

*The Gospels highlight Jesus' ministry of healing and exorcism. In his teaching and proclamation, Jesus interprets his acts of healing as expressions of the sovereign rule of God and his exorcisms as an assault upon the dominion of Satan. In both the sayings of Jesus and the stories of his healings, therefore, the reader encounters the fundamental conviction that God wills the wholeness of human beings. To construct a Gospel theology of healing, it is on the foundation of this conviction that one must build.*

## Sickness and Healing in the New Testament Gospels

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**SICKNESS AND HEALTH** are matters of universal human concern. Every person and culture must address the experience of sickness, the pursuit of healing, and the need to discern meaning in both sickness and health. It is no wonder, then, that the sacred scriptures of ancient Israel and the Christian church visit this theme over and over again.<sup>1</sup>

In the Old Testament, it is characteristically Yahweh who gives both sickness and healing, with sickness generally pictured as the outcome of disobedience or sin.<sup>2</sup> Now and then one encounters a reference to a human mediator of healing, whether prophet (Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah)<sup>3</sup> or physician.<sup>4</sup> And on occasion the conventional paradigm of sickness and health is challenged: in the Book of Job, which questions the assumption that misfortune, including illness, stems from one's guilt; and in the Isaianic image of a suffering servant whose wounds, endured on behalf of the guilty, bring healing to the many (Isa. 53:4-5). The provision of healing is also a prominent image of God's eschatological

restoration of the people.<sup>5</sup>

The New Testament identifies healing as a central ministry of the Christian community, whether such healing appears in the guise of miracles performed by apostles (Acts) or other charismatic healers (I Cor. 12:8–10, 28–30), or whether it is a task assigned to elders (James 5:13–18). Above all, however, the Gospels highlight healing, for at the core of their narratives of Jesus' public ministry lies his activity as healer. The Gospels, in fact, represent a rich resource for persons who, in the experience of sickness and other conditions of limitation, seek both healing and meaning. In this essay, I shall suggest steps toward a theology of healing informed by the canonical Gospels. We shall first note the distinctive ways in which each Gospel presents Jesus' healing activity; then we shall explore significant theological perspectives expressed (1) in Jesus' own interpretation of his acts of healing (the sayings tradition) and (2) in Gospel stories of healing and exorcism.

## Distinctive Features of the Gospel Healing Accounts

All four canonical Gospels cast Jesus in the role of healer, and the miracles of healing they relate assume a certain stereotypical form. First, the narrator presents a situation defined by a need for healing. Second, the narrator tells of the healer's intervention, typically including dialogue with the person requesting help (or that person's representative) or with opponents. Third, the narrator confirms in some demonstrative way that healing has occurred, and this may involve (especially in Luke) acclamation of the healing by the observing crowd. Nevertheless, each Gospel characterizes Jesus' healing ministry in its own way. We turn now to a sketch of some of the significant patterns.

### Mark

Healing miracles figure prominently in Mark's Gospel. They encompass four exorcisms,<sup>7</sup> eight healings,<sup>8</sup> and one apparent raising from the dead;<sup>9</sup> in addition, one finds three summaries of healing.<sup>10</sup> Important as these healing miracles are, they are nevertheless subordinate to the Markan Jesus' primary mission, which is to teach and proclaim God's sovereign rule (see already 1:38–39). After a (sabbath) day and evening filled with acts of healing and exorcism (1:21–34), Jesus departs to do what he was sent to do: preach (*kēryssein*). Still, even during his ensuing preaching tour, the narrator reports that Jesus continued to cast out demons (v. 39). In fact, Jesus' miracles of healing and exorcism show him to be the mighty teacher and proclaimer who delivers his message with unprecedented authority (1:22, 27). Indeed, Jesus' authority is divinely bestowed, a point underscored by the healing and controversy story of 2:1–12 ("Who can forgive sins except God alone?" v. 7).<sup>11</sup>

Jesus' mighty acts win him the attention and admiration of the crowds, but they also precipitate conflict. In one case, the pronouncement of forgiveness to a paralytic raises concerns about blasphemy (2:7). In another, a sabbath-day restoration of a withered hand results in a death plot on the part of Pharisees and Herodians (3:6). And in a third, Jerusalem scribes charge Jesus with exorcising demons by tapping evil powers (3:22). In each situation, Jesus bests his critics with his incisive word (2:8-11; 3:4, 23-27). Regardless, Mark's narrative generates the expectation that Jesus' authoritative deed and words will eventually lead to death. To be sure, Jesus' defense of his exorcisms characterizes his ministry as an effective assault against the oppressive dominion of Satan (3:23-27). Yet, the climax of this ministry—and in Mark's narrative the defining disclosure of Jesus' identity as the Messiah and Son of God and of his power against evil—occurs at the cross. It is as the crucified Messiah that Jesus reigns as king. He bears the authority of the Son of God, but only as one who faces death abandoned by his admirers, his disciples, and even his God (15:34). That is to say, in Mark, the cross interprets the ministry of Jesus and places it in proper perspective.

