

V. - Miracles of the Christ.

Now the multitudes, seeing this, marveled, and glorified God, who had given such power to man. MATTHEW 9:8.

Yet, this has not exhausted the meaning of the miracle in Scripture. For so far we have discussed only those miracles which are performed directly and immediately by God Himself. Miracles whose purpose it was to show that the omnipotence of God went far beyond the awesome power of Nature itself. Whoever believed that Nature was the strongest, fell into the idolatrous service of Nature. Only those who saw and confessed that the power of Jehovah far exceeded the power of Nature, bowed down in adoration before the Unseen One. Fear filled everyone's heart, but that fear remained with the servant of Nature, and only passed into the fear of God with those who believed in Jehovah's miraculous power. But this is not enough. We still fail to see the connection between man's calling to royal rule and the miracle power of which Scripture tells us. Therefore, in order to gain a clear and comprehensive understanding of miracles, our attention must now be drawn to two other series of miracles, namely 1°. the miracles performed by the men of God, and 2°. the miracles and signs of Christ.

As to the miracles performed by the men of God, only those miracles and signs are considered here which they themselves performed by a power granted to them. Thus, the signs of competition with the wise men of Egypt are left out of consideration, as are the signs in which the men of God only play an external role. When Moses stretches out his staff over the Nile or over the Red Sea, it is not to be interpreted as if Moses achieved the miracle by that stretching of his staff. Moses himself emphatically cuts off this representation. He gives glory to God and God alone, and he sings it in his song of jubilation: "o, God, by the blowing of your nose the waters have risen, the streams have stood up like a heap. Even when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it, his own selfishness showed how he had to make the indication that the miracle would come, but that the power by which it came did not emanate from Moses himself. Even though it is sometimes difficult to draw a clear line between the miracles that God performs Himself, and those other miracles which do emanate from God, but in which man acts as a vehicle, or rather as a channel through which the power of God works, it is beyond all doubt that such a line exists. In the Flood we are faced with a miracle-working, to which no man has contributed, and which comes about entirely without human interference, whereas, conversely, the raising of the child of the Sunamite widow is effected indirectly by Elisha. The conception of the Christ in Mary's womb is an immediate

Divine miracle; the signs done by the disciples when they were sent out among Israel were miracles for which Jesus had given the disciples the power to perform. And it is precisely these miracles performed by God's men indirectly that are more directly related to the royal rule of man. It is in these miracles that power is given to man to triumph over Nature and over the consequences of the curse.

Here we are faced with a mystery that always boils down to the power that spirit possesses over matter. In nothing, even now, is that power so clearly discernible as in the power we possess over our own bodies. In all that we do with and through our bodies, it is not the body that works, but the spirit in us. It is our spirit that moves our body and causes it to perform all kinds of deeds. If one person holds another with his hand or squeezes with his arm, both hand and arm are only doing indirect work, and the real worker is the spirit within us. However, as soon as the spirit in us wants to let go of the man we are holding, the hand and arm will lose their power to hold. In all the work we perform, our limbs and senses alone serve us. They serve our spirit, and it is the spirit within us that accomplishes the work through our limbs and senses. What we now lack, however, is the immediate effect of our spirit on what is outside our body. Such power remains with us in the words we speak and, in the case of some people, in the biologic power which they sometimes exert over other people through their glance, through touch, or through the action of spirit upon spirit. But man can no longer act directly on the material nature that surrounds us. The guiding thread through which this effect could come about has been severed, and we are powerless against Nature. The fact that the supernatural spirit world exerts its effects on our earth, for the good of God's angels and for the evil of demons, is shown repeatedly in the Scriptures, but fallen man was powerless to resist these demonic effects either. He saw before him a man possessed, a man made unhappy by a demon, but he could not deliver him from the demon. That such instinctive power was originally man's is shown by the faint after-effects of this instinctive power, even after paradise, in the pagan world. Whoever does not accept this, for him what is reported to us from all sides from that pagan world remains inexplicable. But the instinctive aftereffects of man's original capacities gradually wore off, became more and more dilapidated, and in the end, man was completely powerless. His spirit could only work on his body, and also through spirit to spirit in speech and personal influence. The king of creation lay sunk in incapacity, and though he remained king for God's sake, scepter and crown were lost to him.

