
Christ's Miracles

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*Therefore, said some of the Pharisees,
This man is not of God, because He keepeth not
the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a man
that is a sinner do such miracles? And there
was a division among them—John 9:16.*

In this verse is set down a double opinion which the Pharisees held concerning Christ, and especially concerning the works which He had wrought among them. Some of them have peremptorily and flatly condemned Him, saying that He was a man that was not of God; and they render a reason, or rather a shadow of a reason, namely because He keepeth not the Sabbath, but their opinion was rash, and their judgment false and erroneous, proceeding from the malice and hatred of the person of Christ. Also that which they have used for a reason, we have showed that it is likewise false; for Christ was so far from breaking the Sabbath, or any part of the law, that He did in full perfection fulfill the whole law of God.

Now followeth the opinion of the second sort of Pharisees, which said: "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" As if the Holy Ghost should say, If our Savior Christ were such a profaner and breaker of the Sabbath, as you surmise Him to be, then it were impossible for Him to do such strange and wonderful miracles, as we see He hath wrought. Of this we have spoken before, and shall speak more hereafter, when we have spoken generally of miracles, of the works of them, and therefore of the power of God, in working them, and also of the power of angels, of Satan, and of men therein.

Whereas it is said, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" these men do insinuate, that sinners can do some wonderful mir-

acles in the sight of men, but to do such a miracle, as to cure a man being blind from his birth, was impossible for them. It is impossible that any sinner should do this or any such miracles which Christ did. We are therefore to show, first, what a miracle is, that everyone understanding the nature thereof, may make such proper and peculiar use of the same, as he ought.

A miracle is nothing else but a rare work, apparently wrought by the sole omnipotent power of God, clean, contrary to the order and instinct of nature, far above nature or natural causes. I use so many words, that I may speak to the capacity of all the people, whereas, otherwise, I might use fewer. We are therefore first to know that it is a work, for indeed it must be in itself a true work, deed, or fact, otherwise it cannot in itself, and of itself, make men to muse and marvel at it; at least it cannot make wise men to marvel at it. If therefore it be a miracle, it must be a sensible work, not a work in show, illusion, or deceit, but a work in nature, in deed, and in truth. If it be but an appearance of a work, it is no miracle. If it be only an illusion of the senses, it is no miracle. It is then true that the illusions of Satan, are no miracles, for he doth nothing but delude the senses of men, neither is it the celerity or agility of men's hands which are miracles, as of jugglers, which deceive the people by an activity in continuing the thing which they do. For they do not any true work, but by their dexterity deceive men's senses. These, therefore, are no miracles, for every miracle must be a true work, and fact in deed. I therefore first call a miracle, a work, to separate it from those that seem to be miracles, and yet are not, as be the works of Satan, and his members, and also those that are done by agility of man, which are works in show, but not in deed. This kind of miracle which is a true work, hath been wrought by divers of God's children, as Moses when he was sent to deliver the people of Israel out of Egypt, did work many miracles, to testify that he was sent of the Lord. He made frogs, not in appearance, but in deed; he turned the water of the river into blood, not in appearance, but in deed. So also Elias wrought miracles, not in show but in deed. So Christ wrought miracles not in show, but in deed. For Lazarus being dead in deed, He raised him up again in deed; when the wine wanted at the marriage, He turned water in deed into wine in deed, as pure wine as any issued out of the vine, and so were all the miracles which He did, works in deed, and not only in appearance. When therefore we see any wonderful thing come to pass, we must examine it, whether it be a work in deed, or only in appearance. If it be not a work in deed, as be

the illusions of Satan, and of men, which deceive the senses, and do not bring any work to pass, then it is not a true miracle. For every true miracle which the Lord hath wrought Himself, or any of the prophets, or our Savior Christ, have been true works.

