the cessation of the charismata is usually placed in the fourth century when Christianity had acquired the support of the civil power. The theory lost much of its popularity despite the fact that as early as 1749 Dr. C. G. Middleton pointed out in his famous Free Enquiry that it was contrary to patristic evidence. The silence of the Apostolic Fathers led him to state that there was a interval of about half a century . . . after the departure of the Apostles . . . we find not the least reference to any standing power of working miracles . . . but on the contrary the strongest reason to presume that the extraordinary gifts of the Apostolic age were by this time actually withdrawn.8 He found it impossible to believe that the gifts were withdrawn during the first half of the second century and then restored. Middleton agreed with current Anglican opinion that the charismata were given for the purpose of founding the Church, but held that this had been accomplished in apostolic times.

In 1917, Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield delivered a series of lectures, originally published under the title Counterfeit Miracles (later known as Miracles: Yesterday and Today (1935). Leaning heavily on Middleton, Warfield sought to reinstate the view of the theologians of the post-Reformation era that the charismata ceased with the apostolic age. In addition to the argument from silence propounded by Middleton, Warfield examined the writings of the later Fathers and came to the conclusion that there was much greater abundance and precision of evidence, such as it is, for miracles in the fourth and succeeding centuries, than for the preceding ones. The date for the cessation of the charismata suggested by the Anglican school was purely artificial and based on a preconceived theory rather than the facts of history. We are compelled to accept one of two alternatives: either that miraculous powers have never been withdrawn, as the Romanists claim; or that they lasted only as long as the apostolic age. After examining the evidence for the validity of the ecclesiastical miracles Warfield opts for the latter alternative. The charismata were woven into the New Testament, not directly for the extension of the Church, but for the authentication of the apostles as the messengers of God. The possession of these gifts and the power to confer them on others, destined some to the signs of an apostle.9 The gifts ceased gradually with the death of those on whom the apostles had conferred them.

Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas has regarded the charismata as a testimony to Israel. The gifts are seen to be in operation up to the end of Acts, but not afterwards. 'These facts seem to show that the miraculous gifts recorded in Acts were specifically and solely for Israel; that they were demonstration of the power to vindicate the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, but not intended for permanent exercise in the normal conditions of the Christian Church when Christ had been rejected by Israel . . . Acts iii. 19-21 plainly indicates that if only the Jews had then and there acknowledged Christ would have come back according to His own promise, but as they wilfully refused to accept Him, and maintained this refusal on every occasion when the offer was made, the supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit were discontinued, and the normal graces of the Christian religion naturally more prominent in the Gentile Christian Church and as associated with the Apostle Paul.10

In the face of this rather bewildering variety of opinion, one may well ask, What is the truth about the nature, purpose and continuance of the charismata? To answer the question it is clearly necessary to give close attention to the teaching of the New Testament in an effort to formulate a distinct and accurate doctrine. This has been obscured by hazy theories defended in the smoke of controversy, and there has been surprisingly little thorough examination of biblical evidence. There is need of an accurate definition of terminology, an examination of Christian gnosticism, and the relation of the charismata to similar supranormal phenomena mentioned in patristic and Hellenistic literature. This enquiry is now in progress.

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References:

THE KINGDOM, THE POWER AND THE GLORY

It is generally accepted that the idea of the kingdom of God was the central theme in the preaching of Jesus. Most scholars would also agree with T. W. Manson that it is 'something through and through spiritual' and 'a personal relation between God and the individual human being', while others have emphasized that the calling of a community of people to be God's kingdom is governed by the rule of God. But concerning the time of the coming of the kingdom there still remains considerable disagreement. It seems that there are grave weaknesses in all the main positions that have come to my notice at least. Thorough-going eschatology has lost much ground and is faced with many passages in the Gospels as we have them, which seem to state quite clearly that the kingdom has arrived (whatever may be the meaning of ἐνίκησις in Mt. i. 15). If that is what Jesus taught, we have to assume that a disappointed Church managed to adjust itself well enough to the situation to read back to the words of Jesus a more correct interpretation than He had intended to offer. In opposition to that is set the Kingdom of Heaven. We are greatly indebted to Prof. Dodd and others for the important light that they have shed upon the subject in this direction, but there are places in such a work as The Parables of the Kingdom where his exegesis seems to be strained further than is legitimate. There are sayings in all strands of the synoptic tradition which are hard to apply to anything but the kingdom. (Mt. xiii. 27; Lk. xiv. 24 from Q; Mt. xix. 28 from M'; Lk. xxi. 31 from L). There are too many references to be written off as being due to misunderstanding by the early Church. If they were so radically wrong on so vital a matter, the reliability of the
Likewise, Prof. Manson's emphasis on Peter's confession as the turning point of man (and we take the two phrases to be descriptions of the same events) seems to have some connection with one or more of these aspects of kingship. Moreover, all the main events of the life of Jesus, incarnate and glorified, seem to be connected with one or more of these elements. Hence, one element seems particularly prominent it does not of course mean that the other elements are not present also, if in lesser measure.

