

THIRD PART, QUESTION 43

Of the Miracles Worked by Christ, in General (In Four Articles)

We must now consider the miracles worked by Christ: (1) In general; (2) Specifically, of each kind of miracle; (3) In particular, of His transfiguration.

Concerning the first, there are four points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether Christ should have worked miracles?
- (2) Whether He worked them by Divine power?
- (3) When did He begin to work miracles?
- (4) Whether His miracles are a sufficient proof of His Godhead?

Whether Christ should have worked miracles?

IIIa q. 43 a. 1

Objection 1. It would seem that Christ should not have worked miracles. For Christ's deeds should have been consistent with His words. But He Himself said (Mat. 16:4): "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet." Therefore He should not have worked miracles.

Objection 2. Further, just as Christ, at His second coming, is to come "with" great power and majesty, as is written Mat. 24:30, so at His first coming He came in infirmity, according to Is. 53:3: "A man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity." But the working of miracles belongs to power rather than to infirmity. Therefore it was not fitting that He should work miracles in His first coming.

Objection 3. Further, Christ came that He might save men by faith; according to Heb. 12:2: "Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith." But miracles lessen the merit of faith; hence our Lord says (Jn. 4:48): "Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not." Therefore it seems that Christ should not have worked miracles.

On the contrary, It was said in the person of His adversaries (Jn. 11:47): "What do we; for this man doth many miracles?"

I answer that, God enables man to work miracles for two reasons. First and principally, in confirmation of the doctrine that a man teaches. For since those things which are of faith surpass human reason, they cannot be proved by human arguments, but need to be proved by the argument of Divine power: so that when a man does works that God alone can do, we may believe that what he says is from God: just as when a man is the bearer of letters sealed with the king's ring, it is to be believed that what they contain expresses the king's will.

Secondly, in order to make known God's presence in a

man by the grace of the Holy Ghost: so that when a man does the works of God we may believe that God dwells in him by His grace. Wherefore it is written (Gal. 3:5): "He who giveth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you."

Now both these things were to be made known to men concerning Christ—namely, that God dwelt in Him by grace, not of adoption, but of union: and that His supernatural doctrine was from God. And therefore it was most fitting that He should work miracles. Wherefore He Himself says (Jn. 10:38): "Though you will not believe Me, believe the works"; and (Jn. 5:36): "The works which the Father hath given Me to perfect...themselves...give testimony to Me."

Reply to Objection 1. These words, "a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas," mean, as Chrysostom says (Hom. xliii in Matth.), that "they did not receive a sign such as they sought, viz. from heaven": but not that He gave them no sign at all. Or that "He worked signs not for the sake of those whom He knew to be hardened, but to amend others." Therefore those signs were given, not to them, but to others.

Reply to Objection 2. Although Christ came "in the infirmity" of the flesh, which is manifested in the passions, yet He came "in the power of God", and this had to be made manifest by miracles.

Reply to Objection 3. Miracles lessen the merit of faith in so far as those are shown to be hard of heart who are unwilling to believe what is proved from the Scriptures unless (they are convinced) by miracles. Yet it is better for them to be converted to the faith even by miracles than that they should remain altogether in their unbelief. For it is written (1 Cor. 14:22) that signs are given "to unbelievers," viz. that they may be converted to the faith.

Whether Christ worked miracles by Divine power?

IIIa q. 43 a. 2

Objection 1. It would seem that Christ did not work miracles by Divine power. For the Divine power is omnipotent. But it seems that Christ was not omnipotent in working miracles; for it is written (Mk. 6:5) that "He could not do any miracles there," i.e. in His own country. Therefore it

seems that He did not work miracles by Divine power.

Objection 2. Further, God does not pray. But Christ sometimes prayed when working miracles; as may be seen in the raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11:41,42), and in the multiplication of the loaves, as related Mat. 14:19. Therefore it seems

¹ Cf. 2 Cor. 13:4.

that He did not work miracles by Divine power.

Objection 3. Further, what is done by Divine power cannot be done by the power of any creature. But the things which Christ did could be done also by the power of a creature: wherefore the Pharisees said (Lk. 11:15) that He cast out devils “by Beelzebub the prince of devils.” Therefore it seems that Christ did not work miracles by Divine power.