Secondly, I call it a rare work of God, for of the works of God, there be some which are usual, common, and ordinary; as the preservation of mankind, is an ordinary and usual work of God, and it is truly said of the Holy Ghost, that we live, move, and have our being in the Lord; yet because this is usual, ordinary, and common, yea, daily and hourly (for the Lord doth ordinarily every day and hour, preserve men, otherwise they could not live). I say because it is ordinary, daily, and hourly, we cannot properly call it a miracle, for it doth make men to marvel, to muse, to be amazed and astounded at it, seeing it is so usual and ordinary among them. For it is the nature of miracles, to make men muse and marvel at them; and therefore when as in the evangelists, any miracle which our Savior Christ wrought, is set down, there also immediately followeth, that the people were astounded; therefore that which is usual and common, cannot properly be called a miracle. A miracle therefore must be a rare work of God seldom brought to pass, and for this cause we cannot say, that repentance, or regeneration is a miracle, for although repentance be wrought in few, yet it is not properly a miracle, because it is ordinarily, and usually at one time or another, wrought in the hearts of all God's children. There be also many strange and wonderful works of nature, yet because they are not rare but usual, and ordinary, they be no miracles. An adamant stone (we know not by what force) will draw iron to itself. Iron is heavy of itself, and of itself cannot possibly move from place to place, yet an adamant if it be above it will draw it to itself, which is very strange and admirable, yet because it is usual and common, it cannot be called a miracle. So we may see the nature, and power of some water, to turn that which in nature is gold, into stone; that is known to be true by experience, yet no man can show any reason, why that water should rather do it, than any other. Although this be strange and wonderful, yet because it is usual and ordinary, yet in those waters, it is no miracle; for every miracle is a rare work that cometh to pass, not ordinarily, but very seldom.

This work is called rare, either in regard of the thing wrought, or in regard of the manner of working it. First in respect of the thing wrought; as when the Lord sent down manna from heaven, to feed such a great number of people as the Israelites were, this was very rare in regard of the thing wrought. So when the Lord made the sun to stay

in the element; so likewise (as we may read) when the Lord made the shadow of the dial to go back.

Secondly, a miracle is rare in regard of the manner of working it, as when the water was turned into blood, it was not a rare thing to see blood, but the manner of working it, as namely with a rod, was most rare and was never seen before. So we do see that Christ's manner of healing the blind man was very rare. Therefore, a miracle, if it be a miracle indeed, first, it must be a true work; secondly, a rare work, either in regard of the thing itself, or in regard of the manner of doing it. Apparently wrought, etc.

Thirdly, a miracle must have this annexed unto it: for it must not be obscure, but apparent, I mean not to the reason and judgment of man, but to man's sense, that is, to some of his senses, or to all of them, without controversy or doubting. This we shall see in all true miracles wrought by God, to be of this nature, namely clear and evident to man's senses; for either men did feel them, as the darkness in Egypt, or else they might touch them, taste them, or smell them. When the Lord brought His people of Israel from Egypt, all the miracles which He by His power had wrought among them were most apparent unto man's sense. As namely when they went through the Red Sea, there He made the waters to divide themselves, and to stand like mighty mountains on each side of them, in such sort, that they did most manifestly see, and behold the same. So likewise they saw, when Moses stroke the stony rock, so that there out gushed water. So they saw most suddenly the walls of Jericho fall down; and therefore if there be any miracle which is not apparent of itself, it is no miracle. Likewise what works soever be done by Satan or any of his angels, if it be not evident and to be discerned by man's sense, hence we know that it is no miracle. Let us by this property of a true miracle, examine the miracle of the Altar of the Church of Rome, for in the Sacrament of the Altar, after the priest hath said a few words as these, *Hoc est corpus meum*, they teach that there a strange work is brought to pass, for the substance of the bread which was on the Altar, is gone and is changed into the body of Christ; if it were so, then indeed it were a miracle; but if it be a miracle, then men may discern it by one sense or other. For let them show me an instance where the Lord wrought any miracle which He did not subject to the senses of man, but in this there is no miracle, which may be discerned by the senses; for the bread in the judgment of all the senses seemeth the same, that it was before to the sight, it seemeth to be the very same in substance, of the same quality and

color that it was of before, it hath the same taste it had before, to the handling it appeareth the same that it was before, and hath the same smelling that it had before, there is not any sense that judgeth now otherwise of it, than it did before, and therefore it can be no true miracle. Indeed if before I seeing it to be bread, tasting, smelling, and touching it, do judge it to be bread, should now, seeing, smelling, tasting, and feeling it, perceive it to be the body of Christ, it were a true miracle. But seeing to all the senses, it appeareth one and the same that it was before, it cannot be a miracle; but they say the outward form and external accident of the bread yet remaineth, but the substance of it is turned into the body of Christ, which though we cannot perceive by our senses, yet we are to believe by faith. But how did Christ Himself deal with Thomas, when he doubted of His resurrection? He said, "Reach hither thy finger . . . and thrust it into My side" (John 20:27), "handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have" (Luke 24:39); He taketh away his doubt by the sense of feeling; and if this true natural body of Christ were there in the bread, then might we feel it as Thomas did, for Christ still retaineth that His true and natural body, although He be now glorified. Insomuch, therefore, that in the bread there is no miracle apparent to the senses, there is no miracle at all. But this is the difference (in God's Church) that before it was common bread, ordained, and sanctified by the Lord, for the nourishment of our bodies, but now it is the holy bread, appointed, and set apart, and sanctified by the Lord, not so much for the nourishment of our bodies, but especially for the confirmation of our faith, and the food of our souls. The same also is to be said of the wine.

