

The Apostle Paul and Justin Martyr on the Miraculous: A Comparison of Appeals to Authority

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THE SUBJECT OF MIRACLES has too often been ignored or overlooked in scholarly discussions of early Christianity.¹ This article focuses on the writings of Paul and Justin Martyr, in part because these authors exemplify points of both continuity and development from the writings of the NT to the early patristic literature.² Although these authors employ different genres,³ there is no reason to suspect that either author's choice(s) of genre has necessarily limited what he wished to write concerning the miraculous. Part of what is to be offered here is a subtle argument that Paul and Justin did, in fact, have

¹ With S. Schreiber, *Paulus als Wundertäter: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und den authentischen Paulusbriefen* (BZNW 79 [Berlin/New York 1996: hereafter SCHREIBER]) 161–165, on Paul: “Die Frage nach Wundertätigkeit und Wunderverständnis des Paulus hat in der exegetischen Forschung bislang kein großes Interesse gefunden” (161).

² The idea for this article began with the author's study of Mark 16.9–20, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (Tübingen 2000) 271–279, 315–321. The primary purpose of this earlier work is to offer comparative material for the interpretation of Mark 16.9–20. This article offers a thorough revision, augmentation, and reorganization of materials pertaining to Paul and Justin and highlights a significant shift in the discussion of miracles as illustrated by representative figures of the first (Paul) and second (Justin) centuries. The author's thanks are due to Troy W. Martin, Chris P. Evans, and the anonymous readers of *GRBS*, whose feedback on this article has helped to sharpen the arguments offered here.

³ Paul's undisputed letters are the earliest surviving Christian letters. Justin's *Dialogue* is the earliest such writing by a Christian. Moreover, Justin's *First Apology* is one of the earliest Christian apologies (after those by Quadratus and Aristides).

a substantial awareness and interest in the miraculous.⁴ If this is true, then, whether explicitly or implicitly, it is an oversimplification to interpret Paul solely as a herald of the word of the gospel, or Justin only as a rationally-minded apologist.

The analysis to follow builds upon a seminal essay by Paul Achtemeier,⁵ as well as more recent analyses by Ramsay MacMullen,⁶ Bernd Kollmann,⁷ Stefan Schreiber,⁸ and others,⁹ and focuses on three questions: In what ways do Paul and Justin Martyr refer to miraculous phenomena? What common assumptions do these authors hold about the performing of miracles, especially with regard to appeals to authority? To what ends, or with what goals, do Paul and Justin refer, usually in passing, to the miraculous? The analysis begins with Paul and then considers the writings of Justin.

⁴ With C. J. Roetzel, *Paul: The Man and the Myth* (Columbia 1997) 164–165.

⁵ “Jesus and the Disciples as Miracle Workers in the Apocryphal New Testament,” in E. Schüssler Fiorenza, ed., *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity* (Notre Dame 1976) 149–186. Achtemeier offers a survey of non-Christian views of miracles and “the developing line of Christian apologetic with regard to miracles and miracle workers” in certain extracanonical Christian writings.

⁶ *Christianizing the Roman Empire A.D. 100–400* (New Haven/London 1984) esp. 25–42; “Conversion: A Historian’s View,” *SCent* 5 (1985–6) 67–81; “Two Types of Conversion to Early Christianity,” *VigChr* 37 (1983) 174–192. Cf. W. S. Babcock, “MacMullen on Conversion: A Response,” *SCent* 5 (1985–6) 82–89, and M. D. Jordan, “Philosophic ‘Conversion’ and Christian Conversion: A Gloss on Professor MacMullen,” 90–96. MacMullen emphasizes the importance of miracles to the spread of the Christian faith and discusses this motif in numerous texts of the first through fourth centuries. There is much to be said for MacMullen’s discussions, which in many respects constitute a resurrection of A. von Harnack’s (*Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* [Leipzig 1902]) thesis concerning the mission and expansion of early Christianity.

⁷ *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter: Studien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum* (Göttingen 1996). Kollmann’s important Habilitationsschrift offers a comprehensive study of miracles in early Christianity and the early Christian mission, with a particular interest in source-critical matters.

⁸ *Paulus*. Schreiber’s published dissertation is largely concerned with traditio-historical questions, comparing Paul’s own statements about miracles with depictions of Paul as a miracle-worker in the NT book of Acts.

⁹ See, e.g., the recent collection of essays in J. C. Cavadini, ed., *Miracles in Jewish and Christian Antiquity: Imagining Truth* (Notre Dame 1999).

I. Occasional references to the miraculous in Paul's writings

This article addresses only materials from Paul's undisputed writings, leaving for another time the equally intriguing material in the NT book of Acts on Paul as a miracle-worker. As a side note, and curiously, the Deutero-Paulines never mention the miracles of Paul, which is interesting from the standpoint of how Paul was (not) remembered in the early church. The passages, to be discussed in the following order, are 2 Cor 12.11–12; Gal 3.1–5; Rom 15.18–19; 1 Thess 1.5; 1 Cor 2.4–5; and 1 Cor 12.9–10, 28–30. These passages reflect most clearly the apostle's own conceptions of the miraculous, and especially of his own miracles.