In this context the miracles which God gave to some of the men of God have a peculiar meaning. For although they usually had the power to save, to end misery, this was not their real purpose. Misery was common in Israel, and more terrible still among other peoples. Had salvation from misery been the immediate object of these miracles, they would have had to be revealed everywhere. But they were not. They were limited in number. They all took place in a small area, among one people. They did not go on steadily, but only happened now and then. They were performed by a few persons only, and all these persons were in higher service, and were interpreters of God's revelation. Thus, they served to support faith in this Revelation, to imprint a seal on it, and to arouse the conviction that a higher power had come down to the people. Now this could just as well have happened, if all these miracles had been wrought directly by God Himself. But it did not work out that way. In addition to the many miracles performed immediately by God Himself, there were others which were performed through the intermediary of these men of God, partly in order to legitimize these witnesses of God as such, but partly also, prophetically, to restore mankind, or rather man's spirit, to its royal power over nature and over the evil spirit world. They were a prelude to the triumph that would one day make mankind regain what it had lost. They made something glimmer again of the power and majesty with which mankind was clothed in his creation. They showed mankind's susceptibility to a higher revelation of power from his spirit, as soon as that "spirit in him" was raised in power by a higher Spirit. These were not miracles created by magic. Rather, the Scriptures are always sharp in their condemnation of this miracle-working. All hypocrisy was to be banished from Israel. The demonic element, which had mixed with it, was to be opposed in every way. And it is against this half-demonic miracle that the miracle performed by man's spirit in Israel is now revealed, thanks to the increase in power that God's spirit bestowed upon mankind. And this is not magic, but in the line of man's original supremacy over nature. For a moment and in a few holy persons of man's original nobility, and precisely because of this, prophecy of the glory that would one day come. Breakthrough of the spell that, since the curse, had, and still partly has, effect on our entire family, but that would one day be lifted. Even Daniel in the lion's den reminds you of Adam in Paradise. For it is and always will be God's power that restrained these wild animals, but that is and always will be the case in everything we do. He who as a hero defeats his enemy and returns home victorious, gives glory to God, but it was he through whom God revealed this power. That of which we still see a faint after-effect in the animal tamer, and which Adam possessed to the full in Paradise, the coercion of the spirit in the face

of the mighty animal, has suddenly shone forth in Daniel through God's miraculous act. As the king of man, he stood in the lion's den among the kings of the forest.

But in full, unbroken majesty it first shines forth in the Son of Man. The miracles of the Old Covenant are connected with the appearance of Messiah. From afar they were the indication of what was to come in Christ; but they were no more than a pretext. They reminded us of man's highness in the Garden of Eden, they showed that the restoration of the original power was possible, they prophesied that that power would one day return, but they could not reveal that power in its fullness. This could, should and would only happen when the Christ Himself appeared, and when in the Son of Man, man without sin and thus man in his original unbroken power appeared again.

It is important not to mistake the miracles of the Son of Man for miracles of the Son of God. One is inclined to do so. God is omnipotence, and where he appears, before whom we kneel with Thomas as "our Lord and our God", we easily arrive at seeing in his miracles and signs nothing but revelations of his divine omnipotence, in order to find in them precisely the proof of his divinity. And yet, it is precisely this idea that leads us astray from the right path. Jesus himself never pointed to his miracles as proof of his divinity. They were intended to show that the Father had sent him, that he was performing a service on earth, carrying out a task assigned to him. He never separated his own miracles from the miracles he would train his apostles to perform. He once spoke to them the remarkable word that those who believed in him would do greater works than these. Even about the forgiveness of sins, in connection with the miracle of healing, the Lord said: "That you may know that the Son of Man (not the Son of God) has power on earth to forgive sins, you sick person, arise, take up your bed and walk". And Matthew, the Evangelist and Apostle, adds that the crowds were amazed that such power had been given to man. You will lose sight of the whole of Jesus' work if you do not keep in mind that he acts as a man, in our nature, as the Son of Man, and that he, acting among us, had humbled himself, indeed destroyed himself, and was among us in the form of a man, yes, taking the form of a servant. On this earth the Christ did not reign as the Son of God, did not display his majesty as God, but acted as a man, as our one, and did not manifest any power other than that which could be manifested in man. He has learned obedience. He came to accomplish the work to which the Father had called him. All his power was in his spirit. The Holy Spirit was not given to him in measure. But it was and remained to the end a power of the spirit, working in, out of and through him within the confines of our human nature, bound by the

ordinances that God Himself had given for our human nature in the Creation. And even when Jesus said: -Do you not know that I can pray to my Father, and He will send me more than twelve legions of angels, he was not speaking as God's Son, because he who reveals himself as God does not need the help of angels, but as the Son of Man, who would be saved from death and distress by the invincible army of angels.