Fourthly, I add: Wrought by the sole omnipotent power of God. Wherein I note the workers of miracles. The Lord Himself worketh miracles, but peculiarly and properly by His power, and not by His wisdom, though both be infinite, and that a miracle is wrought by the power of God, I prove by these reasons.

First, a miracle is a work of great power far passing the power of all creatures, therefore it must needs be wrought by the power of the Creator.

Secondly, it is apparent by divers places of the Word of God, as Joel 2:21, 30, there the Holy Ghost ascribeth the working of miracles to the Lord Himself. "I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth," saith the Lord, "Fear not, O land, . . . for the Lord will do great things."

Thirdly, the Holy Ghost useth this as an argument to prove, that *Jehovah* is the Lord, and is only to be served (Lev. 26; Deut. 28).

Albeit the magicians of Egypt could work many admirable wonders by their own art, and by the instruction of the devil, yet they confessed that the works of Moses were not done by Moses' power, nor by any act or skill that was in Moses, nor yet by natural causes, but by the finger of God, which is nothing else but His power. By this argument doth Christ prove, that His miracles were not done by the power of Beelzebub. "If I with the finger of God cast out devils" (Luke 11:20), "by whom do your sons cast them out?" (v. 19).

Lastly, this may also appear by the consideration of the means which the Lord useth in working of miracles. As the shadow of Peter to cure diseases. Can any man's shadow cure another? No, but the Lord would have that this means should show that the things were wrought by His power. So the handkerchief of Paul did cure diseases, not that there were any such virtue in it, but that it came from the Lord. So also did the hem of Christ's garment; is there any power in the hem of a man's garment to cure diseases? Surely no, but the Lord useth that means to teach us thereby that His power only doth work it. Here then we must acknowledge, that miracles are wrought only by the Lord, and serve greatly to the advancing of His glory.

Lastly we must consider, that a miracle is contrary to the instinct of nature. Nature had never any such inclination, as to bring to pass any miracle, as when the water stood on two parts, nature had a desire to make the waters run, when as then the waters stood, it was contrary to nature.

The Use

The use that we must make hereof, is to give to God that which is His own, that we should acknowledge Him to be the sole Author and Worker of miracles, that either have been or shall be in the world. If thou give them to Satan, then doest thou constitute him, instead of the Lord Himself. Art thou the Lord's? Then know, that neither Satan, nor any creature, is able to work any miracle against thee. If thou be His, rather than His name should be dishonored by thee, He will work miraculously, for thy good and preservation.

Further, this serveth to ratify our faith in the power of God. The devil is His servant, whether he will or not, he can do nothing but that which the Lord willeth.

And hereby we hold that our bodies shall be raised again at the last day. For God is able to work all miracles; although there be neither

bone, skin, nor flesh left, yet He is able to join flesh to flesh, sinew to sinew, and raise us up again with the same bodies we had before.

The Second Part of This Sermon

Now remaineth something to be spoken more plainly and particularly of miracles. For as in all other things, so also in miracles, the Lord useth diverse and sundry ways of working. For either Himself alone, and of Himself alone, or else He useth some creature in the working of the same. As in the creation of the world, He used not anything out of Himself, but in Himself, by Himself, and of Himself alone, He created all things of nothing. So likewise in the working of some miracles, it pleaseth Him not to admit the use of any creature whatsoever. As when He stayed the sun in the firmament, He did it of Himself without the help of any other. So also He turned back the shadow of the dial of Azah by Himself alone without the use of any other. But nevertheless in working some miracles, He useth means, but especially man for the means thereof. As in all the miracles wrought in Egypt, the Lord did work them indeed, but by the hand of Moses and Aaron. He divided the Red Sea so that Israel passed through on dry foot, but it was done by Moses. So also He wrought many miracles in the wilderness before the Israelites, but by the hands of Moses and Aaron. So some miracles were done by judges, some by Elizaëus, and others of the prophets. So also God wrought miracles afterward, not only by His Son, but also by the hands of the apostles. So that it is a true point of religion, to hold, that the Lord in working of miracles, doth oftentimes use the means of man therein. In this doctrine we are to take heed of these two dangerous points.

