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 not only of its popularity despite the fact that as early as 1749 Dr. Conyers 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 in an interval of about half a century . . . after the days 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contrary the strongest reason to presume that the extraordinary gifts of this Apostolic age were by this time actually withdrawn. He found it impossible to believe that the gifts were withdrawn during the first half of the second century and then restored.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 written under the title Counterfeit Miracles (published under the title Miracles: Yesterday and Today (1953). 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 We are compelled to accept one of two alternatives: either that miraculous powers have never been withdrawn, as the Romanists claim; or that they lasted only as long as the apostolic age.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 opted for the latter alternative. The charismata withering according to 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 were one of the signs of an apostle. 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 not afterwards, with T. W. Manson that it is 'something through and through spiritual', while of course implying a community of people who would live together and 'a personal relation between God and the individual human being', central theme in the preaching of Jesus. Most scholars would also agree that they have shed upon the subject in this direction, but there are places in such a work as The Parables 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 clearly that the kingdom has arrived (whatever may be the meaning of ἐνίγκεν in Mk. 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 into the words of Jesus a more correct interpretation than He had at all to offer. In opposition to that is set realized eschatology. 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 prophetic tradition which are hard to apply to anything but the kingdom. The text is Lk. vii. 38; Mt. xxiv. 27; Lk. xvii. 24 from Q; Mt. xix. 28from 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
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 the New Testament, appears unable to account for the sayings which seem to assert that the kingdom has actually arrived during the ministry (Mt. xi. 12; Lk. xvi. 16; Mt. xii. 28; Lk. xi. 20). Likewise, Prof. Manson’s emphasis on Peter’s confession as the turning human response too much and to minimize the truth that God is acting in the sayings which seem to assert that the kingdom has actually arrived (cf. Mt. xvi. 16) appears unable to account satisfactorily for all the main events of the life of Jesus, incarnate and glorified, that there is progress both as God gives it and as man receives it.

Likewise, Prof. Manson’s emphasis on Peter’s confession as the turning point of the ministry, whilst being a valuable insight, seems to stress the human response too much and to minimize the truth that God is acting in the sayings which seem to assert that the kingdom has actually arrived (cf. Mt. xvi. 16). To us the most helpful work on the sayings which seem to assert that the kingdom has actually arrived is Mr. Stott’s focus on the idea of progress both as God gives it and as man receives it. The first step is to analyse the conception of the kingdom in the Gospels as they are (G. W. Bromiley, The Christian Approach to the Jew). The second step is to revise the sayings in the Gospels as they are (S. B. Babbage, Mobs and Men). The third step is to see how these revised sayings relate to the idea of progress both as God gives it and as man receives it.

Moreover, all the main events of the life of Jesus, incarnate and glorified, seem to have some connection with one or more of these elements. The kingship of the Babe of Bethlehem is clearly brought out in both Matthaean and Lucan 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 manifested in glory, and in the transfiguration He is manifested in glory. These at least are the most prominent associations of these elements with the sayings which seem to assert that the kingdom has actually arrived.

The problem of Mark xiii has been dealt with by Mr. Stibbs in The T.S.F. Letter (Lxix, pp. 307ff. J. N. Birdsall, Photius and the Text of the Fourth Gospel, NTS iv, pp. 61ff. The Missing Leaves of Codex 213 of the New Testament, JTS (NS) ix, pp. 78ff. A Commentary on Ephesians and Colossians, A. E. NIXON.). The interpretation of the phrase 'God will come as a thief in the night, and his power, and glory, and 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 there are clear references to power, glory, and judgment in the Temple. In some senses the kingdom reached its culmination in the cross and resurrection, for then Jesus showed that He was prepared to fulfil His mission to the bitter end, and God confirmed it and vindicated Him by raising Him from the dead. Again, the three strands 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 in judgment at the destruction of Jerusalem. Finally, of course, there was to be the consummation at the Parousia.
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 important truth, appears unable to account satisfactorily for the sayings in the Gospels which seem to assert that the kingdom has actually arrived during the ministry (Mt. xi. 12; Lk. xvi. 16; Mt. xii. 28; Lk. xi. 20). Like Prof. Fuller, Mr. Stott’s emphasis on Peter’s confession (Mt. xvi. 16) is one of the many points of the ministry, whilst being a valuable insight, seems to stress the human response too much and to minimize the truth that God is acting in the history whether men hear or forbear. To us the most helpful work on 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. xxxv. 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. xcviii-xcix). 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 the connection with one or more of these elements. Each 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 Matthaean and Lucan 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 in Jerusalem. At His baptism the Holy Spirit descends as a sign of power, in the Temptation is tested and so God’s judgment becomes operative, and the transfiguration denotes His glory. These at least are the most prominent associations of these elements. Actions of Jesus during His life are characterized by dunamis as he stresses the power of Christ, while in John they are semeia in which 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 works of 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 Jesus showed that He was prepared to fulfil His mission to the bitter end, and God confirmed it and raised Him from the dead by raising Him from the dead. Again, the three strands are present and 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 judgment by 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 texts will be found for the verses which have presented special 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 correct in seeing an emphasis in the aspect of power rather than of glory and judgment, it may be legitimate to refer it to Pentecost. By then 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 (Ps. cii. 1 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 still has the effect of pointing back to the Transfiguration and to theconsummation of the kingdom (cf. Heb. xi. 8 where it means ‘go’ rather than ‘come’). It would seem that opsesthe could refer to the signs which followed to show that He had been exalted on the right hand of power. It may be that some of the Sanhedrin saw the cloud which ‘received him up out of their sight’ (Acts i. 9).

A third saying, which has proved a thorn in the flesh to all but the thoroughgoing eschatological school, is Matthew x. 23: ‘Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.’ I would suggest that this may refer to the coming of the Son of man in judgment upon the persecutors of the disciples at the destruction of Jerusalem. If it was possible to speak of Cyrus as the servant of the Lord, because he accomplished some of His purposes though he did not know Him, could not the Son of man come through the agency of Titus? The saying then has some point. There would not be time to evangelize the whole of Palestine, or at least they would not have been forced by persecution to go the rounds of all its towns, before the Romans should come to take away the Jewish place and nation.

The problem of Mark xiii has been dealt with by Mr. Stibbs in his T.S.F. seminar at Avenham 1954, in which he distinguishes between the spoken of, the destruction of Jerusalem which was to happen in that generation, and the Parousia, of which the date was unknown. There is probably some value in a thorough 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 the exodos (Lk. ix. 31) and the full possession by the Church of the Jewish inheritance. There is clearly much further light which might be shed upon these passages by the study of the Jewish Writings, and Brandon, The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church. What shall we then say to these things? We should submit that every verse in the Gospels on the subject of the kingdom is explicable without forcing and that we are to see a progressive coming of the kingdom with the cross-resurrection as the decisive moment and the Parousia as the consummation of things. But every action of Jesus and every event in His life was associated with His one great purpose of bringing the rule of God amongst men.

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