1. *Paul, his opponents, and the Corinthians on miracles in 2 Corinthians*

In 2 Corinthians 10–13, Paul must defend his ministry and apostleship against the criticisms of certain Christian miracle-working apostles:

I have become a fool, but you forced me. Indeed, I should have been commended by you, for, compared with the super-apostles, I am not lacking in any way: the signs of an apostle (τὰ ... σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου) were performed among you with all endurance—signs and wonders and miracles. (2 Cor 12.11–12)

When Paul claims that “the signs of a [genuine] apostle were performed among” the Corinthians, he acknowledges that he lives up to the criterion of performing miracles offered by the rival apostles and that this criterion was apparently accepted *also* by many of the Corinthians. Such broad acceptance of this standard suggests that the phrase τὰ σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου was “a slogan” of Paul's opponents and that the criterion of 2 Cor 12.12a did not originate with the apostle himself.¹⁰ Paul's

¹⁰ With Kollmann (*supra* n.7) 328 (“ein Schlagwort”), and H. D. Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner “Apologie” 2 Korinther 10–13* (Tübingen 1972) 70–100, esp. 70–71; but against J. Jervell, “The Signs of an Apostle: Paul's Miracles,” in *The Unknown*

response to such a specific accusation points to his understanding of his opponents' position and, moreover, to their view of his claim to be a legitimate apostle.

Addressing the current situation in Corinth, Paul makes known his intent to "remove the occasion of those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about" (11.12b). In this last statement Paul acknowledges that the opponents boast of their ability to perform miracles, for, while the apostle states that he worked miracles among the Corinthians (ἐν ὑμῖν, 12.12), he also admits *the same* of the so-called super-apostles (12.11).

Paul also identifies his opponents as "Hebrews" (11.22), who, it is commonly alleged, denied Paul's ability to work miracles.¹¹ The reason Paul's capability as a wonder-worker was called into question is, as Jervell suggests, "the peculiar circumstance that he is an ailing miracle-worker, an ailing miraculous healer."¹² Responding to such an accusation, Paul offers the dual affirmation that, while he did perform the signs expected of a true apostle (12.11–12), the same δύνάμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ was with him in his affliction (12.9, cf. 11.16–12.10).

Accordingly, two different "narratives" or explanations concerning Paul as a (possible) miracle-worker can be ascertained

Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History (Minneapolis 1984: hereafter JERVELL) 77–95 and 169–172, who wonders (171 n.35), "Why cannot Paul himself have invented the label?" It is highly unlikely that Paul's opponents would have applied to themselves (but not to Paul!) a slogan that ultimately stemmed from Paul himself.

¹¹ See 2 Cor 10.1, 10; 11.15; cf. Kollmann (*supra* n.7) 323; D. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia 1986) 274–279.

¹² Jervell 94; he also observes, "The problem lies in convincing the Corinthians of the fact that it is also and precisely his weakness which belongs to the true life and mark of an apostle. Concretely, this means that the divine miraculous power is expressed in the weakness of the ailing apostle (2 Cor 12:8)"; cf. Jervell's comment elsewhere that "Diese Gaben wurden als Manifestationen des Geistes verstanden, aber der Apostel, durch den die Gemeinde den Gottesgeist empfing, war krank!": "Der schwache Charismatiker," in J. Friedrich et al., edd., *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann zum 70. Geburtstag* (Tübingen/Göttingen 1976) 185–198, at 194.

from 2 Corinthians 10–13: Paul’s opponents interpret the apostle’s bodily weakness as an indication that power to perform miracles could not have stemmed from Paul. Conversely, Paul combines the two elements of weakness and power, asserting that his status as a divinely-approved apostle is confirmed not only by the miracles, but also by the endurance Christ granted him in the midst of affliction.¹³ Although the super-apostles would be prepared to accept the former criterion, they apparently would have rejected the latter, and Paul’s response to their questioning of his apostolic status thus comprises much of 2 Corinthians 10–13.

2. *Paul’s “proof from experience” and the Galatian controversy*
(Gal 3.1–5)

In a different type of controversy from the one addressed in 2 Corinthians 10–13,¹⁴ Paul again mentions the miraculous when responding to “a different gospel” (Gal 1.6), which was more recently proclaimed to the Galatian churches since his departure from the region. To cite Jacob Jervell’s paraphrase, during Paul’s initial encounter with the Galatians, “the Spirit came upon the Galatians and by this means God worked miracles (ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις) (3:2 and 5).”¹⁵ At the beginning of this passage (3.1–2), the apostle reminds the Galatians of their first acquaintance with the gospel and pleads that they recall their reception of the Spirit at that time.¹⁶ Toward the end of the

¹³ With Jervell (*supra* n.12) 194–198.

¹⁴ On this point see H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia 1979) 1–9, and the discussion below; cf. Georgi (*supra* n.11) 27–82.

¹⁵ Jervell 93. Gal 3.1–5: ὁ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται, τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν, οἷς κατ’ ὀφθαλμοὺς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς προεγράφη ἐσταυρωμένος; τοῦτο μόνον θέλω μαθεῖν ἀφ’ ὑμῶν· ἐξ ἔργων νόμου τὸ πνεῦμα ἐλάβετε ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως; οὕτως ἀνόητοί ἐστε, ἐναρξάμενοι πνεύματι νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε; τοσαῦτα ἐπάθετε εἰκῆ; εἶ γε καὶ εἰκῆ. ὁ οὖν ἐπιχρησθῶν ὑμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις ἐν ὑμῖν, ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως.

