

QUESTION 43

The Miracles Worked by Christ, in General

Next we have to consider the miracles worked by Christ (*de miraculis a Christo factis*): first, in general (question 43); second, more specifically, each of the kinds of miracles (question 44); and, third, His transfiguration in particular (question 45).

And on the first topic there are four questions: (1) Was it fitting for Christ to work miracles? (2) Did He work them by divine power? (3) When did He begin to work miracles? (4) Was His divinity sufficiently proved by His miracles?

Article 1

Was it fitting for Christ to work miracles?

It seems that it was not fitting for Christ to work miracles (*Christus miracula facere non debuit*):

Objection 1: What was done by Christ had to fit in with what He said (*factum Christi verbo ipsius debuit concordare*). But in Matthew 16:4 He Himself said, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.” Therefore, it was not fitting for Him to work miracles.

Objection 2: Just as in His second coming Christ is going to come “in great power and majesty” (Matthew 24:30), so in His first coming He came in weakness—this according to Isaiah 53:3 (“... a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity”). But the working of miracles involves power rather than weakness. Therefore, it was not fitting for Him to work miracles in His first coming.

Objection 3: Christ came in order to save men through grace—this according to Hebrews 12:2 (“Looking toward Jesus, the author and consummator of faith”). But miracles diminish the merit for faith; hence, in John 4:48 our Lord says, “Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.” Therefore, it seems that it was not fitting for Christ to work miracles.

But contrary to this: In the person of Christ’s adversaries John 11:47 says, “What are we to do? For this man works many signs.”

I respond: There are two reasons why it is divinely given to a man to work miracles.

First of all, and principally, in order to confirm the truth of what that man teaches. For since some things that belong to the Faith exceed human reason, they cannot be proven by human reasoning (*per rationes humanas*), but instead have to be proved by the evidence of divine power (*per argumentum divinae virtutis*), so that when an individual does works which only God can do, the [teachings] that are claimed to be from God are believed—in the way that when an individual is the bearer of letters sealed with the king’s signet-ring, what is contained in the letters is believed to have proceeded from the king’s will.

Second, in order to show God’s presence in that man through the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that when a man does the works of God, God is believed to live in him through grace. Hence, Galatians 3:5 says, “... who gives the Spirit to you and works wonders (*virtutes*) among you.”

Now both of these had to be made manifest to men in the case of Christ, viz., (a) that God was in Him through grace—not the grace of adoption but the grace of union—and (b) that His supernatural teaching was from God. And so it was especially fitting for Him to work miracles. Hence, in John 10:38 He Himself says, “The works which the Father has given me to do, it is they themselves that give testimony to me.”

Reply to objection 1: What He said, viz., “No sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah,” should be taken to mean that, as Chrysostom puts it, “they will not at the time in question receive a sign

of the sort they are seeking,” namely, “a sign from heaven”—and not that He will give them no sign at all.

An alternative reply is that He did indeed perform signs—not for the sake of those whom He knew to be hardened, but in order to cleanse others. And so those signs were given to the others and not to them.

Reply to objection 2: Even though Christ came in the weakness of the flesh—something that is made manifest by His sufferings—He nonetheless came “in the power of God” (2 Corinthians 13:4). The latter had to be made manifest by His miracles.

Reply to objection 3: Miracles diminish the merit of faith insofar as those individuals are shown to be hard of heart who are unwilling to believe what is proved from the divine Scriptures except because of the miracles. And yet it is better for them to be converted to the Faith by miracles than to remain in unbelief altogether. For 1 Corinthians 14:22 says that “signs are given to non-believers” in order that they might be converted to the Faith.

Article 2

Did Christ work miracles by His divine power?

It seems that Christ did not work miracles by His divine power (*Christus non fecerit miracula virtute divina*):

Objection 1: Divine power is omnipotent. But it seems that Christ was not omnipotent in working miracles, since Mark 6:5 says, “He could not work any miracles there,” viz., in his native region. Therefore, it seems that He did not work miracles by His divine power.

Objection 2: God does not pray. But as is clear in the case of the raising of Lazarus (John 11) and in the case of the multiplication of the loaves (Matthew 14), Christ sometimes prayed in working His miracles. Therefore, it seems that He did not work miracles by His divine power.