First, that we derogate nothing from the majesty of God, although He use means in the working of many miracles. Secondly, that we do not magnify the creature, which the Lord useth above that which is convenient, into which many have fallen heretofore. For the avoiding therefore of them, it is necessary to hold these two points of religion: first, to believe and know that the omnipotent power of God cannot be communicated to any creature. For the Lord saith, as of His wisdom, justice, and mercy, so also of His power. I will not give My glory to another. We are therefore to hold, that the power of God cannot beseem any creature whatsoever, no, though it be an angel of heaven.

Secondly, that we must know, remember, and constantly believe, that albeit the power of God could be communicated to any creature,

either in heaven or in earth, yet that there is no creature capable thereof, no creature is able to bear it. This is evident in the example of Peter, before whom when Christ had wrought a miracle, and he had seen some small sight of His glory, he said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). If Peter could not abide the glimmering of His glory, and if it brought his sins to memory, insomuch that he thought himself unworthy of His presence; how much more unable had he been to bear the weight thereof.

But (may some say) if this be so, why then doth the Lord use means in working of miracles? Why doth He use men, prophets, apostles, yea, and those also which have no justifying faith, and also other creatures? I answer, the Lord useth them, not because He stands in need of them (for He can work all things of Himself), neither useth He them, that men should ascribe less to Him, and more to the creatures which He useth, but for to teach us these three things.

First, to teach us, how His majesty doth approve the means whereby things are brought to pass; for if the Lord useth means when as they be of less use, much more will He approve when the means are used which have some power to bring things to pass. This then is the first cause why the Lord useth means, to show that He would have us kept, maintained, and live in this world, but so, as by using such means, as His majesty shall appoint. Therefore no man ought to neglect and contemn the means, lest he oppose himself against the Lord.

Secondly, the Lord useth creatures in working miracles, to support and uphold man's weakness, who is not able to look on His majesty, when He worketh Himself. This is plain in the example of the Israelites (Exod. 19). When they came to Mount Sinai, to hear the Lord, there was such thunder and lightning, and the sound of a trumpet exceeding loud, and the mount all of a smoke, because the Lord came down by fire, they were so bereft of their senses, and were so afraid, that afterward they desired the Lord not to speak to them Himself any more, but that they might have Moses to speak unto them, and they would hear him.

Thirdly, the Lord useth means for the trial of our faith, of our religion, and conscience, whether we will ascribe the work that is wrought to the worker thereof or to the means, or partly to the worker, and partly to the means, or as some do, all to the means, and none to the worker. The Lord trieth whether we will be constant, to ascribe the power that is in miracles unto His majesty, for in the miracles of Christ, we see how diversely they were expounded, albeit they were

effected by the finger of God, yet the Pharisees would not ascribe them to the worker, but said that He wrought miracles by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. This is the corruption of man and want of faith; they are ready to ascribe though not all, yet at the least some part of the miracle to creatures, which are but the means, and not wholly to the Lord, who is the only worker of miracles; for these causes the Lord useth means in working miracles, to teach us these things thereby, for all miracles are wrought not for Him, but for our cause.

The means which the Lord useth are of divers sorts, but especially three.

First, some means which the Lord useth in working of miracles, are such as may seem to men to have some power in them, for the working of the miracle. As when Moses came to the Red Sea, he lift up his rod, and stretched out his hand over the waters. So when he came to the rock to get water for the people, he stroke the rock with his staff, which seemed to have some power in it, to make the water gush out of the rock, as afterward it did.

The second sort of means which the Lord useth, are such as have not so much as an appearance of any force or power, or use, in the working of the miracle. Such was the hem of Christ's garment, the hem of a garment hath not so much as an appearance, that it should heal any that are diseased. Such was the handkerchief of Paul to cure diseases, what are handkerchiefs or swaddling clouts (as we may as well say, for the curing of diseases); such was the shadow of Peter, whereunto some coming were healed of their diseases. These were wrought when the apostles were ignorant thereof, and when they were occupied about other matters. But yet it pleaseth the Lord to use such means, although they have not any appearance of any power in the working of a miracle.

Thirdly, the Lord useth such means as are not available for the work, but seem to hinder it, as in curing of the blind man, the clay which was made, and laid upon his eyes, this Christ (who was God and man) used, though it seemed to contain in it a natural hindrance to the miracle. These three sorts of means the Lord useth, to teach its three notable points.

First, He useth the first means to try the truth of our faith, to see whether we be so firm in faith, and whether we will so wholly rely upon Him, as that we will give all glory to Him for the working of the miracle, though the means used do seem to have some power of bringing it to pass, we must therefore learn to give all glory to the Lord whatsoever.

Secondly, the second sort of means that the Lord useth, is to teach us, that it is He alone that worketh miracles, and not the creature which is used, His sole omnipotent power doth work it. Let the means do or be what it will, whether it be any creature whatsoever, or no creature, as was the shadow of Peter which was nothing, but the absence of light. Let us acknowledge the Lord to be the only cause and worker of the miracle.