In Jesus there appears before us the restored man, and in him the power, raised to its highest expression, of which the spirit of man is capable in its consummation over against Nature, matter and demons. You must not say that Jesus was like Adam, for in Adam man's development only began, and in Jesus that development appears as completed. He was not just man, but the Son of man. The central man. Man in his perfection, man in the richest and highest of his strength and ability. And even where Adam's power over creation sank and gave way at the very moment when the curse, as we have expressed it, drove the whole of this creation insane, the Son of Man possessed that heightened and brought to its highest zenith the power of man's spirit, by which he was also able to subdue Nature, which had been shattered by the curse. But also, in this way his miracle power remains to the end a human power, i.e., a power falling within the framework of our human nature; provided that you do not take this framework as it is now, but as it was in Adam, and then think of this framework, which was in Adam, as raised to its highest completion. He speaks, in his miracles and signs he works a power that goes far beyond our power, but it is and remains a power that he received, a power that was given to him; and you err by seeing in that power a power that he, as self-God, possessed of himself. He revealed himself by his miracles and signs not in his divinity, but as the Son of Man. Even in his glorification he is and remains the glorified Head of his congregation, that is, the glorified Son of man, for as God he could not, of course, be glorified; and also of that glory which is his due the Apostle declares that his redeemed shall one day reign with him as Kings, and that our now humiliated body shall be made like his glorified body. The connection and conjunction of His divine and human natures cannot be gone into here, but it must be emphasized that whoever sees in the miracles and signs of our Savior immediate divine miracles is mistaken, and does not recognize that all too soon they were one miraculous revelation of power by the man Jesus Christ, or more correctly, by the Son of Man. Just as Adam, clothed with majesty, stood in paradise, but then that majesty was raised to its full height in Jesus, and applied to the creation that had been spoiled by the curse, so Jesus stood over against the demon world and against

all the realms of Nature. In him the rule, the royal rule, which was lost in Paradise, has returned. In Jesus' miracle power shines forth the glory of the king of man.

When "the wild beasts" surround Jesus in the desert of temptation (see Mark 1:13), the glorious scene from Paradise, when Adam gave names to the beasts, revives. The temptation itself brings back the temptation of Adam and Eve in Paradise, but in such a way that, where Adam succumbed, the Son of Man triumphed. His battle is therefore first of all against the demons. The casting out of devils breaks the demonic power, and when Jesus sends out his disciples, it is especially the "power to cast out devils" that he attributes to them. The demonic power is the power, which lies behind Nature, as well as the working of the forces of angels. In the woefully possessed this demonic power came out most strongly. And Jesus breaks this power with a power that falls within the realm of the human, because His disciples do the same. And furthermore, the power of the Son of Man is constantly expanding. If the animals were subject to him in the desert, the fish in the waters also obey him. He demonstrates his power over the vegetation by the miracle at Cana and by the miracle of the multiplication of the bread, as well as by the withering of the fig tree. And over inorganic nature he reveals his supremacy by his walking on the waters and by his stilling of the storm. But this revelation of power over the realms of Nature is not the end of it. He also takes hold of the consequences of the Curse. He releases the blind, deaf and dumb from their bonds. Sick people of all kinds find mercy and healing of their illnesses. And finally, three times over, temporarily and for a time, he nullifies the separation of soul and body in death. In the servant of the high priest Jesus does not even cure a sick person, but a wounded one. All of Jesus' miracles together form a whole. One might almost say that there was a plan in it for the power of the human spirit, restored and perfected in Messiah, to emerge triumphant in every way, in all the realms of demons, nature and misery. And it is only then that you get the right perspective on this holy cycle, if in all of this you see the Son of Man as the King over all opposition that opposes him and over all opposition that rises up against mankind.

This does not deny that you can also look at each miracle in its own right; that you can also admire Jesus' compassion for the unfortunate, his love for the suffering. Jesus' miracles form a sacred cord, in which each pearl is of great value. Yet, it is only when the chain is taken as a whole that you can understand the basic meaning of the miracles of Jesus, and comprehend their deep significance. And in order to arrive at this, you must not start from the wicked man, not from the sinner, but from the man, as God created him in His image, crowned him with honor and

glory, clothed him with power and majesty, and anointed him king over His creation.

That man had perished. That man was found no more. But even though he was buried under curse and sin in human nature, the seed of all that was still laid in our human nature. And now Jesus took on that nature. He is the seed promised to Eve. From Adam's loins He is as far as the flesh will go. And now the spirit receives in him a disposition of power, which returns all the glory of paradise to him; makes that glory shine forth in its full brilliance; and in that light makes the turmoil of curse and sin pale, even in triumph over death. Thus, the kingship of Christ in this first revelation is not a garment that is put on him, not an authority that is imposed on him from without. It is from human nature, under the highest and richest spiritual constraint, that this kingship arises in him. It is the human king from paradise, who is revived in Jesus and goes beyond his original measure.