¹⁶ As Betz observes (*supra* n.14: 131–132), “Paul, in a case of self-ironic exaggeration, makes use of this topos, reminding the Galatians of his initial efforts to proclaim the gospel of ‘Jesus Christ [the] crucified’ (Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐσταυρωμένος) to them.”

argument, he refers to “the one who grants the Spirit to you and is working miracles among you” (ὁ οὖν ἐπιχορηγῶν ὑμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις ἐν ὑμῖν, 3.5a). Accordingly, Paul assumes that the current wonder-working power mentioned in Gal 3.5 is analogous to what the Galatians experienced when Paul first preached among them.¹⁷

The formulation of Gal 3.5 gives rise to a related issue. The masculine participles ἐπιχορηγῶν and ἐνεργῶν cannot refer to the neuter noun “Spirit” (πνεῦμα 3.5, cf. 3.3). Likewise, God (ὁ θεός), which the participles could otherwise modify, is not an explicit subject in Gal 3.1–5. Thus, the most likely referent for “the one who grants the Spirit ... and works miracles among” the Galatians is Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, mentioned at the beginning of the argument in 3.1.¹⁸ Accordingly, in Gal 3.5a Paul depicts the exalted Christ as one whose presence among the Christian congregations was manifest at the time of their conversion (3.1–2) and whose continuing activity (3.5) was, and remains, evident in the working of miracles.

This allusion to Christ, who granted confirmation to Paul’s preaching and who continues to work miracles among the Galatians, may be understood in light of the apostle’s reminiscence toward the end of Romans 8 concerning Christ, who died, was raised, and who currently “intercedes on our behalf ” at the right hand of God.¹⁹ For Paul, then, the same glorified Christ, who prays for believers, not only sent the Spirit to authenticate the Galatians’ initial conversion experience with

¹⁷ Betz (*supra* n.14) 135 also notes, “‘Miracles’ (δυνάμεις) can be named as evidence for the fact that the Spirit is ‘at work’ (ἐνεργῶν) among them. Consequently, God must now be at work among them.”

¹⁸ Cf. the NRSV translation of Gal 3.5. As would follow from the argument offered above, the NRSV inaccurately offers God as the subject of the sentence: “Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you...?”

¹⁹ Rom 8.34: τίς ὁ κατακρινῶν; Χριστός [Ἰησοῦς] ὁ ἀποθανών, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐγεροθείς, ὃς καὶ ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.

the apostle, but also continues to grant miracles.²⁰ Such wonders should serve as a reminder that the Pauline gospel still has validity in the face of the law-oriented alternative that the apostle seeks to dismiss in Galatians.

3. *Reflection on his own ministry: Rom 15.18–19*

Toward the end of his letter to the faithful in Rome, Paul states that his working of miracles finds its purpose in “the obedience of the gentiles”:

οὐ γὰρ τολμήσω τι λαλεῖν ὧν οὐ κατειργάσατο Χριστὸς δι’ ἐμοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν ἐθνῶν, λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ, ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων, ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος [θεοῦ]· ὥστε με ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ κύκλῳ μέχρι τοῦ Ἰλλυρικοῦ πεπληρωκέναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ. (Rom 15.18–19)

According to Paul, his own preaching was accompanied by “signs and wonders” wherever he went.²¹ This miraculous assistance resulted in (ὥστε) his fulfilling his mission until the time he wrote to the congregations of Rome.

Paul’s bold declarations concerning miracles in 2 Cor 12.11–12, Gal 3.1–5, and Rom 15.18–19 may come as a surprise, since miracles receive relatively little emphasis elsewhere in his letters, and, moreover, “the author of the Pastoral letters ... does not describe Paul as a miracle-worker.”²² Necessary, then, is an explanation as to why Paul would offer such self-portraits in these three passages but not

²⁰ Against Schreiber 197, who denies that Paul derives significance from his having performed miracles: “Paulus spricht in Gal 3,5 nicht sein eigenes Wundertun, sondern wunderbare Phänomene in den Gemeinden in Galatien allgemein an.”

²¹ As Jervell 92 observes, “This activity in ‘word and deed’ is further interpreted as the εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ (‘gospel of Christ’), and is carried out from Jerusalem to Illyricum—thus *wherever Paul preached*. This can scarcely be construed other than as proclamation, which is regularly accompanied by miraculous deeds.”

²² Jervell 78. In the case of the Pastorals, Paul is remembered primarily as a teacher rather than a miracle-worker, a point of interest to the history of dogma and the development of Christian theology.

mention the miraculous more often in either these or his other writings.

The most likely explanation is: Attention devoted to Paul's own miracles tends to occur in proportion to the extent to which the apostle needed to defend himself. In a letter to the Philippians, written to acknowledge their gift to the imprisoned apostle (Phil 4.10), there is no need to mention the miraculous at all. Likewise, in 1 Cor 12.31b–13.12 Paul can hold up love (ἀγάπη) as the greatest ideal to be sought by the believer.²³ When Paul must address the problem of “a different gospel” (Gal 1.6), however, the first in a series of counter-arguments concerns the wonder-working power of Christ, who confirmed the apostle's preaching and continues to “work miracles among” them.²⁴

At another point, when the apostle confronts the charge that a sickly, miracle-producing apostle constitutes a contradiction in terms, Paul affirms that he meets the criterion of others—in that he does, indeed, perform τὰ σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου (2 Cor 12.12a)—and argues that he was able to endure sufferings by the same power of Christ. He offers such a statement before he is to visit the Corinthians for a third time (τρίτον, 12.14, 13.1) with the hope that they will recognize him as much more of an authoritative figure than his opponents were willing to concede. Likewise, in Rom 15.18–19 Paul writes the churches of Rome, whom he has never met, and affirms that “signs and wonders” and the “power of the Spirit” have always accompanied his ministry. Concerning this last claim in Romans, he appeals to a standard accepted by himself, his opponents, and the Corinthians in 2 Cor 12.11–12 that a legitimate apostle receives

²³ With A. Fridrichsen, *The Problem of Miracle in Primitive Christianity* (Minneapolis 1972) 137–147. Paul states that ἀγάπη, rather than, e.g., manifestations of prophecy, is the greatest ideal for these charismatically-inclined Corinthians, as well as for other believers.