Thirdly, the third sort of means teacheth us to give nothing to the creature itself which is used, which is contrary to the opinion of many superstitious people, and contrary to all conjurers, sorcerers, and casters of figures; Satan maketh them to think that the miracle is brought to pass by him, or the means which he appointeth, and not by the power of God. But we must acknowledge that all creatures whatsoever, that albeit the power of angels be great, yet if all these were joined together, yet they were not able to work the least miracle that could be. This doctrine hath singular use. First, it teacheth us what a miracle is. Secondly, what a miracle is not; as all manner of appearances are no miracles, whether they be illusions of Satan, or proceed from the deceit, subtlety, and agility of man, none of them are miracles. So the preservation of mankind, albeit it be a true work wrought by God only, yet because it is a true, usual, and ordinary work, it is no miracle, for every miracle is a rare work of God.

Thirdly, it teacheth us that no work is a miracle which cannot be felt, smelled, or perceived by some of the senses; when men therefore hold us in hand that there is a miracle, yet if we cannot see anything, feel, smell, or taste anything, contrary to the ordinary manner, there is no miracle wrought. Therefore, let the malignant Church of Rome teach, write, and decree in their counsels, that there is a miracle wrought in the sacrifice of their Altar; yet because I can neither see, touch, smell, nor taste anything but the same that was before, it cannot be any miracle.

Fourthly, every miracle is wrought by the sole omnipotent power of God.

If any work be done by the power of Satan, or of any man; or anything be done wonderfully by the power of nature, it is no miracle. If Satan hath power to do any strange thing, it is a natural work, and therefore no miracle. So also of the good angels. So likewise if we see strange things come to pass in the heavens by natural causes, we are not to think they are any miracles.

Last of all, if anything fall out according to the rare strength and power of some waters, or other creatures, if it fall out by nature, or if

partly by art, and partly by nature, it is no miracle. Whatsoever, therefore, is not brought to pass by the sole omnipotent power of God, and that is not contrary to nature, it is no miracle.

It followeth now to see, how many sorts and kinds of miracles there be. I mean not how many sorts there be in nature (for so there is but only one true miracle) but in name, and as they are called, for so there may be diverse, and this I gather out of the words of these Pharisees. "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" insinuating thereby, that there be some miracles which sinners may do, yet not such as Christ had done. Out of this place then we gather that in name there be two sorts of miracles. One is a true and divine miracle, which is that whereof we have spoken before, which is an unbelievable miracle, for it is not done to deceive any, but to magnify the work thereof, and for the good of them for whom it is wrought, and for the profit of those which behold it, it is called divine because it is wrought by the sole omnipotent power of God. Besides this, there is a false, vain and deceivable miracle, false, I say, because it is not this, for whatsoever is not this, is a false miracle, and vain, because it cannot have any good, godly, profitable and holy use to the conscience of man, and deceivable, because it deludeth men that are to discern and judge of it. This is the miracle which the Pharisees here speak of, the which is granted to be done by the wicked. Elsewhere in the Scriptures we read, who are the workers of this miracle, as namely Satan himself doth oftentimes work it. So also his ministers do oftentimes work the same, for the Holy Ghost teacheth us, that in the latter days "there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:24). We must not imagine that the false Christs shall work true miracles, but they shall work such strange and wonderful things, that they should carry away many after them; nay, if the Lord had not decreed in His secret counsel to save them that they should never fall away, they would also deceive them. Whereby we may be admonished, that seeing we are in the last age of the world, that fearful times are at hand, wherein false Christs shall arise and deceive many. And is not Satan now strong in the hearts of the reprobates, that they will teach false doctrines? Now what if heretics and schismatics should have power to confirm their doctrine by miracles and strange wonders? Would not many believe in them? Let us therefore (as Paul taught the Galatians) prepare our hearts, that if an angel from heaven teach us any other doctrine than that which we have received in the written Word of

God, let him be accursed. The Holy Ghost also foretelleth us, that before the coming of Christ to judgment, shall appear Antichrist “with all power and signs and lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9). The Holy Ghost doth before admonish us hereof, that we should not waver at every motion, nor fall away at every trial, but be constant, and hold fast the doctrine which we have received from the Lord, by His prophets, His Son, and His apostles; then although we be tried with heretics and schismatics, and seem to ourselves and to others to be lost, yet we shall be reserved to eternal salvation.

