is an immortal pledge of resurrection and life for believers. This is especially the burden of Paul. He teaches that the resurrection of Christ ensures the resurrection of "the dead in Christ"¹³⁰ because the God who raised Christ from the dead will also "give life to the mortal bodies" of the saints whether they be dead or alive. He further states that Christ did not only abolish death but created new "life and immortality" for the saints.¹³¹ Indeed, he is "the resurrection, and the life; . . ."¹³²

Moreover, the event is a pattern for the dead in Christ. According to V. C. Grounds, "the resurrected body of our Lord prophesies the nature of that future embodiment which believers will enjoy . . ."¹³³

¹²⁶I Pet. 3:18. ¹²⁷Rom. 6:9; II Tim. 1:10. ¹²⁸Rev. 1:8.

¹²⁹Mat. 28:18. ¹³⁰I Thessa. 4:16; I Cor. 15:12ff.

¹³¹II Tim. 1:10. ¹³²Jn. 11:25.

¹³³Fenney et al., eds., "Resurrection," by V. C. Grounds, p. 717.

It is a body that is "recognizably the same."¹³⁴ It is "no longer subject to space-time limitations"¹³⁵ but is "changed" and "glorified" and "adapted . . ." to a new sphere of existence.¹³⁶ In the words of the Beloved John--" . . . we shall be like Him, because we shall see him just as He is."¹³⁷

In addition, the event provides categorical evidence of pending universal judgment. Paul indicates that "by raising [Christ] from the dead" God thereby furnished proof "to all men" of his intention to judge the world.¹³⁸ The resurrection then is not merely a positive message; it is a negative means by which God displays both his wrath and power with which he will judge sin, its consequences and its agent.

Miracles Are Tools of Evangelism and Discipleship

The salvific design of deity also requires the propagation and appropriation of his redemptive message. The gospel of the kingdom must be proclaimed and men must be confronted with the personal and practical matters of choice and experience. They must have opportunity not only to hear and to respond but to appropriate the good news. Evidently, the miracles associated with Christ also make this realization possible.

First of all, they call upon men to accept God's offer of salvation. Men must repent, believe and receive eternal life. Christ himself

¹³⁴Lu. 24:36-43; Jn. 20:27. ¹³⁵Lu. 24:31; Jn. 20:19-26.

¹³⁶Mat. 22:30; I Cor. 6:13; 15:30-38, 51; Tenney ed. et al.

¹³⁷I Jn. 3:2; See Rom. 6:4, 5.

¹³⁸Acts 17:31; See Tenney ed. et al.

teaches that his miracles invite men to repentance. Their eradication of evil shows God's displeasure with sin and his readiness and power for personal and moral reformation. Their concern for the good of humanity suggests his divine love and mercy, and these are extended to the sinner.

Also, the supernatural character of his miracles suggests the work and presence of God himself who deserves man's greatest honor at all times. In close association, Christ teaches that his miracles constitute fair grounds for determining spiritual liability and destiny. Men may repent on the basis of his miracles and enter his kingdom. On the other side, refusal to accept their witness and message would lead naturally, not only to judgment but to ultimate damnation and death.

Furthermore, miracles invite men to believe the truth about Christ and to trust in him. They prove to mankind that he is the Son of God, the promised Messiah or Saviour of the world. They demonstrate that he is sovereign and supernatural in character and that he is love as well as truth. Likewise, they make undoubtedly clear his abhorrence of, and opposition to evil. He is the captain of a holy kingdom and is sent to invade and conquer the kingdom of evil.

Such characterization and description of mission are not only testimonial; they are evangelistic. Men who see and hear about the miracles of Christ must surely recognize and accept the obvious truth inherent in them. They must acknowledge them as divine evidence, both of his Messiahship and Saviourhood. Hence, Christ himself teaches that, on the basis of his miracles men must believe in him as Saviour.¹³⁹ They must trust him as God's appointed agent, having the means and authority to

¹³⁹Jn. 10:38; See v. 25; 14:11.

grant salvation.¹⁴⁰ The Evangelists hold a similar view. They teach that belief in Christ on the basis of his miracles is a prerequisite for God's special blessings and eternal life.

It is also evident that the miracles of Christ symbolize an invitation to life. Their life-giving dimension provides assurance of spiritual reformation and resurrection.¹⁴² Men could be transformed from their coldness of heart, mediocrity and dead legalism. They could be delivered from their indifference, spiritual isolation and death. On the other side, they could be free from the haunting anxiety concerning their ultimate destiny. They could have freedom, not only from spiritual death but from perpetual damnation and misery. This deliverance from death--both spiritual and eternal--means life. By the power of God, men could be born anew into the kingdom of life. They could recover God's energizing power to live, not only unfettered by sin and its agent but abundantly in fellowship and happiness with him.¹⁴³

Secondly, besides appealing to men to accept God's offer of salvation, miracles are shown as occasions for personal professions of faith and commitment. From various walks of life, many have come forth and

¹⁴⁰Mk. 2:5; Jn. 8:11.