²⁴ Gal 3.1–5, cf. 3.1–4.31. On the order and structure of Paul's arguments in Galatians, see Betz (*supra* n.14) 14–33, cf. 128–130.

authentication from Christ, who is also the subject of the apostle's preaching. Additionally, as will be discussed below, in the exhortations of 1 Thess 1.5 and 1 Cor 2.4, Paul simply alludes to supernatural "power" and the Spirit and can assume a common understanding with his audience. In these last two passages he does not need to defend or explain exactly to what he is referring. These observations indicate that Paul's miracles did indeed play a significant role in Paul's own defensive statements and, by implication, his own self-conception. One must thus question S. Schreiber's argument that miracles had no great significance for Paul's theology.²⁵

4. Allusions to miracles: 1 Thess 1.5 and 1 Cor 2.4–5

In what is probably Paul's earliest surviving letter, the apostle states that the Thessalonians' reception of the gospel "was not in word only," but also with "power" and "the Holy Spirit."²⁶ The mention of "full conviction" (πληροφορία πολλῇ) seems to imply that the proclamation (ἐν λόγῳ) of Paul and others²⁷ was confirmed by some kind of miraculous manifestation (ἐν δυνάμει) that occurred through the activity of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, comparison with passages like Rom 15.19 (ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων, ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος, discussed above) warrants interpreting ἐν δυνάμει as a reference to miracles.²⁸ Paul thus clearly distinguishes between preaching without authentication, on the one hand, and proclamation ἐν

²⁵ Schreiber 271–282. His erudite study highlights numerous differences between Paul himself and the Paul of Acts on miracles, but underestimates the difficulty of distinguishing too sharply between Paul's self-understanding, on the one hand, and his theology, on the other.

²⁶ 1 Thess 1.4–5: εἰδότες, ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ [τοῦ] θεοῦ, τὴν ἐκλογὴν ὑμῶν, ὅτι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐγενήθη εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν λόγῳ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν δυνάμει καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ καὶ [ἐν] πληροφορίᾳ πολλῇ, καθὼς οἴδατε οἷοι ἐγενήθημεν [ἐν] ὑμῖν δι' ὑμᾶς.

²⁷ Cf. 1 Thess 1.1, which mentions also Silas and Timothy. In this passage Paul apparently does not claim that he was the only miracle-worker at the time of the Thessalonians' conversion.

²⁸ With Jervell, 92–93, but against Schreiber 257–266; cf. *infra* on 1 Cor 2.4b.

δυνάμει καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ [ἐν] πληροφορίᾳ πολλῇ, on the other.

Somewhat more vividly than in 1 Thessalonians, in 1 Cor 2.4 Paul contrasts between artful, persuasive speech and his own preaching “with a demonstration of Spirit and of power”:

καὶ ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖ[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις] ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως, ἵνα ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν μὴ ᾖ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ’ ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ. (1 Cor 2.4–5)

Although the apostle does not mention explicitly what miracles he performed, he once again distinguishes between the wise words of some and the power that accompanied his own initial visit to the Corinthians.

Some scholars may still wonder why Paul does not state more explicitly what he means by “a demonstration of Spirit and of power,” since by mention of such he seeks in 1 Cor 1.21–2.5 to distinguish himself from both the expectations and the proclamation of others. Presumably, Paul’s addressees knew to what he was referring and would not need a detailed clarification on this point. Another likely reason Paul offers only an allusion to the miraculous here is that he mentions pejoratively certain Jews who “demand signs” (σημεῖα, 1 Cor 1.21a). Accordingly, although the apostle seeks to distance himself from those whom he criticizes in 1.21a, he nevertheless finds a general allusion to miracles useful in distinguishing his own preaching from that of other rhetoricians who appeal simply to “persuasive words of wisdom.”²⁹ Responding to certain Corinthians’ preference for other leaders, who were better orators, Paul defends himself in 1 Cor 1.21–2.5 by admitting that his preaching was not eloquent, rhetorically speaking, but that it was superior because it was confirmed by the Spirit’s power.

²⁹ 1 Cor 2.4. Again against Schreiber 241–252, whose argument that Paul refers to his own miracles *only* in 2 Cor 12.12 and Rom 15.18–19 is not persuasive.

5. *An anomalous Pauline passage: Miracle-workers in the Corinthian community (1 Cor 12.9–10, 28–30)*

In understanding Paul's different statements on miracles, one must also take into account 1 Cor 12.9–10, which mentions ordinary believers performing healings (χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων) and other miracles (ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων).³⁰ Moreover, in a later part of this same argument (12.28–30), he again mentions those who work miracles and perform healings.³¹ In this latter context Paul argues that the Spirit does not designate every believer as an apostle, prophet, miracle-worker, or healer. Such an acknowledgment betrays both his own and the Corinthians' awareness of those known for manifestations of miraculous phenomena.

Significantly, 1 Corinthians 12 is the only point in the seven indisputably authentic Pauline letters where the apostle mentions other miracle-workers with whom he is on (relatively) favorable terms.³² Albeit only a passing reference to other healers and workers of miracles, Paul's acknowledgment here may well highlight a perspective on miracles that was shaped by his need to respond to the Corinthians' question³³ concerning the various

³⁰ 1 Cor 12.7–11: ἐκάστῳ δὲ δίδοται ἢ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον. ᾧ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος δίδοται λόγος σοφίας, ἄλλῳ δὲ λόγος γνώσεως κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, ἑτέρῳ πίστις ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι, ἄλλῳ δὲ χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ πνεύματι, ἄλλῳ δὲ ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, ἄλλῳ [δὲ] προφητεία, ἄλλῳ [δὲ] διακρίσεις πνευμάτων, ἑτέρῳ γένη γλωσσῶν, ἄλλῳ δὲ ἑρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν· πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ καθὼς βούλεται.

