THE SPIRIT AND THE POWER OF JESUS’ MIRACLES IN THE LUCAN CONCEPTION

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Traditionally Luke 4:18-21 and Acts 10:38 were understood to imply that Luke thought the Spirit was the power by which Jesus worked his redemptive miracles. But of late most of the more nuanced descriptions of Luke have asserted that he prefers to think of the Spirit as the power of inspired speech, and that he attributes miracles to other sources, typically to δύναμις. This understanding of Luke has been so well received that those passages in Luke-Acts which indeed appear to connect the Spirit with the power of miracle have ipso facto come under suspicion of being 'pre-Lucan.' The present article seeks briefly to review the arguments used to support this recent understanding of Luke (part I); and then to assess their validity (part II).

Part I

There are essentially five arguments for the position that Luke does not think of the Spirit as the power of exorcisms and healings:

(1) The main argument can be stated quite simply in the words of E. Schweizer: 'Luke adopts the typically Jewish idea that the Spirit is the Spirit of prophecy....this prevents him from directly attributing to the πνεῦμα...the χαρίσματα ἱαμάτων.' The Spirit of

1 We use this term pre-critically to denote any powerful manifestation of the Spirit in the physical realm, exorcisms, and charismata other than those of speech/revelation, or ethical inclination.
3 This 'quotation' conflates what Schweizer says in two separate sections of his dictionary article (one on Jesus' ministry, the other on the Spirit in the church: TDNT 6 (1968) 407 and 409), but remains entirely faithful to his meaning in
prophecy (for Schweizer) means principally the power of inspired insight or speech (glossolalia, prophecy), especially of authoritative preaching, and this he sees as fundamentally different from a conception of the Spirit as the power to perform miracles and exorcisms. Seeking to elucidate a similar distinction, Haya-Prats was to claim that Luke associates the Spirit with the realm of the 'intelligible' rather than with the realm of the 'tangible'. The way this argument is stated in the literature appears to imply there is a measure of incoherence between the notion of the Spirit as the 'Spirit of prophecy' and that of the Spirit as the power of miracle; and a writer holding one is therefore the less likely to hold the other simultaneously. R.P. Menzies, in an important Aberdeen thesis, has especially developed this last point with detailed argument to the effect that Intertestamental Judaism tended to refer divine Spirit terminology almost exclusively to 'the Spirit of prophecy', and consistently distanced the Spirit from the power to work miracle.

(2) Luke distances πνεῦμα from δύναμις, emphasising the latter as the source of Jesus' miracles, and conceiving of it in a magical way as a mana-like substance, or fluid, which can flow from Jesus to heal others (5:17; 6:19; 8:46; cf. Acts 6:8). For Luke 'power' is not a metaphor, 'but is that reality which carries the actual potency of the spirit world into our world'. Acceptance of this claim need not of itself distinguish δύναμις from πνεῦμα, for it has been claimed by Bultmann that Luke was capable of conceiving the Spirit dynamically as a fluid poured out on people (cf. Acts 2:17-18, 33; and compare the typically Lucan 'filled with' or 'full of' the Holy Spirit), and by Schweizer that Luke thinks of the Spirit as a