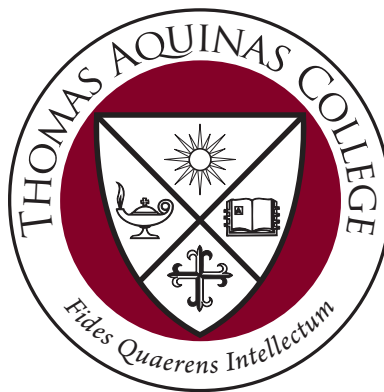


SUMMA THEOLOGIAE

Tertia Pars, Question 43

by St. Thomas Aquinas



2023 Legatus Summit
“Signs & Wonders”

February 9, 2023
1:00–2:30 p.m.
Sabal Room

Question 43

The miracles worked by Christ, in general

1. Should Christ have worked miracles?
2. Did He work them by Divine power?

Article 1

WHETHER CHRIST SHOULD HAVE WORKED MIRACLES?

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 (Matthew 16:4): "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonah 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 Matthew 24:30, so at His first coming He came in infirmity, according to Isaiah 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 Hebrews 12:2: "Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith." But miracles lessen the merit of faith; hence our Lord says (John 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 (John 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 (Galatians 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 (John 10:38): "Though you will not believe Me, believe the works"; and (John 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” [Cf. 2 Corinthians 13:4, 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 Corinthians 14:22) that signs are given “to unbelievers,” viz. that they may be converted to the faith.

Article 2

WHETHER CHRIST WORKED MIRACLES BY DIVINE POWER?

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 (Mark 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 (John 11:41-42), and in the multiplication of the loaves, as related Matthew 14:19. Therefore, it seems 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 (Luke 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 (John 14:10): “The Father who abides in Me, He doth the works.”

I answer that, as stated in I:110:4, 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 (III:19:1).

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 (Genesis 18:17): “Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?” and Genesis 19:22: “I cannot do anything till thou go in thither.”

Reply to Objection 2. As Chrysostom says on Matthew 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 (John 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 [Cf. Matthew 12:24-30; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15-32].



California

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