³¹ 1 Cor 12.28–31a: καὶ οὐς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεύτερον προφήτας, τρίτον διδασκάλους, ἔπειτα δυνάμεις, ἔπειτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν. μὴ πάντες ἀπόστολοι; μὴ πάντες προφῆται; μὴ πάντες διδασκαλοὶ; μὴ πάντες δυνάμεις; μὴ πάντες χαρίσματα ἔχουσιν ἰαμάτων; μὴ πάντες γλώσσαις λαλοῦσιν; μὴ πάντες διερμηνεύουσιν; ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα.

³² *Pace* 2 Corinthians 10–13. In Galatians, moreover, Paul does not even find it necessary to concede that his opponents ever performed miracles.

³³ With U. Schnelle, *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings* (Minneapolis 1998) 62, who regards *περὶ δέ* (1 Cor 12.1; cf. 7.1, 25; 8.1; 16.1, 12) as a sign that Paul answers the Corinthians' questions in response to a now lost letter of Paul to this congregation (cf. 1 Cor 5.9). For a contrasting view on *περὶ δέ* in 1 Corinthians, see M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Tübingen 1991) 190–192.

endowments of the Spirit exercised by members of this community. Such a distinctive recognition of other miracle-workers raises the interpretive question of the occasional nature of Paul's response in 1 Corinthians 12 relative to the other Pauline references to the miraculous discussed above. Clearly these other five Pauline passages also have their own rhetorical appeal relative to Paul's particular interests in these other contexts. Although one need not expect perfect consistency within one of Paul's letters, it is exceptional to find in 1 Cor 2.4–5 and 12.9–10, 28–30 such divergent depictions of the miraculous within the same letter of Paul.³⁴

With the acknowledgment that even ordinary believers perform miracles, the Paul of 1 Corinthians 12 would presumably have difficulty responding to the challenge of diversity among workers of miracles in early Christianity. When two or more Christian leaders holding different theological viewpoints are both also recognized as wonder-workers, *the appeal to miracle becomes a moot point* if one's opponent can also claim the same confirmation from heaven. That is to say, the expectations of 1 Cor 12.9–10, 28–30, along with those of John 14.12 and Mark 16.17–18,³⁵ have no recourse for troublesome or "heretical" miracle-workers—like those whom Paul (2 Cor 12.11–12) and Justin Martyr in *First Apology* 26 and 56 (*cf.* Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 2.31.2–4) address—except perhaps an appeal to bland statements along the lines of Matt 7.22–23 that only some miracle-workers truly "know" the Lord.³⁶ As a result, Paul's response to a particular problem in 1 Corinthians 12 stands in

³⁴ With Mitchell (*supra* n.33) 184–295, who regards the whole of 1 Corinthians as a unified example of deliberative rhetoric.

³⁵ On John 14.12 and Mark 16.17–18 see Kelhoffer (*supra* n.2) 264–266.

³⁶ On the passages mentioned above in Justin and Irenaeus, see Kelhoffer (*supra* n.2) 312–314, 322–326. Matt 7.22–23: πολλοὶ ἐροῦσίν μοι ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ· Κύριε κύριε, οὐ τῷ σῷ ὀνόματι ἐπροφητεύσαμεν, καὶ τῷ σῷ ὀνόματι δαιμόνια ἐξεβάλομεν, καὶ τῷ σῷ ὀνόματι δυνάμεις πολλὰς ἐποιήσαμεν; καὶ τότε ὁμολογήσω αὐτοῖς ὅτι Οὐδέποτε ἔγνων ὑμᾶς· ἀποχωρεῖτε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν.

tension with the apostle's presuppositions concerning the miraculous and his own authority in 2 Cor 12.11–12, Gal 3.1–5, Rom 15.18–19, 1 Thess 1.5, and 1 Cor 2.4–5.

Consequently, it stands to reason that Paul, when under pressure from rival Christian leaders, would oppose an unqualified reference to 1 Cor 12.9–10, 28–30 because such use of his own words would render the authentication of his own apostleship by his own miracles defenseless from attacks by rival charismatics or their supporters. Such a difficulty concerning the prevalence of miracle-workers in the Christian community and the authority to be ascribed to them should not be regarded as unique to Paul. Similar difficulties in associating truth claims with miraculous phenomena occur repeatedly in many other later Christian writings, such as those of Justin Martyr, and are probably greater than any single person in antiquity fully appreciated.

II. The Apologist Justin and miraculous phenomena

The relevant materials for this study stem from Justin's *Second Apology* and *Dialogue with Trypho*.³⁷ This investigation will discuss five sections of the *Dialogue* before considering a single passage in the *Second Apology*. Differently from Paul, Justin never refers to his own miracles; nor is he concerned with his own authority as an ecclesiastical leader. What this study will examine, then, is the ways in which Justin is consistently interested in miracles for the support they lend to his larger apologetic agenda.