A recurring motif in the Markan healing and exorcism accounts is concealment: Jesus often seeks (without success) to keep the fact of healing secret (1:44-45; 5:43; 7:36; cf. 8:26).<sup>12</sup> His motive is evidently crowd control; as word of his miracles spreads, the multitudes flock to him, making his teaching (and healing) mission more and more difficult. The exception that proves the rule is the story of the Gerasene demoniac "Legion," whom Jesus sends back to his home to proclaim the news of God's benefaction (5:19-20). Presumably, this is territory Jesus does not intend to revisit. In two narrative summaries that also mention exorcism (1:34; 3:12), the motif of concealment likewise appears. Here the purpose is to prevent premature disclosure of the identity of Jesus as Son of God (cf. also 8:30; 9:9).

The two episodes in which Jesus heals blind men (8:22-26; 10:46-52) play an especially important role in Mark's Gospel. These episodes bracket a pivotal section in which the disciples, after Jesus has revealed his destiny as the suffering human son who must die and then be raised, fail to understand him (8:31-32; 9:31-32; 10:32-45). Indeed, the first of these episodes (8:22-26) is itself bracketed by scenes featuring the disciples' failure to understand (8:14-21, 27-33). Clearly, the imagery of blindness and restoration of sight plays a symbolic role here, serving as a commentary on the disciples' lack of spiritual perception. Like the blind man at Bethsaida, the disciples will come to full (spiritual) insight only in stages, with the watershed event (cross and resurrection) still to come. To confirm the connection he makes between "blindness" and "sight" and discipleship, Mark depicts the blind beggar Bartimaeus as one who, immediately upon the restoration of his vision, becomes a disciple of Jesus ("he followed him on the way," 10:52). The real miracle in Mark's story, it seems, is the gift of discerning faith.

## Matthew

Alongside a number of uniquely Matthean stories,<sup>13</sup> nearly all the Markan accounts of healing and exorcism reappear in Matthew. Typically, Matthew simplifies the healing story: The narrator rivets attention on Jesus and the one seeking healing<sup>14</sup> and, through the use of dialogue, reveals the character of both parties. In Jesus' encounters with petitioners, he stands forth as the sovereign Lord whom they approach in reverence, confident of his power to make them well (*pistis*, "faith!"). Whereas Mark's narrator provides the reader with inside views of the thoughts and emotions of Jesus, of the one needing healing, and of the audience,<sup>15</sup> Matthew places considerable stress on the motive from which Jesus' acts of healing spring. Frequently it is because of his mercy and compassion that Jesus heals (9:35-36; 14:14; 20:34; cf. the appeals to his mercy in 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31).

An especially intriguing feature of the healing stories in Matthew's Gospel is the recurring motif of *doubling*. Jesus heals not one but two men possessed by demons (cf. 8:28-34 with Mark 5:1-20), two blind men (9:27-31), and again, two blind men (cf. 20:29-34 with Mark 10:46-52). Likely, such doubling not only accentuates the power and majesty of the healer but also enhances the credibility of the stories by anchoring them in the witness of more than one person.<sup>16</sup>

Matthew makes explicit what Mark only implies through intertextual echoes of the Old Testament: Jesus' ministry of healing fulfills scriptural promise.<sup>17</sup> To be sure, Jesus heals the sick by virtue of his authority as Messiah and Son of God, but his healings and exorcisms are the way in which he, the Messiah, *serves* the people. For it is as the servant of God prophesied by Isaiah that Jesus heals. His cures and exorcisms fulfill Isaiah 53:4: "He has taken our sicknesses and borne [our] diseases" (Matt. 8:17). Indeed, in Matthew the motif of concealment, which receives such emphasis in the Markan miracle accounts, becomes but another indicator that Jesus wields *exousia* ("power" or "authority") as the humble servant of the Lord (12:15-21, with a lengthy quotation from Isa. 42:1-4).