But some man may say: If Satan can work such miracles, and the Lord would have false Christs to arise and work wonders, how shall we judge of a miracle that is done; whether it proceed from the Lord, or from Satan and his ministers, from a good cause and worker, or from an evil, and what we are to hold and think of the power of Satan, how far it reacheth, and what it is able to do? I answer, that this is a very necessary point to be known, and seeing we have entered into the handling of miracles, we will show what miracles can be wrought by Satan, what is his power, where it beginneth, and where it endeth.

The Third Part of This Sermon

Now therefore it remaineth to speak of the power of Satan.

Certain it is, and we are to believe it by faith, that the power of Satan is not equal to the power of God. It is not so strong, so large, and so wide. It is in every way infinitely less. There is no comparison between that which is infinite and that which is finite. If we compare it with good angels, it will be less than some, and greater than others; as afterward we shall more plainly see. But if we compare it with the power of man, it is far greater in every way; but yet we must know that is a finite and natural power, not supernatural—for then none could be saved. It is mighty, but yet not almighty. But that we may better conceive of it, let us lie wherein it lieth.

All the power that Satan hath consisteth in two points: first, in his knowledge or understanding; and secondly, in his deed, action, or work. For according as a man’s knowledge is, such is his deed; so is Satan’s: as his knowledge is great, so also his work great. For his knowledge it is to be considered whence it ariseth, and how he cometh by it, so shall we better judge of the greatness thereof. He hath his knowledge by these means that follow.

First, from his spiritual nature, for by nature he is a spirit, and therefore by nature hath the measure of knowledge given by God to a spirit, which is great. We know that there is a greater measure of knowledge in man than is in a brute beast, by reason of that nature which the Lord hath given to man above beasts. So the devil is made of a spiritual substance, and of that only; for that he hath not a body which might hinder him to see into the nature, quality, and operation of a spirit, and therefore being a spirit, he hath the knowledge of a spirit. In that, therefore, he is a spirit, he hath a greater familiarity with our spirits, than otherwise he could have. In regard therefore of his nature his knowledge is great.

Secondly, the measure of his knowledge may be discerned by his creation. God created him a good angel, and gave him the same measure of knowledge that He gave to other angels. Look therefore what knowledge is in a good angel by creation, the same knowledge is in Satan by his creation. It may be that he retaineth still that measure of knowledge which he then received, albeit as it may be thought, that as man by his fall, lost a great measure of that knowledge which he had by his creation; so the devil lost a great measure of his knowledge by his apostasy from the Lord. Further it is to be known, that the devil being now fallen, is not of the consultation of the Lord, as the good angels are, for they stand always before His face, ready to do anything that He shall command them, for the good of the elect, and therefore, they are of the consultations of the Lord. But Satan is not so, and therefore he cannot have so great knowledge as they have, which is a great comfort to those that be the true children of God, that the good angels, by the measure of their knowledge, are more able to save and defend us, than the devil is by the measure of his knowledge to harm us.

Thirdly, the devil since his fall, hath increased his knowledge, both on the things on earth, and of the ways of God, by long observations and continual experience, who hath always had experimental knowledge of the nature of man; for he is well acquainted with the age of men, he knoweth what be their affections, what is their nature, and what is their disposition, he knoweth what things be offensive to men, he knoweth also what pleaseth them best in their young age, what in their middle age, and what in their old age. And as in these things, so also hath he experience in supernatural things. For he remembereth by whom he hath been resisted and who will not yield to him. This then must greatly amplify his knowledge, seeing he hath always had such long experience of all things that come to pass. As put the case there

were one man alive which were perfect in sense, in body, in mind, in reason, and memory, and in all the faculties, both of the body and the mind, that had lived from the beginning of the world unto this day, and had observed all things that had fallen out heretofore; this man would tell such wonderful things, both past and to come, by natural causes, and continual observation, that I fear lest many would worship him as a God; therefore the devil must needs have great knowledge, seeing that he hath had all these. But he knoweth more than any man could have done; for he doth not only know those among whom he liveth, and the things that falleth out amongst them, but he goeth about into every family and country, observeth what is done, and is well acquainted with their conversation.

Fourthly, besides this he hath also another means to increase his knowledge. When the Lord commandeth him to appear before Him to render accounts of all the works that he hath done. When the children of God, that is, the good angels came before the Lord, Satan stood amongst them, and the Lord said unto him, "Whence cometh thou?" and he answered, "From going to and fro in the earth"; and the Lord said, "Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man?" Satan answered, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? . . . But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face" (Job 1:6-11). Satan knew well enough, that man will make show of religion in prosperity, but in adversity, by impatience would fall away; for hereupon the Lord gave him liberty to afflict Job, in visiting his body with sickness, in taking away his children, and his goods; but whence hath he this knowledge? From the revelation of the Lord; he knew that Job should be visited with great sickness and lose his children, and his goods, when he heard it from the Lord, and so he knoweth many other things which are to come to pass, and after he once knoweth them, he goeth to witches or suchlike, and tells them thereof, who likewise tell others of the same before it comes to pass, and so deceive men thereby, making them to think that they know it of themselves; but neither they, nor the devil know it of themselves, but by revelation of the Lord unto Satan.