As is well known, an overarching concern in Justin's *Dialogue* is to demonstrate that Christian interpretation of the Old Testament is superior to Jewish exegesis and that Christians can refute all Jewish objections to the claim that OT prophecies are fulfilled in Christ. At a number of points Justin supports a

³⁷ Yet, as mentioned *supra* n.36, note Justin's criticisms of "heretical" miracle-workers in *First Apology* 26 and 56; cf. *Dialogue* 7.

certain interpretation of the Jewish scriptures by highlighting the occurrence of contemporary miracles, usually exorcisms, that are said to be performed by believers of his own time. Unfortunately, as in the *Second Apology*, Justin says nothing about the identity of these people and rarely describes the miracles themselves. What these five sections of the *Dialogue* do offer is an insight into how Justin appeals to the miraculous within the context of this apologetic treatise.

1. *Exorcisms, the “great power” of Christ, and judgment at Christ’s return (Dialogue 30–31)*

In *Dialogue* 30, Justin instructs Trypho “that we believers beseech him to safeguard us from strange, that is, evil and deceitful spirits” (30.2). The apologist explains that the prevalence of exorcisms in his own day stands as proof that God bestowed “great power” upon Christ:

We constantly ask God through Jesus Christ to keep us safe from these demons, who ... were once adored by us ... We call him our helper and redeemer by the power of whose name even the demons shudder. Even today they are cast out (καὶ σήμερον ἐξορκιζόμενα) in the name of Jesus Christ ... From this it is clear to all (ὡς καὶ ἐκ τούτου πᾶσι φανερόν εἶναι) that his Father bestowed upon him such a great power, with the result that (τοσαύτην ... δύνάμιν ὥστε) even the demons are subject to his name and to his preordained manner of suffering.³⁸

Justin is not interested in the activities of exorcists as such, but rather in the support they lend to his argument concerning Christ, who received “great power” from his Father.

In *Dialogue* 31.1, moreover, Justin connects the above discussion of Christ’s receiving strength from heaven to the return of Christ (the parousia): “If such a great power (τοσαύτη δύναμις) is shown to have accompanied and continues to

³⁸ *Dial.* 30.3; cf. Luke 11.20, 10.17. Greek text used for the *Dialogue*: G. Archambault, *Justin, Dialogue avec Tryphon* (Paris 1909). The translation cited is T. B. Falls, *Saint Justin Martyr* (New York 1948), modified where necessary to conform more accurately to the Greek.

accompany (παρακολυθήσασα καὶ παρακολουθοῦσα) his passion, how great shall [his power be] (πόση ἡ)³⁹ at his glorious parousia?" The main point of Justin's warning about the second coming is that the manifestation of power, which accompanied the earthly Jesus, continues to follow those who have faith in Jesus. Others like Trypho should thus take heed of this power and make themselves ready for the coming judgment at the parousia.⁴⁰

2. *Contemporary miracles support Jesus as "blameless and without reproach" (Dialogue 35)*

In *Dialogue* 35.7, Justin defends the credibility of Jesus, who both "had foreknowledge of what would happen to him" and predicted his own suffering. He asks Trypho and other unbelievers not to blaspheme

Jesus Christ, who, through (διὰ) his own deeds (ἔργα) and by the miracles which even now are wrought in his name (καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ νῦν γινομένων δυνάμεων) and by the words of his teaching and the prophecies that were prophesied about him, [is proved to be] in every way blameless and without reproach (ἄμωμον καὶ ἀνέγκλητον κατὰ πάντα). (*Dial.* 35.8)

According to Justin, then, there is a correlation between the deeds of Jesus (ἔργα) and the miracles (δυνάμεις) of Jesus' followers. Justin calls upon these miracles, which, along with other proofs, demonstrate the superiority of Christ.

3. *Miracles and belief that Jesus is the Messiah (Dialogue 39)*

In *Dialogue* 39.6, Justin offers an argument similar to that in 35.7–8. The apologist accuses Trypho:

You hesitate to acknowledge that [Jesus] (οἶτος) is the Christ— which the scriptures, the things that have been witnessed and

³⁹ Justin's statement assumes an earlier reference to δύναμις in the same sentence, *i.e.*, πόση ἡ [δύναμις].

⁴⁰ This connection between miracles and the parousia in Justin's argument may be unique among Christian writings of the first two centuries and merits further study.

the [miracles] wrought in his name demonstrate (ὡς αἱ γραφαὶ ἀποδεικνύουσι καὶ τὰ φαινόμενα καὶ τὰ γινόμενα ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ)—in order that you may not be persecuted. (39.6)

In this translation the word “miracles” is in brackets because Justin does not specify what comes about “in his name” (τὰ γινόμενα ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ). In comparison with 35.8 (ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ νῦν γινομένων δυνάμεων), it is reasonable to infer that Justin refers to (contemporary) miracles, which support his plea in 39.6 for Trypho to believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

4. *Miracles confirm a “Gospel” prooftext; the prooftext interprets an OT prophecy (Dialogue 76)*

In *Dialogue* 76.1–3, Justin discusses prophecies of Daniel, Moses, and Isaiah and their fulfillment in Christ. He writes that Isaiah called Christ “the angel of the great counsel” (cf. Isa 9.6) and predicted “that Christ would be a teacher of those truths which he expounded when he came upon this earth” (*Dial.* 76.3). In demonstration of this oracle’s fulfillment he cites sayings of Jesus strikingly similar to those preserved in Matt 8.11–12, 7.22–23, 25.41,⁴¹ and Luke 10.19 (*Dial.* 76.4–6a). It is the last of these passages with which this discussion is concerned. Justin cites a saying much like Luke 10.19⁴² and explains:

⁴¹ Translation of Justin’s citation of a saying like, or the same as, Matt 8.11–12: “They shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into exterior darkness”; of Matt 7.22–23: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not eat and drink and prophesy and cast out devils in your name? And then I will say to them: depart from me”; of Matt 25.41: “Depart into exterior darkness which the Father has prepared for the devil and his angels.”