¹⁴¹See Mat. 13:57-58; Cf. Mk. 6:4-6; Jn. 20:31; Also, note that several biblical interpreters hold this view. Marcus J. Priestler, "Sign and Response in the Fourth Gospel," McCormick Quarterly, 18 (1965), 18, points out that signs are "an open invitation to believe in Christ . . ." Vincent P. McCorry, "John and Miracle," America, 121 (1969), 312, agrees that "John urges the necessity of faith, faith with or without miracles." Also referring to the fourth gospel, Peter Riga, "Signs of Glory," Interpretation, 17 (1963), 468, declares that "the gospel as a whole was written to stimulate the faith of the hearers. . . ."

¹⁴²Jn. 11:25; Rom. 6:4-5. ¹⁴³Jn. 10:10; I Jn. 1:7.

embraced Christ's "kingdom built on faith."¹⁴⁴ These include civil and religious officials;¹⁴⁵ the once deformed and incapacitated;¹⁴⁶ households and friends¹⁴⁷ and many individuals.¹⁴⁸ These were all overwhelmed by the message and offering of salvation. God's truths of love, life, purity and presence--all appealed to the hearts of the lonely, the bereaved, the diseased and the alienated.

In addition, the miracles of Christ are instruments of discipleship. Their impact on the disciple's devotion is outstanding. Apart from contributing to their initial call, they led to the development of a dynamic personal relationship with Christ.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the crucifixion demoralized and disstabilized the band. To them, it was a tragedy, a bitter disappointment. It meant the end of Christ and consequently their hopes. This however, was a mistake. The resurrection followed and besides amazing them, it wrought a remarkable transformation in their lives. Their messianic outlook was radically changed, their piety intensified, their mission clarified and their ministry empowered. They soon became a force to be reckoned with, and a movement of mass evangelism and "social change" occurred.

Summary

In recapitulating this chapter, it must be remembered that it is essentially theological in nature. It indicates that the soteriological

¹⁴⁴ Ernest O. Hauser, "Believest Thou This?," Readers' Digest, 114 (1979), 45.

¹⁴⁵ Jn. 3:2; 7:50; 19:36; 4:46, 53. ¹⁴⁶ Jn. 5:14; 9:3ff, 36.

¹⁴⁷ Jn. 4:53; 11:3, 5, 39-40, 45. ¹⁴⁸ Jn. 11:45. ¹⁴⁹ Jn. 2:11.

design of miracle is manifold. It serves as a medium of redemptive truth, revealing the nature, dispensation and sponsorship of salvation. It also serves to implement the redemptive plan by which they not only introduce the agent but purchase salvation and assurance for mankind. It serves also as tools of evangelism and discipleship. It invites men to accept God's offer of salvation as well as his Lordship.

CONCLUSIONS

The study lends itself to two outstanding conclusions. First of all, it is rather evident that diety expects the subject of miracles to be given a place of prominence in the doctrine and message of salvation. Consistently and strategically, God has employed miracles to make salvation and fellowship actual realities. They have been used to call and establish relationship with great leaders, men like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, the Twelve and the Apostle Paul. They have served as a key factor in God's attempt and success in establishing the theocracy of Israel. Most significantly, it is by miracle that he has provided and ensured ultimate salvation for mankind. His provision of an acceptable agent, the sacrifice of his Son and his conquest of death and evil involve such notable and supernatural deeds as the incarnation, the crucifixion and the resurrection.

These then are indispensable and universal miracles and with the more particular ones, form an integral part of the doctrine of soteriology.

On the basis of this evidence, the writer contends that any serious attempt to treat the doctrine of salvation must definitely consider the role of miracles to be crucial. They must be seen in their true perspective; they must be seen as instruments of God's saving plan, as instruments of his saving truth and as a mighty weapon against evil. To deny them this divinely appointed role is to deny the provision and availability of salvation. It is through them that the Saviour is provided, identified and revealed. According to Luke, his sacrificial

death, his resurrection and victory over death are all God's "mighty deeds." They are his actions of provision and salvation.

It is important then, that their Scriptural place of prominence be not only apprehended but proclaimed. Unlike the modern tendency of form criticism to delete and to denounce the subject, miracles must be re-examined with a view to articulate their true and enormous theological significance. Bible scholars, theologians and exegetes must view them not a posteriori but a priori. For while they are events that involve both God and man, they are absolutely the acts and expressions of God, designed to fulfill his will to restore all things to its pristine state. As such, they must be viewed as an important part of the gospel message. They are expressions not only of his plan and will to save mankind but of his character and being. Thus, they show that he is holy, perfect, true, loving and supernatural.

Finally, the writer believes that miracles ought to play an important role in the life and conduct of the Church. They proclaim a powerful and relevant message. They offer deliverance and hope to the wretched and despairing sinner. In them, he finds love, forgiveness and comfort. He finds life, and purity as well as strength.

Also, they are a means of instruction and support for the saints. From them believers learn of the security and power that are theirs in God. They learn of his cleansing and holiness and of his abhorrence of evil. In them they are promised victory and assurance; they are promised grace and life; and they are promised truth and liberty.

This beautiful message is entitled to a full and free expression. It must be articulated by Bible scholars, proclaimed and taught in the local Church, incorporated in dogmatics as well as theology and made a

part of the devotional literature and exercise of the saints. Only in this manner will the ultimate design of God be served.

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