Objection 3: The things that are done by divine power cannot be done by the power of any creature. But the things that Christ did could likewise have been done by the power of a creature; hence, the Pharisees claimed that He drove out demons “by Beelzebub, the prince of demons” (Luke 11:15). Therefore, it seems that Christ did not work miracles by His divine power.

But contrary to this: John 14:10 says, “The Father, who abides in me, He does the works.”

I respond: As was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 110, a. 4), genuine miracles can be worked only by divine power, since God alone is able to change the order of nature—and that is what is involved in the notion of a miracle. Hence, in *Epistola ad Flavianum* Pope Leo says that even though in Christ there are two natures, “one of which”—viz., the divine nature—“shines forth with miracles, and the other of which”—viz., the human nature—“submits to injustices,” it is nonetheless the case that, as was established above (q. 19, a. 1), “the one of them acts in communion with the other (*una earum agit cum communicatione alterius*),” viz., insofar as (a) the human nature is the instrument of the divine action and (b) the human action receives power from the divine nature.

Reply to objection 1: What is said here, viz., that “He could not work any miracles there,” should be taken to refer not to [Christ’s] power absolutely speaking (*non est referendum ad potentiam absolutam*), but to what can be done in a fitting way (*congruenter*). For it is not fitting that miracles be worked among those without faith (*inter incredulos*). That is why it is added, “He marveled at their lack of faith (*mirabatur propter incredulitatem eorum*)” (Mark 6:6).

In a similar way, in Genesis 18:17 [God] says, “Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”

And in Genesis 19:22 [God] says, “I can do nothing until you arrive there.”

Reply to objection 2: In commenting on Matthew 14:19 (“Having taken the five loaves and two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them and broke them”), Chrysostom says, “One must believe of Christ that (a) He is from the Father and that (b) He is equal to the Father. And so, in order that He might make both points manifest, He works miracles sometimes with power and sometimes by praying (*nunc cum potestate, nunc autem orans*). In lesser matters, e.g., in the multiplication of the loaves, He looks up to heaven, whereas in greater matters belonging to God alone, e.g., when He forgave sins or raised the dead, He acts with power.”

Now as regards what is said in John 11:42, viz., that in the resuscitation of Lazarus “He raised His eyes,” He did this for the sake of giving an example and not because it was necessary for Him to pray. Hence, He explains, “I spoke for the sake of the bystanders, in order that they might believe that you [Father] have sent me.”

Reply to objection 3: Christ drove out demons in a way different from the way in which they are expelled by the power of demons.

For demons are expelled from bodies by higher demons in such a way that their dominion over the souls nonetheless remains; for the devil does not act contrary to his own kingdom.

By contrast, Christ drove out demons not only from the body, but much more from the soul. And so the blasphemous opinion of the Jews who claimed that He was driving out demons by the power of demons was disproved by our Lord, first of all, by the fact that Satan is not divided against himself; second, by the example of others who were expelling demons by the Spirit of God; third, because He could not expel a demon unless he conquered him by God’s power; and, fourth, because there was nothing in common between Him and Satan, either in their works or in the effect of those works, since Satan desired to drive apart those whom Christ was gathering together (cf. Matthew 12:24-30; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 11:15-26).

Article 3

Did Christ begin to work miracles at the wedding feast, by changing water into wine?

It seems that Christ did not begin to work miracles at the wedding feast, by changing water into wine (*Christus non incoeperit miracula facere in nuptiis, mutando aquam in vinum*):

Objection 1: In the book *De Infantia Salvatoris* we read that Christ worked many miracles in his childhood. But He worked the miracle of converting water into wine at the wedding feast in the thirtieth or thirty-first year of His life. Therefore, it seems that He did not begin working miracles at that time.

Objection 2: Christ worked miracles in accord with His divine power. But the divine power was in Him from the beginning of His conception, since He was God and man from that time on. Therefore, it seems that He worked miracles from the beginning.

Objection 3: As we read in Matthew 4 and John 1, Christ began to gather His disciples together after His baptism and temptation. But His disciples gathered around Him mainly because of miracles; for instance, Luke 5 relates that He called Peter while Peter was in a state of amazement because of the miracle He had worked in the catch of fish. Therefore, it seems that He worked other miracles before the miracle at the wedding feast.

But contrary to this: John 2:11 says, “Jesus worked this first of His signs in Cana of Galilee.”

I respond: Miracles were worked by Christ (a) for the sake of confirming His teaching and (b) in order to reveal the divine power in Him.