⁴² The apologist’s version of Luke 10.19: δίδωμι ὑμῖν ἐξουσίαν καταπατεῖν ἐπάνω ὄφρων καὶ σκορπίων καὶ σκολοπενδρῶν καὶ ἐπάνω πάσης δυνάμεως τοῦ ἐχθροῦ (*Dial.* 76.6a). The wording of this citation may be compared with that of Nestle-Aland²⁷: ἰδοὺ δέδωκα ὑμῖν τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ πατεῖν ἐπάνω ὄφρων καὶ σκορπίων, καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἐχθροῦ, καὶ οὐδὲν ὑμᾶς οὐ μὴ ἀδικήσῃ. Of the numerous distinctive aspects of Justin’s citation of Luke 10.19, the only variant reading widely attested elsewhere (P⁴⁵ A C³ D Θ Ψ 0115 f¹³ 33 M c sy Irl^{at}) is the present δίδωμι, which probably does not originate with Justin. Justin’s witness to this variant should be added to the critical apparatus of NA²⁷. One rather distinctive variant is the addition of σκολοπένδραι

And now we who believe (καὶ νῦν ἡμεῖς οἱ πιστεύοντες) in Jesus our Lord, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, cast out all devils and [other] evil spirits and have them submitting to us (τὰ δαιμόνια πάντα καὶ πνεύματα πονηρὰ ἐξορκίζοντες ὑποτασσόμενα ἡμῖν ἔχομεν). (*Dial.* 76.6a)

The complexity of the subject of Justin Martyr and “gospel” quotations has been addressed by Helmut Koester and Arthur J. Bellinzoni, among others.⁴³ The important point for the present analysis is that sayings of Jesus and the works of contemporary exorcists are placed beside one another in Justin’s argument. The two forms of “proof” were not incompatible.

This interpretation of Luke 10.19 in relation to exorcisms of the apologist’s own day has the following function in Justin’s larger argument: The affirmation that believers currently cast out demons provides a *contemporary illustration* of the statement in Luke that Jesus gave authority to the disciples. Justin intends the Lukan saying, along with those now preserved in Matthew, to support his christological interpretation of Genesis, Isaiah, and Daniel.⁴⁴ Contemporary exorcisms mentioned in *Dialogue* 76.6a thus provide confirmation for his appeal to the Lukan proof-text.

5. *Exorcisms demonstrate that Christ is the Lord of hosts*
(*Dialogue* 85)

In *Dialogue* 85, Justin again mentions exorcisms to support his christological exegesis when seeking to demonstrate that Psalm

(“poisonous insects,” “millipedes,” or “sea animals”) to the list of things to be trampled.

⁴³ H. Koester, “Septuaginta und Synoptischer Erzählungsstoff im Schriftbeweis Justins des Märtyrers” (Habilitationsschr. Heidelberg 1956); A. J. Bellinzoni, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Writings of Justin Martyr* (Leiden 1967). Justin may have utilized a “Gospel” harmony and, in contrast to his use of the LXX, seems to have taken some liberty with the “gospel” materials he cites.

⁴⁴ Cf. Justin’s citations of Gen 49.1; Isa 9.6, 53.8; Dan 2.34, 7.13 in *Dial.* 76.1–3.

24.7 refers to Christ.⁴⁵ He contends that “the Psalm and the other [passages of] scripture made clear (δηλώω) and proclaimed (καταγγέλλω) [him] the Lord of hosts” (85.1). Offering to Trypho an additional proof for this interpretation of scripture, the apologist mentions contemporary miracles:

Now (ὡς καὶ νῦν) you can, if you wish, be persuaded by the things that are happening in front of your eyes (ὑπ’ ὄψιν). In (κατά) the name of this Son of God ... every demon, once exorcised, is vanquished and subdued (πᾶν δαιμόνιον ἐξορκιζόμενον νικᾶται καὶ ὑποτάσσεται).⁴⁶

In this last example from Justin’s *Dialogue*, the success of contemporary believers in performing exorcisms offers an additional confirmation to Justin’s argument that Christ is the Lord of hosts referred to in Ps 24.7.

6. Justin’s *Second Apology: Defending a christological point to the Prefect Urbicus*

Similarly to his interest in the miraculous in his *Dialogue*, in the *Second Apology* Justin offers one reference to contemporary miracle-workers. Contrasting the “unnamed” God with the name of Jesus, Justin writes that Christ came “for (ὑπέρ) believing people and for the defeat of demons” (*Second Apol.* 6.5, cf. 6.1–5). In support of this statement, the apologist explains to the Prefect Urbicus:⁴⁷

Even now, you are able to learn using your own eyes (ὑπ’ ὄψιν) about what has taken place. For many of our own people [the Christians] exorcise (ἐπορκίζοντες) many demoniacs throughout

⁴⁵ Ps 24.7: “Lift up your gates, O you princes, and be lifted up, O eternal gates, that the king of glory may enter.” Following the numbering of the LXX, Justin refers to Psalm 23.7 in *Dial.* 85.1.

⁴⁶ *Dial.* 85.1–2. Justin also contrasts the Christians’ proficiency in performing exorcisms with that of the Jews, some of whom are said to employ “the magical art of the gentiles, using fumigations and amulets” (85.3).