Matthew broadens the scope of Jesus' mission of healing: Throughout Galilee he heals all the sick afflicted with every disease and those under the sway of demons (4:23-24; 9:35). Although Matthew concentrates many of Jesus' miracles of healing in chapters 8 and 9, he scatters notices of Jesus' effective healing ministry throughout the narrative (12:15-21; 14:14, 34-36; 15:29-31; 19:2). In fact, such a notice occurs at the very end of Jesus' public activity, when his cures of the blind and the lame within the temple enrage the elite priests and scribes (21:14).<sup>18</sup> Of course in Matthew as in Mark, Jesus' acts of healing provoke sharp conflict in a way that points toward the climax of his ministry in the cross. Hence, for all the public interest that the mighty deeds of Jesus, the servant of God, generate, his compassionate ministry does not issue in the

repentance that would draw Israel into the domain of God's rule (see, e.g., 11:20-24).<sup>19</sup>

## Luke

Luke, too, links Jesus' activity of healing to a scriptural paradigm, which appears in the programmatic statement with which Jesus inaugurates his public ministry (4:16-30). With Jesus, the era of liberation and divine benefaction promised by Isaiah (61:1-2; 58:6) has begun, for he is the one endowed with divine Spirit who will bring good news to the poor, release to the captives and oppressed, and sight to the blind. Jesus displays prophetic insight when he anticipates that his hometown audience, even as they recognize his healing power, will reject him: "Certainly you will tell me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself . . .'" (4:23). Jesus further provokes his listeners by reminding them (vs. 25-27) of the creative detour by which God's favor bypassed Israel to extend a prophet's miraculous aid to a foreign woman (Elijah and the widow at Zarephath) and a soldier (Elisha and Naaman). In a similar way, Luke's reader will discover that Jesus brings release—liberation for those opposed by demons (cf. Acts 10:38) and forgiveness for sinners—and offers God's gracious favor to those beyond the pale. As he presses beyond conventional social boundaries to embrace those living on the margins of society, Jesus will draw the latter into the fellowship of God's reign.<sup>20</sup> For the sick, this shattering of existing social barriers will mean "salvation," that is, deliverance and healing (see 8:48, 50; 17:19; and cf. 7:50; 19:9-10). Less than pleased by such a declaration of Jesus' priorities, the synagogue audience at Nazareth does indeed repudiate his mission, a harbinger of Jesus' destiny at Jerusalem.

Several stories in Luke feature the faith of outsiders: the healing of a gentile soldier's slave (7:1-10), that of a woman whose chronic bleeding has for twelve years assigned her to a state of perpetual ritual uncleanness (8:43-48), and that of a Samaritan "foreigner" (17:11-19). Each time the message is clear: Faith "saves," that is, delivers and makes well.<sup>21</sup> But others standing outside the community are also restored to health and therefore to the community. Jesus heals a "leper" and directs him to priests who can enable his return to the people (5:12-16), and he sets free a demoniac who has lived in complete isolation from human community and sends him back to his home and city as a herald of good news (8:26-39). Again and again, Luke's Jesus, in word and deed, gives marginalized persons (sick and sinner alike) a place of honor within the people of God. Through faith they leave the domain of sickness and sin and enter the sphere of salvation.

In Luke's Gospel, therefore, Jesus' acts of healing are part and parcel of his mission as "Savior" to bring God's salvation to the people of God. Like Matthew, Luke highlights the broad scope of Jesus' ministry of healing (see the summary

notices in 4:40–41; 6:17–19; 9:11).<sup>22</sup> In his reply to the Baptizer's disciples, Jesus cites a round of healings<sup>23</sup> to call attention to the center of his mission: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: [the] blind see, [the] lame walk, lepers are cleansed,<sup>24</sup> and [the] deaf hear, [the] dead are raised, [the] poor are given a message of good news" (7:22). Such people, Jesus later affirms in a parable, enjoy a place of special honor in the banquet emblematic of God's reign (14:21).

Against his detractors, Jesus claims that his exorcisms, performed "by the finger of God," are a clear signal that God's sovereign rule has come upon them (11:20)! If sickness and demon possession reflect Satan's malevolent action in the world, then Jesus' mighty acts of healing point to the certain demise (10:17–20; 11:14–22) of the dominion of evil. But not just Jesus' acts of healing showcase the coming of God's mighty rule. The disciples, too, become healers in Jesus' name, divinely authorized by the same Spirit that empowered his work of healing (9:1–2; 10:9, 17). In the hands of his followers, Jesus' ministry of healing continues.<sup>25</sup>

According to Luke, how ought one to respond to the experience of healing? Almost without fail, Luke describes reactions to the event of healing on the part of both the healed and the audience of observers. Although Jesus' critics find reason to object (6:11; 13:14), the audience generally sounds the right chords: joyous praise of God (5:26; 7:16; 13:17; 18:37, 43; cf. 9:43). The responses of persons healed by Jesus prove to be an even more reliable guide for Luke's reader: They offer thanks to Jesus (17:16) and glory to God (5:25; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43).