As regards the first point, it was not fitting for Christ to work miracles before He began to teach. But, as was established above when we were talking about His baptism (q. 39, a. 3), it was not fitting for Him to begin to teach before having reached a mature age.

As regards the second point, it was fitting for Him to reveal His divinity through miracles in such a way that the reality of His humanity would be believed in. And so, as Chrysostom says in *Super Ioannem*, “It was fitting for Him not to begin working signs from an early age, since people would have thought that the Incarnation was imaginary and would have handed Him over to be crucified before the opportune time.”

Reply to objection 1: In *Super Ioannem*, commenting on the words of John the Baptist, “In order that He might be made manifest in Israel, for this reason I have come baptizing with water” (John 1:31), Chrysostom says, “It is clear that those signs that some claim were worked by Christ in childhood are lies and fictions. For if Christ had worked miracles from His early years, there is no way in which John would not have known about Him, nor would the rest of the people have needed a teacher to make Him manifest.”

Reply to objection 2: The divine power operated in Christ insofar as it was necessary for human salvation, for the sake of which He had assumed flesh. And so He worked miracles by divine power in such a way as not to undermine faith in the reality of His flesh (*ut fidei de veritate carnis eius praeiudicium non fieret*).

Reply to objection 3: As Gregory explains in a certain homily, it works to the praise of the disciples that they followed Christ even though they had not seen Him work any miracles. And, as Chrysostom says, “It was especially necessary for Him to work miracles once the disciples had already been gathered together and were devoted to Him, paying attention to what was happening. Hence, it is added: ‘And His disciples believed in Him’ (John 2:11)”—not because they then believed in Him for the first time, but because they believed in Him more diligently and perfectly.

An alternative reply is that, as Augustine claims in *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, the ones whom [John] calls disciples here are those who were going to become His disciples.

Article 4

Were the miracles that Christ worked sufficient to prove His divinity?

It seems that the miracles that Christ worked were not sufficient to prove His divinity (*miracula quae Christus fecit non fuerunt sufficientia ad ostendendam divinitatem ipsius*):

Objection 1: It is proper to Christ to be God and man. But the miracles that Christ worked have also been worked by others. Therefore, it seems that they were not sufficient to prove His divinity.

Objection 2: Nothing is greater than the power of the divine nature. But there are those who have worked greater miracles than Christ worked; for John 14:12 says, “He who believes in me will do the works that I do, and he will do greater works than these.” Therefore, it seems that the miracles which Christ worked were not sufficient to prove His divinity.

Objection 3: The universal is not sufficiently proved from the particular. But each of Christ’s miracles was a certain particular work. Therefore, from none of them can one sufficiently prove Christ’s divinity, which involves having universal power over all things.

But contrary to this: John 5:36 says, “The works that the Father has given me to do, these bear witness concerning me.”

I respond: The miracles which Christ worked were sufficient to make His divinity manifest, and

this in accord with three considerations (*secundum tria*):

First of all, because of *the very character of the works*, which transcended every capacity of a created power and so could be effected only by the divine power. And it is because of this that in John 9:32-33 the blind man who had received sight exclaimed, “Not from the beginning of the world has it been heard that anyone has opened the eyes of one who was born blind! If this man were not from God, He could not do anything.”

Second, because of *His manner of working miracles*, viz., because He worked the miracles as if by His own power and not by praying like the others. Hence, Luke 6:19 says, “Power went forth from Him and healed all.” As Cyril [of Alexandria] comments, what is thereby shown is that He did not receive power from another, but instead, since He was God by nature (*esset naturaliter Deus*), He was revealing His own power over those who were infirm. And because of this He worked innumerable many miracles. Hence in commenting on Matthew 8:16 (“He cast out spirits with a word and cured all who were sick”), Chrysostom says, “Notice how great a multitude of healed individuals the Evangelists pass over, not describing each one cured in detail, but introducing in one sentence an unspeakable sea of miracles.” And it is thereby shown that He had coequal power with God the Father—this according to John 5:19 (“Whatever the Father does, the Son does in like manner”) and John 5:21 (“Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to whom He wills”).

Third, because of *the very teaching by which He called Himself God*—which, if it were not true, would not be confirmed by miracles worked by divine power. And this is why Mark 1:27 says, “What is this new teaching? For with authority (*in potestate*) He commands the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.”