Fifthly, Satan hath another excellent means to increase his knowledge which the Lord hath also granted unto men; for they know what is to come by the revelation of the prophets; for if there be any curse belonging to the people, the prophets do denounce the same, and

make the people to know thereof, by the preaching of the Word; whereas, therefore, the Word is preached, there is Satan present; he observeth the doctrine, whether it be of power to bring men from the kingdom of darkness, to the Lord; from sin unto repentance. If it be, then is he very busy, either to stop it from the ear, or to pull it out of the heart, if they have once received it, as in Matthew 13:19. By this means therefore he increaseth his knowledge, that he may work more covertly, and be the less discerned; for he can turn himself into an angel of light.

Sixthly, he hath yet another means to increase his knowledge, and that is by the observation of natural causes. If you speak of an astronomer, he can tell that best; if you speak of an astrologer, he is most cunning therein. Yea, that which men guess at, and as it were grope at in the dark, he beholdeth and knoweth most certainly, and can tell anything that is to come to pass by the course of the stars, and other natural causes. If we speak of knowledge in the arts, there is none comparable to him; he is most skillful in all the tongues, and there is no time that is hid from him. So that by these means he hath wonderfully increased his knowledge. But some may say: Hath he knowledge in anything, in which the good angels have no knowledge? No, for they are as diligent for the salvation of the godly, as he is for their destruction. God giveth His angels charge to keep Christ and all that are His, in all their ways; nay, they pitch their tents about him that feareth the Lord to keep him on every side, that no harm befall him any way (Ps. 91:11). And therefore as soon as Satan had left off tempting Christ, the good angels came and ministered unto Him all things that were requisite for Him in this life. But doth not Satan's knowledge serve to the working of a miracle? No; for it is a finite knowledge and therefore cannot produce any miracle, for every true miracle is wrought by an omnipotent power.

The second thing wherein Satan's power doth consist in his action, or his deed, which as his knowledge is great, so it is likewise great. Let us therefore see his actions. The deed of persuading is great, for he moved Cain contrary to his knowledge, and contrary to nature, not only to revile his brother, but to kill him, he talked not with Cain, but by motions and persuasions in his heart did allure him thereunto. But it appeareth more great in his first action against mankind, as when he came to our first parents in the form of a serpent (which argueth his great power, that he can transform himself into such a creature, and abuse the tongue of a serpent to that end). So we read of his actions

also in Exodus, when Moses wrought miracles before Pharaoh by the finger of God. Satan also by his enchanters did work the same miracles, yet not true miracles, because they did them not by the finger of God, but by the power of Satan. So also Satan comes to a witch, and would also tell the witch what success Saul should have in his battle, that he took in hand, he came in the shape of Samuel, so that Saul thought he had been Samuel (1 Sam. 28). So also would he talk familiarly with men; therefore the Lord gave a law, that if any one consulted with a familiar spirit, he should die, which law had been in vain, if none had consulted familiarly with him. So he was a liar in the mouth of all the false prophets, although they themselves did not at that time perceive it. So he possessed men's bodies, as in the Gospel, when our Savior had cast him out of a man, he straightway went into a herd of swine, and even so he is able to draw men's bodies after him. We may also see his power by a comparison with the good angels. An angel of the Lord slew an hundred and eighty-five thousand men of Sennacherib's host in one night (2 Kings 19:35). Now the same power is in Satan by his creation, which hereby appeareth to be very great. So when he carried Christ's body upon a pinnacle of the temple, and up into a mountain to tempt Him. And there were exorcists that would cast forth devils in the name of Jesus, but the evil spirit in the man, ran on them, and overcame them, so that they fled out of the house naked, and wounded (Acts 16:19). It is therefore certain, that Satan is of a wonderful power, and that the children of God have oftentimes tried, both in themselves, and also in others. Among many other, I remember one that is worthy of remembrance. There was a man in Geneva who feeling something to fall out contrary to his mind, and for divers causes which is not needful to repeat, blasphemed God, and desired that if there were any devils they might come and take him away, who was presently in the air, and never heard of after, save only that his cap fell off his head, which showeth that Satan hath great power. This teacheth us that men must not be careless, but must look to themselves. For Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may soonest devour; watch, therefore, and pray, lest ye fall into temptation. But if Satan's power be so great, how comes it to pass, that many men do so well in this world? I answer this power is barred and limited by the Lord, and that by two special limits.