The kingship of the Babe of Bethlehem is clearly brought out in both Matthew and Luke. But all accounts of His birth, and there are clear references to power, glory and judgment in the Lucan narrative of the presentation in the Temple. Then there are three major experiences of Jesus .. At His baptism the Holy Spirit descends as a sign of power, in the temptation He is shown to be greater than Satan, and in the Transfiguration the Son of God manifested His glory (ii. 11). Perhaps the cursing of the fig tree provides the best example of a work of judgment. The entry into Jerusalem was evidently understood by the evangelists as a time when the kingdom came, as is shown by their quotation from Zechariah. There are clear references to power, glory and judgment in His cleansing of the Temple. In some senses the kingdom reached its culmination in the cross and resurrection, for then showed that He was prepared to fulfill His mission to the bitter end, and God confirmed it and vindicated Him by raising Him from the dead. Again, the three events are present and are perhaps best expressed in the fourth Gospel. His death is referred to as an exaltation and glorification which had the power to draw all men to Himself and at which the prince of this world was judged (Jn. xii. 31, 32). But the coming of the kingdom was not then complete. It needed to be manifested in glory at the ascension and exaltation in power at Pentecost and in judgment at the destruction of Jerusalem. Finally, of course, there was to be the consummation at the Parousia.

It is in the three events of the ascension, Pentecost and the destruction, that the kingdom will be found for the verses which have caused most difficulty. Mark ix. 1: 'There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.' It is usually referred to the Parousia. But if we are careful in seeing an emphasis in the aspect of power rather than of glory and judgment, it may be legitimate to refer it to Pentecost. But when Jesus and Judas at least had tasted death and Peter had promised that he would be willing to, though his courage failed him in the event, Pentecost is associated with power much more strongly than the transfiguration, of which the chief significance is the display of the glory of Christ.

Mark xiv. 62: 'Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven,' is also generally applied to the second coming. But the fact that it is based upon the coronation passages (Pss. I and Dn, vii. 13) suggests that it might suitably be referred to the exaltation of Christ. The verb erchomai is not necessarily used in a spatial sense, but, even if it is to be so taken here, it is clear that a reference to His ascension in Dn, vii. (cf. Heb. x. 12 where it means 'go' rather than 'come'). It would seem that aposteke could refer to the signs which followed to show that He had been glorified. While we do not agree with all his conclusions, Mr. Stott seems undoubtedly correct when he states that the conception of the kingdom is not dealt with one, but that there is progress both as God gives it and as man receives it.

How then are we to find an over-all scheme which will be able to account for all the sayings in the Gospels as they are? It would be unreasonable to write any off as unauthentic if this has proved impossible. The first step is to analyse the conception of kingship. In its essence, its content, it is a combination of power and glory (moral attributes which are elements of kingship). The kingdom of God are not relevant here). In the Old Testament both are attributed to the king and especially to Yahweh as King of Israel (e.g. Ps. xxiii. 8). But as there is always the possibility of the rejection of His sovereignty, there enters into it also an element of judgment (e.g. note the stress on judgment in the royal Ps. xcvii-xcix). All the sayings in the Gospels concerned the coming of the kingdom and the coming of the Son of man (and we take the two phrases to be descriptions of the same events) seem to be concerned with one or more of these aspects of kingship. Moreover, all the main events of the life of Jesus, incarnate and glorified, seem to be connected with one or more of these elements. Hence, one element seems particularly prominent it does not of course mean that the other elements are not present also, if in lesser measure.

Thus, while we do not agree with all his conclusions, Mr. Stott seems undoubtedly correct when he states that the conception of the kingdom is not dealt with one, but that there is progress both as God gives it and as man receives it.

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evangelists must indeed be small. Prof. Fuller says that the kingdom came with the cross and resurrection of Christ, and he, too, though obviously stressing the importance of man (and we take the two phrases to be descriptions of the same meaning), appears unable to account satisfactorily for the Jews’ rejection of the kingdom of God. While we do not agree with all his conclusions, Mr. Stott seems undoubtedly correct when he states that the concept of the kingdom is not one, but that there is progress both as God gives it and as man receives it.

How then are we to find an over-all scheme which will be able to account for all the sayings in the Gospels as they are? It would be legitimate to write any one of them if this had proved impossible. The first step is to analyse the conception of kingship. In its essence, its components are power and glory (moral attributes which belong to the kingdom of God are not relevant here). In the Old Testament both are attributed to the king and especially to Yahweh as King of Israel (e.g. Ps. xxxviii. 8). But as there is always the possibility of the rejection of His sovereignty, there enters into it also an element of judgment (e.g. note the stress on judgment in the royal Ps. xiii-xvii). All the sayings in the Gospels concerning the coming of the kingdom and the coming of the Son of man (and we take the two phrases to be descriptions of the same events) seem to be concerned with one or more of these aspects of kingship. Moreover, all the main events of the life of Jesus, incarnate and glorified, seem to be connected with one or more of these elements. An element seems particularly prominent it does not of course mean that the other elements are not present also, if in lesser measure.

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The problem of Mark xiii has been dealt with by Mr. Stibbs in the Tyndale House Bulletin of Autumn 1954, in which he distinguishes the two events spoken of, that of the destruction of Jerusalem which was to happen in that generation, and the Parousia, of which the date was unknown. There is probably a need for a thorough and careful study to be done on the significance of this generation (a phrase often used in the Gospels). It is simply worth mentioning in passing that the crucifixion is generally dated AD 30 and the destruction in AD 70. This gives us a period of exactly forty years between these events, and so God’s judgment becomes operative, and the transfiguration denotes His glory.

The reading for today is Matthew xxxviii. 8. There is a mention of someone who has the key to the kingdom of heaven. This is the same word as is used in the preceding verse to describe the method by which God revealed the kingdom to the ancient heathen. This method is a mystery to them, and they will not understand it until it is revealed to them in the spirit through the Word of God. So it is with the kingdom of heaven. People cannot understand it if they do not ask for it in prayer. And it is a mystery to them until it is revealed to them in the spirit through the Word of God.

The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church

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NOTES AND NEWS

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