On the contrary, our Lord said (Jn. 14:10): “The Father who abideth in Me, He doth the works.”

I answer that, as stated in the Ia, q. 110, a. 4, true miracles cannot be wrought save by Divine power: because God alone can change the order of nature; and this is what is meant by a miracle. Wherefore Pope Leo says (Ep. ad Flav. xxviii) that, while there are two natures in Christ, there is “one,” viz. the Divine, which shines forth in miracles; and “another,” viz. the human, “which submits to insults”; yet “each communicates its actions to the other”: in as far as the human nature is the instrument of the Divine action, and the human action receives power from the Divine Nature, as stated above (q. 19, a. 1).

Reply to Objection 1. When it is said that “He could not do any miracles there,” it is not to be understood that He could not do them absolutely, but that it was not fitting for Him to do them: for it was unfitting for Him to work miracles among unbelievers. Wherefore it is said farther on: “And He wondered because of their unbelief.” In like manner it is said (Gn. 18:17): “Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?” and Gn. 19:22: “I cannot do anything till thou go in thither.”

Reply to Objection 2. As Chrysostom says on Mat.

14:19, “He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, He blessed and brake: It was to be believed of Him, both that He is of the Father and that He is equal to Him...Therefore that He might prove both, He works miracles now with authority, now with prayer...in the lesser things, indeed, He looks up to heaven”—for instance, in multiplying the loaves—“but in the greater, which belong to God alone, He acts with authority; for example, when He forgave sins and raised the dead.”

When it is said that in raising Lazarus He lifted up His eyes (Jn. 11:41), this was not because He needed to pray, but because He wished to teach us how to pray. Wherefore He said: “Because of the people who stand about have I said it: that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”

Reply to Objection 3. Christ cast out demons otherwise than they are cast out by the power of demons. For demons are cast out from bodies by the power of higher demons in such a way that they retain their power over the soul: since the devil does not work against his own kingdom. On the other hand, Christ cast out demons, not only from the body, but still more from the soul. For this reason our Lord rebuked the blasphemy of the Jews, who said that He cast out demons by the power of the demons: first, by saying that Satan is not divided against himself; secondly, by quoting the instance of others who cast out demons by the Spirit of God; thirdly, because He could not have cast out a demon unless He had overcome Him by Divine power; fourthly, because there was nothing in common between His works and their effects and those of Satan; since Satan’s purpose was to “scatter” those whom Christ “gathered” together.

Whether Christ began to work miracles when He changed water into wine at the marriage feast?

IIIa q. 43 a. 3

Objection 1. It would seem that Christ did not begin to work miracles when He changed water into wine at the marriage feast. For we read in the book De Infantia Salvatoris that Christ worked many miracles in His childhood. But the miracle of changing water into wine at the marriage feast took place in the thirtieth or thirty-first year of His age. Therefore it seems that it was not then that He began to work miracles.

Objection 2. Further, Christ worked miracles by Divine power. Now He was possessed of Divine power from the first moment of His conception; for from that instant He was both God and man. Therefore it seems that He worked miracles from the very first.

Objection 3. Further, Christ began to gather His disciples after His baptism and temptation, as related Mat. 4:18 and Jn. 1:35. But the disciples gathered around Him, principally on account of His miracles: thus it is written (Lk. 5:4) that He called Peter when “he was astonished at” the miracle which He had worked in “the draught of fishes.” Therefore it seems that He worked other miracles before that of the marriage feast.

On the contrary, It is written (Jn. 2:11): “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee.”

I answer that, Christ worked miracles in order to confirm His doctrine, and in order to show forth His Divine power. Therefore, as to the first, it was unbecoming for Him to work miracles before He began to teach. And it was unfitting that He should begin to teach until He reached the perfect age, as we stated above, in speaking of His baptism (q. 39, a. 3). But as to the second, it was right that He should so manifest His Godhead by working miracles that men should believe in the reality of His manhood. And, consequently, as Chrysostom says (Hom. xxi in Joan.), “it was fitting that He should not begin to work wonders from His early years: for men would have deemed the Incarnation to be imaginary and would have crucified Him before the proper time.”