## John

John is highly selective: Although he is aware of many more miracles of Jesus (20:30–31), he narrates only seven. Three concern healing<sup>26</sup> and one a raising from the dead (Lazarus in chap. 11).<sup>27</sup> John labels these extraordinary events *erga* ("works") or *semēia* ("signs"). As works, they identify Jesus' action as the act of God (e.g., 5:17, 19–21).<sup>28</sup> As signs, they disclose the truth about Jesus: As Son of God, he is the source not only of health but also of eternal life (e.g., 20:30–31).

John compensates for his reduction in the number of healing miracles by greatly expanding in them the component of dialogue and discourse (especially in John 5, 9, and 11). By so doing, John lays bare the identity and function of Jesus and the event of healing takes on deep symbolic meaning. Thus, Jesus' healing at a distance of the official's son both brings into focus the relation of faith to signs (4:48)—Jesus issues an implicit appeal for faith not based on the seeing of signs (cf. 20:24–29)—and presents him in the role of life giver (vs. 49–53).<sup>29</sup>

The signs Jesus performs, however, can also provoke his opponents to reject his divine sonship in unbelief. For example, when Jesus heals the lame man at the pool of Bethzatha (John 5), controversy erupts. Until verse 9b, the narrator suppresses the information that Jesus' healing has taken place on the sabbath. Seizing on this, Jesus' opponents first attack the lame man (v. 10) and, thereafter, Jesus himself (vs. 15–16). In response, Jesus defends himself by asserting that he does the work of the Father, who has entrusted to him, the Son, the prerogatives of pronouncing judgment and bestowing life (v. 17). Thus, the narrator uses this episode to reveal Jesus as the Son of God who, in calling humanity to the experience of life, acts with divine authorization. The narrator's claim is that Jesus' healing of the lame man, together with his assertion of divine sonship, ought to issue in faith. Instead, however, it has issued in rejection and unbelief.

Concerning faith and unbelief, it is helpful to compare this lame man in John 5 with the blind man in John 9. Whereas the narrator portrays this lame man, following his healing, as one who "informs" on Jesus (5:13–15), he portrays the man born blind as an exemplar of true faith (9:1–38). The latter, physically blind though he may be, is restored by Jesus to physical sight, and this, in turn, is made emblematic of the achieving of a genuine (spiritual) (in)sight into the truth about Jesus (9:35–38). The upshot is that this story highlights the nature and meaning of human perception. It uses the healing of a blind man as a vehicle to advance the claim that Jesus is that "light of the world" through whom alone one can discern the truth about God and world.<sup>30</sup> By contrast, Jesus' opponents, although they may see (physically), nonetheless reject him and thereby indicate that they have in fact chosen to commit themselves to the darkness (vs. 39–41).

John's Gospel portrays Jesus, the healer, as acting in the name and power of God to give life to the world. Although faith is the appropriate response to Jesus' works or signs, in the unfolding of John's narrative, miracles of healing invariably prompt conflict and unbelief. The raising of Lazarus (John 11) also conforms to this pattern and hence points the reader, with stunning irony, through Jesus' life-giving "signs" to his arrest and life-giving death on the cross. Jesus dies precisely because of his mission to give life, yet it is his death that turns out to be the means by which he draws all who believe to eternal life.

## Toward a Theology of Healing Informed by the Canonical Gospels

In this section, I shall draw attention to several important theological convictions that find expression in the healing accounts of the Gospels. Since Jesus, in his teaching and proclamation, interprets his miracles of healing and exorcism, I shall begin with the sayings tradition.<sup>31</sup>