Reply to objection 1: This was an objection posed by gentiles. Hence, in *Epistola ad Volusianum* Augustine says, “‘There were no indications’, they claim, ‘that showed forth suitable wonders of any great majesty. For the sort of ghostly purgation in question,’ viz., by which He chased away demons, ‘the curing of the sick, the restoration of life to the dead, and whatever other miracles might be considered, are insignificant things to God’.” To this Augustine replies as follows: “To be sure, we concede that the prophets did such things. But even Moses himself, along with the other prophets, prophesied about the Lord Jesus and attributed great glory to Him. Because of this, He wanted to do such things Himself, in order to avoid the absurdity of His not doing Himself what He had done through them. And yet it was fitting for Him to do something proper to Himself as well: to be born of a virgin, to rise from the dead, and to ascend into heaven. If anyone thinks this to be insignificant to God, I do not know what more he might expect. Indeed, having become a man, would He have had to make another world in order for us to believe Him to be the one through whom the world was made? But in this world neither a greater world nor one equal to it could be made; and if He had made a lesser world than this one, then, similarly, that world, too, would be considered insignificant.”

Still, what the others did, Christ did in a more excellent way. Hence, in commenting on John 15:24 (“If I had not done in them works that no one else has done ...”), Augustine says, “Among the works of Christ, none seem to be greater than the raising of the dead—which we know the ancient prophets did as well. Yet Christ did certain things ‘that no one else has done.’ But they reply to us that others have done works which neither He nor anyone else has done. Yet we read of absolutely no one among the ancients who healed so many of the defects and ailments and unsound bodily conditions and discomforts of mortal men with such great power—not to mention each of those whom He healed by His command as they came up to meet Him. Mark 6:56 says, ‘Wherever He entered, into villages or towns or cities, they laid the sick in the streets and begged Him to let them touch just the hem of His garment, and as many as touched Him were healed. No one else did these things in them. For notice that He says, ‘*in them*’ (John 15:24)—not ‘*among them*’ or ‘*in their presence*’, but, once again, ‘*in them*’, because He healed them. And even though everyone among [the ancient prophets] did some such works, nonetheless, no one else

did [what He did]. For any other man who did such things did them by *His* doing, whereas He did those things by *Himself* and not by *their* doing.”

Reply to objection 2: In expounding these words from John 14:12, Augustine asks, “What are these greater works which those who believe in Him were going to do? That, as they passed by, their very shadow would heal the sick? For it is greater that a shadow should heal than the hem of a garment. Still, when Christ uttered these words, He was commending the deeds and works of His *words*. For when He said, ‘The Father who abides in me, He does the works’, what works was He talking about then other than the words He was speaking? And the fruit of those same words was their faith. Yet when the disciples preached the Gospel, the ones who believed were not some few as they were, but the very nations. Did not that rich man go away sad from His presence? And yet, afterwards, what that one individual who had heard from Him did not do, many did when He was speaking through His disciples. Look! He did greater works when He was preached about by believers than when He spoke to those who heard Him.

“But there is still a problem, viz., that He worked these greater works through the apostles, whereas He says, “... he who believes in me,” signifying not just the apostles. Listen, then: “He who believes in me: the works that I do, he will likewise do.” First, “I do,” and then, “he will likewise do,” because I do in order that he might do. Which works, except that someone should become just from having been wicked—something that Christ does within him, but not without him? Indeed, I would say that this work is greater than creating heaven and earth, since “heaven and earth will pass away” (Matthew 24:35), but the salvation and justification of those who are predestined will remain forever.

“But, again, in the heavens the angels are the works of Christ. Does not the individual who cooperates with Christ in his own justification do works greater than these works? Let him who is capable judge whether it is greater to create those who are just than to justify those who are wicked. Surely, if both works are of equal power, the latter is a work of greater mercy.

“But no necessity forces us to understand *all* the works of Christ when He says, ‘He shall do greater works than these.’ For perhaps by ‘these’ He meant those which He was doing at that hour. But at that hour He was speaking words of faith; and it is certainly less to preach words of righteousness, which He did outside of us, than to justify the wicked, which He does in us in such a way that we likewise do it ourselves.”

Reply to objection 3: When a particular work is proper to an agent, then the whole power of the agent is shown through that particular work; for instance, since discursive reasoning is proper to a man, an individual is shown to be a man from the fact that he reasons discursively with respect to some particular subject matter. And, similarly, since working a miracle by one’s own power is proper to God alone, Christ’s being God is sufficiently proved by any miracle that He works by His own power.