Reply to Objection 1. As Chrysostom says (Hom. xvii in Joan.), in regard to the saying of John the Baptist, “‘That He may be made manifest in Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water;’ it is clear that the wonders which some pretend to have been worked by Christ in His childhood are untrue and fictitious. For had Christ worked miracles from His early years, John would by no means have been unacquainted with Him, nor would the rest of the people have stood in need of a teacher to point Him out to them.”

¹ Cf. Mat. 12:24-30; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15-32.

Reply to Objection 2. What the Divine power achieved in Christ was in proportion to the needs of the salvation of mankind, the achievement of which was the purpose of His taking flesh. Consequently He so worked miracles by the Divine power as not to prejudice our belief in the reality of His flesh.

Reply to Objection 3. The disciples were to be commended precisely because they followed Christ “without having seen Him work any miracles,” as Gregory says in a homily (Hom. v in Evang.). And, as Chrysostom says (Hom.

xxiii in Joan.), “the need for working miracles arose then, especially when the disciples were already gathered around and attached to Him, and attentive to what was going on around them. Hence it is added: ‘And His disciples believed in Him,’” not because they then believed in Him for the first time, but because then “they believed with greater discernment and perfection.” Or they are called “disciples” because “they were to be disciples later on,” as Augustine observes (De Consensu Evang. ii).

Whether the miracles which Christ worked were a sufficient proof of His Godhead?

IIIa q. 43 a. 4

Objection 1. It would seem that the miracles which Christ worked were not a sufficient proof of His Godhead. For it is proper to Christ to be both God and man. But the miracles which Christ worked have been done by others also. Therefore they were not a sufficient proof of His Godhead.

Objection 2. Further, no power surpasses that of the Godhead. But some have worked greater miracles than Christ, for it is written (Jn. 14:12): “He that believeth in Me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do.” Therefore it seems that the miracles which Christ worked are not sufficient proof of His Godhead.

Objection 3. Further, the particular is not a sufficient proof of the universal. But any one of Christ’s miracles was one particular work. Therefore none of them was a sufficient proof of His Godhead, by reason of which He had universal power over all things.

On the contrary, our Lord said (Jn. 5:36): “The works which the Father hath given Me to perfect...themselves...give testimony of Me.”

I answer that, The miracles which Christ worked were a sufficient proof of His Godhead in three respects. First, as to the very nature of the works, which surpassed the entire capability of created power, and therefore could not be done save by Divine power. For this reason the blind man, after his sight had been restored, said (Jn. 9:32,33): “From the beginning of the world it has not been heard, that any man hath opened the eyes of one born blind. Unless this man were of God, he could not do anything.”

Secondly, as to the way in which He worked miracles—namely, because He worked miracles as though of His own power, and not by praying, as others do. Wherefore it is written (Lk. 6:19) that “virtue went out from Him and healed all.” Whereby it is proved, as Cyril says (Comment. in Lucam) that “He did not receive power from another, but, being God by nature, He showed His own power over the sick. And this is how He worked countless miracles.” Hence on Mat. 8:16: “He cast out spirits with His word, and all that were sick He healed,” Chrysostom says: “Mark how great a multitude of persons healed, the Evangelists pass quickly over, not mentioning one by one...but in one word traversing an unspeakable sea of miracles.” And thus it was shown that His power was co-equal with that of God the Father, according to Jn. 5:19: “What things soever” the Father “doth, these the Son doth also in like manner”; and, again

(Jn. 5:21): “As the Father raiseth up the dead and giveth life, so the Son also giveth life to whom He will.”

Thirdly, from the very fact that He taught that He was God; for unless this were true it would not be confirmed by miracles worked by Divine power. Hence it was said (Mk. 1:27): “What is this new doctrine? For with power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.”