## The Sayings of Jesus

(1) *Healing and the Power of Evil.* In each of the synoptic Gospels, the opponents of Jesus charge that he performs exorcisms by tapping demonic power (that is, as a sorcerer): "By the prince of demons he casts out demons" (Mark 3:22; cf. Matt. 12:24; Luke 11:16). In reply, Jesus shows the absurdity of this charge, for why would Satan undermine his own cause? Jesus next provides a constructive statement of the meaning of his exorcisms.<sup>32</sup> In order to plunder a strong man's goods, one must first bind him. The implication is clear: Jesus' exorcisms are a frontal assault against the dominion of Satan, and he is "robbing" Satan of his "property."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Jesus is able to cast out demons not because of any collusion with Beelzebul but because God's liberating power has been unleashed. Jesus points through the exorcisms to God, their source.<sup>34</sup> The fundamental meaning of Jesus' mighty deeds of healing and exorcism is this: God wills human wholeness—in its physical, psychological, and social dimensions—and in Jesus' ministry God's will is accomplished in concrete terms, for the sovereign rule of heaven is exerting itself.

(2) *Healing and the Reign of God.* "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons," Jesus claims, "then God's sovereign rule has come upon you" (Luke 11:20; cf. Matt. 12:28). Jesus' acts of liberation from demonic control are signs and expressions of the advancing reign of God. In dispatching the disciples on a mission of healing and proclamation (two missions in Luke), Jesus likewise closely links healing to God's rule (Matt. 10:7–8; Luke 9:1–2; 10:9).<sup>35</sup> Healing (or exorcism) as expression of God's rule and exorcism as assault against the dominion of Satan are two sides of the same coin. Jesus and his disciples are able to heal because Satan's power has been challenged by the greater power of heaven. The transformation of human life is under way.

(3) *Healing and Personal Transformation.* This reshaping of the world by God's sovereign rule must be accompanied by personal transformation. Jesus casts out demons and heals the sick as part of his larger mission to summon God's people to *metanoia*, to a new mode of life reflecting a single-minded commitment to the rule of God. Jesus does not say this in so many words. But the implication is clear enough in his retrospective on the reception accorded his acts of power by the towns of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (Matt. 11:20–24; Luke 10:13–15): "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty acts done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented [*metenoēsan*] long ago [sitting] in sackcloth and ashes." Since healing is closely tied to the message and reality of God's rule, one must embrace this reality, otherwise the experience—or witness, for that matter—of healing miracles means little. Beyond the act of healing must lie commitment to the ways of heaven.



A vivid illustration of this point is provided by the parable concerning an exorcism that backfires (Matt. 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26). A person released from domination by an unclean spirit has no guarantee of perpetual health. Unless that life is claimed and reordered by participation in God's realm, it is at risk of being wholly given over (seven unclean spirits!) to forces that destroy health and personhood. Put another way, there is more to the experience of healing than a cure. Healing such as Jesus offers—healing that “saves” and makes whole—must touch every dimension of one's being and living.

## The Healing and Exorcism Stories

Several important religious and theological concerns address readers of the Gospel stories of Jesus' acts of healing and exorcism. In closing, we note briefly five of these concerns: (1) the priority of human need over sabbath observance; (2) healing as restoration to human community; (3) faith as the basis for healing; (4) the connection between sickness and healing on the one hand and sin and forgiveness on the other; and (5) the challenge posed by language of demonic possession.

(1) *Healing and Sabbath: The Priority of Human Need.* All four Gospels present Jesus as healing on the sabbath and thereby provoking a storm of criticism. In defense, Jesus directs his opponents to the imperative of action whenever another needs help, even on the sabbath. Healing is tantamount to saving life, and saving life must always take precedence. There is no evading this responsibility, for one acts either to sustain life (to do good) or to destroy it (to do harm); there is no middle path of benign inaction (Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9). The law of Moses is truly honored when one recognizes the priority of a person's need for healing and responds accordingly (Matt. 12:11-12; Luke 13:15-16).

(2) *Healing as Restoration to Community.* Jesus steps beyond the conventionally drawn social boundaries, offering healing to persons who, both because of their social status (women, Samaritans, gentiles) and their sickness (demonic possession, so-called leprosy), are estranged from human community. Illness and healing alike necessarily affect the web of social relationships in which one is embedded. Through his healing acts, Jesus announces that God wills to restore to the human family and to the fellowship of the table, which anticipates the eschatological reign of God, those marginalized by sickness.

(3) *Healing and Faith.* “Your faith has saved you [made you well]” (e.g., Matt. 9:22): Does human faith create the miracle of healing? “And he did not do many deeds of power there [in Nazareth], because of their lack of faith” (Matt. 13:58): If one cannot be cured, is that an indication of deficient faith? Exploring this theme, the interpreter steps onto a minefield with danger at every turn! Nevertheless, one can point to a promising path the interpreter may follow.