The first limit is his nature, for he is not able to do anything than that which his natural disposition will permit and suffer. The second limit is the will of God; for he can do nothing against the will of God.

Except the Lord do either permit him or command him, he is not able to do anything at all. As it is also in other creatures, the waters should by nature overflow the whole earth, yet they do not because it is the will of God. So also is it with Satan, as appeareth, when the Lord gave him power of all Job's goods, beyond the Lord's will he could not go, for the Lord will not suffer him to do anything to His children; but only that which shall tend to their good. Are thou in misery, or in any dangerous distress, wherein thou art most subject to the cruelty of Satan? Be of good comfort, Satan is limited, he cannot do anything to thee, but only that which the Lord commandeth him. But may not Satan's knowledge and power be used? I answer it may. God useth it in punishing, trying, and correcting His children. Again the apostles used his power for they have delivered men to Satan as Paul did: "Hymenaeus and Alexander" (1 Tim. 1:20), and as he would have done the incestuous Corinthians. But may not a man use it in familiar sort, in talking, bargaining, and consulting with Satan? No. This is forbidden (Deut. 18; Lev. 20), and we are commanded to resist the devil, and to fly from him, we must not therefore consult with him. He may oftentimes tell the truth, but we must not accept it. Christ gave us example hereof, for he said, that Christ was the Son of God, which was a truth, yet Christ commanded him to be silent, to teach us, that the truth is not to be received from him, for he is the father of lies. Here then all men are forbidden to seek unto Satan, to know any truth, whatsoever. And therefore, hereby we condemn those that use witchery, by the counsel of Satan; and in the former places, the very action of consulting with Satan, though no harm come thereby, is flatly death to the party. I would this law were established in all Christian churches, then there would not be so many witches in that kind, as now there are. I confess indeed, there be some which be counted witches, which indeed are not, as namely those which hurt cattle, as oxen, horse, swine, or suchlike, or else children, not from the counsel of Satan, but by the traditions of other women, by poisoning them, in doing nothing but using the natural causes thereof. Those I would have punished, yet not in the name of witches, but in the name of murderers. Some men think that they may overrule Satan by conjuration, in using this preparation, which is set down by some of late, that they must make a circle, and in it make triangles, quadrangles, and crosses, and speak certain words, as saying the paternoster, and many other suchlike things that they may call up Satan in what shape they will, and he will appear and do for them, that which they desire. But is Satan a friend of theirs? Can any such things make him obedient to

man? Dost thou think that ye canst overrule him by this means? No surely, but he rather by this means deceiveth thee, and all that are of thine opinion. And thus he deceiveth them that use characters. So there be charms used to get away the headache, and toothache. But doth the charm get it away? No, Satan knoweth before that thy headache shall go away, and therefore causeth thee to use that charm, and thereby would move thee to ascribe it to the charm.

But when Satan whispereth to men in their ears, how shall they know whether it be he, or a good angel that speaketh to them? In answer, there be diverse manifest tokens, whereby thou mayest discern this.

First, the Lord doth not now use such means to reveal His will unto men; thou art therefore always to suspect it to be of Satan.

Secondly, if it be a good angel, thou mayest know by this: for if it be a good angel, it will tell thee, either at first or at last, what it is, and for what it cometh, and from whence, as in times past the good angels showed themselves to Abraham and Lot.

Thirdly, if it be a good angel, he will allure thee to keep the written Word of God, if he do not, then suspect him.

The Use

The use of all this doctrine is to lead us unto God, to acknowledge Him to be our only Lord and Savior, and to embrace the Son of God, as our King. In all things, therefore, we must go unto Him.

But, whereas, it is said: "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" It may be asked whether God's enemies can work any miracles. In answer, he that worketh is not against Christ, but with Him: and we see that those which endeavored to work a miracle could not (Acts 16).

"And there was a division among them."

Herein we see that the Lord doth so work, that Christ and His do find favor among their enemies, and that by their dissension among themselves. Here we see that schism is neither a note of a false church, nor yet of a true church, here it is in a false church. Schism ariseth of the diversity of knowledge and judgment of men; for all men have not one knowledge and judgment, and all see not the truth, and if they should, yet all have not the like yielding affection thereunto. We are therefore to prepare ourselves to meet with schisms, for it is necessary that there should be heresies, that in the Church of God, that those which are approved might be known (1 Cor. 1:10).