Reply to Objection 1. This was the argument of the Gentiles. Wherefore Augustine says (Ep. ad Volusian. cxxxvii): “No suitable wonders; say they, show forth the presence of so great majesty, for the ghostly cleansing” whereby He cast out demons, “the cure of the sick, the raising of the dead to life, if other miracles be taken into account, are small things before God.” To this Augustine answers thus: “We own that the prophets did as much...But even Moses himself and the other prophets made Christ the Lord the object of their prophecy, and gave Him great glory...He, therefore, chose to do similar things to avoid the inconsistency of failing to do what He had done through others. Yet still He was bound to do something which no other had done: to be born of a virgin, to rise from the dead, and to ascend into heaven. If anyone deem this a slight thing for God to do, I know not what more he can expect. Having become man, ought He to have made another world, that we might believe Him to be Him by whom the world was made? But in this world neither a greater world could be made nor one equal to it: and if He had made a lesser world in comparison with this, that too would have been deemed a small thing.”

As to the miracles worked by others, Christ did greater still. Hence on Jn. 15:24: “If I had not done in [Douay: ‘among’] them the works that no other men hath done,” etc., Augustine says: “None of the works of Christ seem to be greater than the raising of the dead: which thing we know the ancient prophets also did...Yet Christ did some works ‘which no other man hath done.’ But we are told in answer that others did works which He did not, and which none other did...But to heal with so great a power so many defects and ailments and grievances of mortal men, this we read concerning none soever of the men of old. To say nothing of those, each of whom by His bidding, as they came in His way, He made whole...Mark saith (6:56): ‘Whithersoever He entered, into towns or into villages or into cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch but the hem of His garment: and as many as

touched Him were made whole.’ These things none other did in them; for when He saith ‘In them,’ it is not to be understood to mean ‘Among them,’ or ‘In their presence,’ but wholly ‘In them,’ because He healed them...Therefore whatever works He did in them are works that none ever did; since if ever any other man did any one of them, by His doing he did it; whereas these works He did, not by their doing, but by Himself.”

Reply to Objection 2. Augustine explains this passage of John as follows (Tract. lxxi): “What are these ‘greater works’ which believers in Him would do? That, as they passed by, their very shadow healed the sick? For it is greater that a shadow should heal than the hem of a garment...When, however, He said these words, it was the deeds and works of His words that He spoke of: for when He said...‘The Father who abideth in Me, He doth the works,’ what works did He mean, then, but the words He was speaking?...and the fruits of those same words was the faith of those (who believed): but when the disciples preached the Gospel, not some few like those, but the very nations believed...(Tract. lxxii). Did not that rich man go away from His presence sorrowful?...and yet afterwards, what one individual, having heard from Him, did not, that many did when He spake by the mouth of His disciples...Behold, He did greater works when spoken of by men believing than when speaking to men hearing. But there is yet this difficulty: that He did these ‘greater works’ by the apostles: whereas He saith as meaning not only them:...‘He that believeth in Me’...Listen!...‘He that believeth in Me, the works

that I do, he also shall do’: first, ‘I do,’ then ‘he also shall do,’ because I do that he may do. What works—but that from ungodly he should be made righteous?...Which thing Christ worketh in him, truly, but not without him. Yes, I may affirm this to be altogether greater than to create” “heaven and earth...for ‘heaven and earth shall pass away’; but the salvation and justification of the predestinate shall remain...But also in the heavens...the angels are the works of Christ: and does that man do greater works than these, who co-operates with Christ in the work of his justification?...let him, who can, judge whether it be greater to create a righteous being than to justify an ungodly one. Certainly if both are works of equal power, the latter is a work of greater mercy.”

“But there is no need for us to understand all the works of Christ, where He saith ‘Greater than these shall he do.’ For by ‘these’ He meant, perhaps, those which He was doing at that hour: now at that time He was speaking words of faith:...and certainly it is less to preach words of righteousness, which thing He did without us, than to justify the ungodly, which thing He so doth in us that we also do it ourselves.”

Reply to Objection 3. When some particular work is proper to some agent, then that particular work is a sufficient proof of the whole power of that agent: thus, since the act of reasoning is proper to man, the mere fact that someone reasons about any particular proposition proves him to be a man. In like manner, since it is proper to God to work miracles by His own power, any single miracle worked by Christ by His own power is a sufficient proof that He is God.

* The words ‘to create’ are not in the text of St. Augustine.