Jesus consistently honors the expectant trust of one seeking help and responds by meeting the need for healing. Such faith does indeed provide access to the gift of wholeness, which, however, remains a gift of God.<sup>36</sup> But since there is more to the experience of health and salvation than the cure of disease, we need to allow for the possibility that faith as a trusting openness to healing can *coincide* with the tenacious hold of an incurable disease. Faith can make whole even when it does not make well.

(4) *The Problem of Sickness and Sin.* Jesus heals the paralytic with the words, "Child, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). The ensuing controversy shows that the intention of this miracle is to display Jesus' authority to forgive. Although the passage does conform to the prevalent Old Testament view of sickness as consequence of sin,<sup>37</sup> one should not construct an entire theology of healing on this foundation. Both in Luke (13:1-5) and in John (9:1-3), Jesus explicitly rejects the assumption that misfortune results from sin. Clearly, sickness and sin *can* be closely related, as can healing and the experience of forgiveness, for a person's health involves physical, psychological, spiritual, and relational dimensions. The Gospel stories of healing, however, rule out any approach that explains all sickness as the product of sin.

(5) *The Challenge of the Demonic.* This point can also be made from another direction. The fact that so many of Jesus' acts of healing (at least in the synoptic Gospels) are exorcisms indicates that such maladies reflect, not sins for which the sufferer should repent, but oppression, from which liberation is necessary. Still, this language of demonic possession and exorcism poses a challenge for the interpreter today. As with the miracles generally,<sup>38</sup> many modern readers of the Bible reject (or simply ignore) exorcisms as the expression of an outmoded world-view.

Certainly, the authors of the Gospels inhabited a symbolic universe quite different from that of many modern readers. Yet cavalier disregard of the ancient mythological model of illness is inappropriate.<sup>39</sup> Without surrendering their own scientifically based models of sickness and health, modern readers can be instructed by the cultural models shaping the Gospel accounts. In them, a crucial theological affirmation is awaiting discovery: The forces that oppose health also oppose the will of God. The God whom Jesus discloses does not purpose sickness but health. With whatever models we explain the phenomena of sickness and healing, this affirmation of God's will for human wholeness must stand at the center of a theology of healing informed by the Gospels.

#### NOTES

1. For recent surveys of materials on sickness and healing in the biblical tradition, see Klaus Seybold and Ulrich Mueller, *Sickness and Healing* (Nashville: Abingdon Press,

1981); Helge Kjaer Nielsen, *Heilung und Verkündigung: Das Verständnis der Heilung und ihres Verhältnisses zur Verkündigung bei Jesus und in der ältesten Kirche*, Acta Theologica Danica 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1987); Larry P. Hogan, *Healing in the Second Temple [sic] Period* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992).

2. God as the source of healing: see, e.g., Exod. 15:26; Deut. 7:15; 32:39; I Kings 13:6; Job 5:17-18; Pss. 41:3-4; 107:17-20; 147:3; Isa. 30:26; Jer. 30:17; 33:6; Hos. 5:13-6:2. God as the source of sickness: see, e.g., Lev. 26:14-16; Num. 12:9-15; Deut. 28:20-22, 27, 29, 35, 59-61; 32:39; I Sam. 5:6-12; 25:37-38; II Sam. 12:15; I Kings 13:4; II Kings 5:27; II Chron. 21:14-15, 18-19; 26:19-21; Job 5:17-18; Pss. 38:1-8; 106:15; Isa. 10:16; 30:26; Jer. 16:3-4; Hos. 5:13-6:2. Sickness as the consequence of sin: see, e.g., Lev. 26:14-16; Pss. 38:1-8; 41:3-4; 107:17-20.

3. Num. 12:9-15; I Kings 17:17-24; II Kings 4:32-37; 5:1-14; 13:21; 20:1-11; cf. Isa. 38:1-22. Also the anonymous man of God successfully prays for healing in I Kings 13:4, 6.

4. Viewed pejoratively in II Chron. 16:12; Job 13:4. On this point, see Howard Clark Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times*, SNTSMS 55 (Cambridge: University Press, 1986), 17. Egyptian physicians serve as embalmers in Gen. 50:1-3. Also, Jeremiah uses the physician and medicines metaphorically to expose Israel's lack of moral and spiritual health (8:22; 30:12-13; 46:11; 51:8). Some Jewish writings of the late Second Temple Period do recognize the legitimacy of physicians and their art (e.g., Sir. 38:1-15; Philo; and, with some ambivalence, Josephus). See the discussion in Hogan, *Healing*, pp. 38-48, 168-231.