⁴⁷ Justin wrote his *Second Apology* in response to a particular incident: The Prefect Urbicus had three confessing Christians beheaded in Rome.

the entire world, and even in your own city [Rome], in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate. They were not healed by all the other exorcists, incantations, and drugs, but [our own people]⁴⁸ cured them and still now continue to cure (ιάσαντο καὶ ἔτι νῦν ἰῶνται) by rendering helpless and dispelling the demons who are taking possession of (κατέχοντας) these people.⁴⁹

Justin points Urbicus to Christians who perform exorcisms in his own time. Such an appeal to contemporary manifestations of the miraculous is underscored by the fact that the last three present participles of 6.6—“rendering helpless and dispelling the demons who are taking possession” (καταργούντες καὶ ἐκδιώκοντες τοῦς κατέχοντας)—occur with the present verb ἰῶνται. Thus, the performing of exorcisms is regarded as a regular activity of certain believers in Rome. Once again, Justin’s primary interest lies not in the miracles themselves, but rather in their value as proof for his earlier statements concerning the unnamed God and the name of Jesus, who came “for believing people and for the defeat of demons” (6.1–5).

7. Summary of Justin on the miraculous

This treatment of six passages in Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho* and *Second Apology* discussed the ways in which the apologist calls upon miracles of his own day to support a number of different arguments. In the latter work, exorcisms offer evidence that Christ came for the sake of believers and for the defeat of demons (*Second Apol.* 6.5). In *Dialogue* 30–31, the casting out of evil spirits not only supports the contention that the Father granted “great power” to the earthly Jesus, but also warns nonbelievers about the coming judgment at the parousia. In

⁴⁸ Lit.: “they.” The subject of ἰάσαντο is not explicitly stated, but the verb clearly refers to those who performed healings rather than those healed.

⁴⁹ *Second Apol.* 6.5–6. I have modified Falls’ translation so that the first clause of 6.6 is in the active voice, with the Greek, instead of the passive. Greek text: M. Marcovich, *Iustini Martyris, Apologiae pro Christianis* (Patristische Texte und Studien 38 [Berlin 1994]).

addition, Justin contends that contemporary miracles support the claim that Jesus was “blameless and without reproach” (*Dial.* 35.7–8). He also refers to miracles when asking Trypho to believe in Jesus as the Messiah (39.6). In *Dialogue* 76, Justin points to exorcisms performed by “[us] who believe,” in order to provide a contemporary example of Luke 10.19, according to which Jesus gave authority to the seventy disciples to trample on snakes, scorpions, and, in Justin’s citation, poisonous insects (σκολοπένδραι). Contemporary exorcisms lend credence to the “Gospel” proof-text, which, in turn, supports the argument that the prophecies of Moses, Isaiah, and Daniel found fulfillment in the NT. At another point (*Dial.* 85.1–2) the apologist refers to miracles to support his christological exegesis of Psalm 24.7, which designates Christ as the Lord of hosts.

At this point we might wonder whether Justin’s references to miraculous signs constituted, to use Adolf von Harnack’s words, “ein sehr wichtiges Mittel der Mission und Propaganda.”⁵⁰ In the case of the exorcists, to whom the apologist refers in the *Second Apology* and *Dialogue*, Justin’s descriptions cannot substantiate this claim. One only reads *that* exorcisms occurred, in Justin’s view, on a somewhat regular basis. Justin never reveals whether such exorcisms took place in a missionary or evangelistic setting, within the church among those who were already believers, or, furthermore, if he even knows such information. It is not even clear from Justin’s writings that the term “(proto-)orthodox” would necessarily apply to these miracle-workers.

Justin’s lack of details concerning the work of exorcists in his own day, however, does not cast doubt on Bernd Kollmann’s thesis that miracles were a significant part of the ministry of the

⁵⁰ “A very important means of mission and propaganda”: von Harnack (*supra* n.6) 95, *cf.* 95–105. The importance of miracles at the time Justin wrote is particularly evident in the apologist’s concern over the continuing influence of Menander in the church (*First Apol.* 26.6, 56.1).

earthly Jesus and of numerous believers in the late first and second centuries.⁵¹ Already by the time of Paul's writings, miracles had become an established part of the Christian tradition, a means of authenticating a particular leader's authority. Justin's references to miracles for overtly apologetic purposes reflect a further, and perhaps novel, stage of development in Christian reflection on the miraculous, whereby the deeds of exorcists and other wonder-workers can function not primarily as the subject of the discussion, but rather as a *pre-supposition* supporting the validity of other points of dogma.

III. Conclusions

This article has offered a comparative analysis of the pre-suppositions underlying Paul's and Justin Martyr's references to miracles. Despite their common assumptions, Paul and Justin have strikingly contrasting goals in their appeals to the miraculous. Paul is usually concerned with defending his own authority by virtue of his own miracles. Yet when Paul responds to a particular problem in 1 Corinthians 12, his comments about other Christians who perform healings and other miracles stand in tension with the apostle's presuppositions concerning the miraculous and his own authority. The logical inconsistency of appealing to the miracle-working Spirit, while granting that other Christians (including Paul's opponents!) can perform δυνάμεις, merits additional attention in connection with the unity of thought (or relative lack thereof) expressed in Paul's occasional letters.

In contrast with most of Paul's statements, Justin Martyr refers to exorcisms performed by others and maintains that these wonders demonstrate the validity of certain parts of his larger apologetic enterprise. These differences between Paul and

⁵¹ See Kollmann (*supra* n.7) on the miracles of Jesus (174–315) and the disciples (316–378).

Justin thus highlight a shift in emphasis from Paul and most other NT authors, who highlight miracles of individual apostolic figures, to apologists like Justin, whose interest in the miraculous stems from the value of these phenomena in proving that the Christian message as a whole is “true.”

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