5. See Isa. 35:5-6; Jer. 30:12-17; 33:6; 46:11; Ezek. 47:12; Mal. 4:2.

6. Though with considerable variety of form as well. Gerd Theissen provides a thorough form-critical study delineating the diverse ways in which the evangelists employ the elements constituting the miracle story repertoire (*The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983]). See also Antoinette Clark Wire, "The Structure of the Gospel Miracle Stories and Their Tellers," *Semeia* 11 (1978), 83-113; Robert W. Funk, "The Form of the New Testament Healing Miracle Story," *Semeia* 12 (1978), 57-96.

7. Mark 1:23-28; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 9:14-29.

8. Mark 1:29-31 (fever); 1:40-45 (leper); 2:1-12 (paralytic); 3:1-6 (withered hand); 5:25-34 (flow of blood); 7:31-37 (deaf mute); 8:22-26 and 10:46-52 (blindness).

9. Mark 5:21-24, 35-43. ("Apparent" because in v. 39 Jesus declares the girl to be not dead but asleep.) Mark has inserted, within this frame, the story of Jesus' encounter with the woman suffering from a flow of blood. Both stories concern the restoring to health of a female, and both feature the motif of "saving faith" (vs. 23, 34, 36).

10. Mark 1:32-34; 3:7-12; 6:53-56; cf. also 1:39. By contrast, Jesus' return to his hometown Nazareth (6:1-6) is greeted by a pronounced lack of faith that renders his healing ministry ineffectual.

11. For a forceful defense of the view that Mark draws the miracles and the cross together into an integrated portrait of Jesus as "the powerful proclaimer whose teaching leads to his death," see Edwin K. Broadhead, *Teaching with Authority: Miracles and Christology in the Gospel of Mark*, JSNTSup 74 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), quote from p. 184. Broadhead probably exaggerates, however, both the "chaotic diversity" of the pre-Markan miracle tradition and the coherence of the Markan portrayal of Jesus (see esp. pp. 185-96).

12. Jesus instructs the healed leper to present himself to the priests, who alone can certify him cleansed and therefore restore him to the community, but he is not to speak to anyone else (1:44-45).

13. The only Markan materials (nn. 7-10 above) missing from Matt. are the exorcism at Capernaum (Mark 1:23-28) and the healing of a deaf mute (Mark 7:31-37) and of a

blind man (Mark 8:22-26, a pericope also absent from Luke). Still, Matthew more than compensates by adding two exorcisms of his own (a mute demoniac, 9:32-34; a blind and mute demoniac, 12:22), the restoring of sight to two blind men (9:27-31), and several general healing summaries (4:23; 9:35; 14:14; 15:29-31, 19:2; 21:14).

14. With other, less necessary characters fading from view, e.g., disciples in 8:14-17 (cf. Mark 1:29-31) and 9:20-22 (cf. Mark 5:30-32). Similarly, the centurion who requests aid for his servant (8:5-13) needs no delegation of elders (cf. Luke 7:1-10). See further Heinz Joachim Held, "Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories," in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, NTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), pp. 165-299; Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, pp. 177-79; Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. 70.

15. E.g., Mark 1:41, 43; 2:6-8; 3:2, 5; 5:28, 30.

16. Deuteronomy 19:15 mandates that criminal charges be supported by the testimony of two or three witnesses. To be sure, the narrative nowhere explicitly connects the healing of two persons to the need for two witnesses, but the witness motif does surface elsewhere in Matt. (18:16, 19-20).

17. Perhaps the clearest scriptural echo in a Markan healing story appears in 7:31-37, which pictures Jesus' healing ministry as the realization of Isa. 35:5-6.

18. John Paul Heil concludes from 21:14 that the healing activity of Jesus leads to his death ("Significant Aspects of the Healing Miracles in Matthew," *CBQ* 41 [1979], 274-87, esp. pp. 283-85).

19. Cf. Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story*, pp. 69-70.

20. Over the protests of the "righteous." This pattern of reversal, by which God's reign as practiced by Jesus turns Jewish society inside out, is enacted repeatedly (e.g., 5:27-32; 7:36-50; 19:1-10) and finds parabolic defense in 14:15-24; 15:1-32.

21. This is a theme shared by Mark (5:34; 10:52; cf. 2:5; 9:23-24) and Matt. (8:10, 13; 9:22, 28-29; 15:28; cf. 9:2).

22. Luke also raises the stakes in the healing accounts. The disorders become more acute ("high" fever in 4:38; "about to die" in 7:2), or their impact is heightened ("right" hand in 6:6; "only" child in 7:12; 8:42; 9:38), or their long duration is stressed (8:27, 43; 13:11).

23. Jesus healed (*etherapeusen*) many with diseases and evil spirits (7:21). Language of sickness or healing and of possession or exorcism tends to converge in Luke's Gospel (e.g., 9:42; 13:10-17). This pattern—also evident in Matt. (cf. 12:22; 15:28; 17:16, 18)—suggests that Jesus' acts of exorcism are a mode of healing. From the other side, it also shows that sickness stems from the operation of evil in the world and that Jesus' healing work therefore mounts a challenge to Satan's oppressive domination of human beings.

24. Jesus' cures of "lepers" figure prominently in the synoptic Gospels. The sickness labelled *lepra* ("leprosy"), which rendered one ritually unclean and therefore cut off from the religious community (Lev. 13-14), actually comprised a variety of skin disorders and is not to be equated with "Hansen's disease." See I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 208; Stanley G. Browne, "Leprosy in the Bible," in *Medicine and the Bible*, ed. Bernard Palmer (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), pp. 101-25; Mirko D. Grmek, *Diseases in the Ancient Greek World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989), pp. 160-61.

25. See further John T. Carroll, "Jesus as Healer in Luke-Acts," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994).

26. John 4:46-54, an official's son; chap. 5, a man lame for thirty-eight years; chap. 9, a man blind from birth.

27. It is noteworthy that John reports no exorcisms (cf. Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel Miracles," in *New Testament Essays* [Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1965], pp.

168–91, esp. p. 182; Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, p. 226). In John the collision between Jesus and Satan takes a more subtle form, centering in Jesus' word and its reception (e.g., 8:39–59).

28. Cf. Brown, "Gospel Miracles," p. 181.

29. Although this passage expresses a preference for faith not based on signs, it does not reject that faith. See the discussion in R. Alan Culpepper, *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 137. In fact, the narrator reports that the official "believed" upon hearing Jesus' word (4:50), a belief reinforced when he later learns the time of healing (vs. 52–53).

30. John 5:14 linked the lame man's physical malady to sin (after the fact, unlike the related scene in the synoptics, where Jesus associates healing and forgiveness of sins prior to the healing [Mark 2:5 and parallels]); John 9:1–3, on the other hand, explicitly challenges the view that the man's blindness stems from sin, whether his own or that of his parents.

31. Cf. Reginald H. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), pp. 39–42; Nielsen, *Heilung und Verkündigung*, pp. 20–27. The healing stories also contain relevant sayings of Jesus. Of particular importance are those that focus on the relation of healing to both faith (e.g., "Your faith has saved you" [Mark 5:34; 10:52]) and forgiveness (e.g., Mark 2:5, 9–11).

32. In Luke and in Matthew, Jesus also uses a rhetorical question that adduces the work of other Jewish exorcists to support the legitimacy of his own activity (Matt. 12:27; Luke 11:19).

33. Luke's Jesus goes a step further, implicitly characterizing himself as the "stronger one," who alone can take away the strong man's goods (11:22).

34. "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons . . ." (Luke 11:20). Matt. 12:28 substitutes "Spirit" for "finger," but the basic claim is the same.

35. The Matthean and Lukan narrators both draw this same connection between Jesus' healing and his proclamation of God's reign (see, e.g., Matt. 9:35; Luke 9:11).

36. The woman plagued by chronic bleeding does seem to be cured spontaneously at the touch of Jesus' garment (Mark 5:27–30), although Mark indicates clearly that it is divine power that has effected the cure (v. 30). Matthew, however, places the event of healing *after* the dialogue in which Jesus praises the woman's faith (9:22). The healing of ten lepers in Luke 17:11–19 draws a subtle distinction between a cure (being made clean) that is given by the healer and a being "saved." The latter comes into view only later, after the Samaritan's expression of thankful faith.

37. See n. 2 above.

38. See the extensive discussion of miracle in Vol. 2 of John P. Meier's tome on the historical Jesus, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, forthcoming).

39. On the importance of understanding and respecting the model of sickness and healing in a given culture, see Peder Borgen, "Miracles of Healing in the New Testament: Some Observations," *Studia Theologica* 35 (1981), 91–106; John J. Pilch, "Understanding Healing in the Social World of Early Christianity," *BTB* 22 (1992), 26–33; Arthur Kleinman, *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).