

you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). Cf. John 20:30-31: "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written"—for what purpose? "That ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." Signs and miracles wrought in this twentieth century would have little or no bearing in relation to events which took place almost two thousand years ago, those events which were made basic in the proclamation of the Gospel,—the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The miracles necessary to attest those events were performed *then* or contemporaneously, and the testimony of the miracles recorded in the New Testament Scriptures, as sufficient evidence of the Messiaship of Jesus and of His resurrection from the dead for all subsequent generations.

6. Duration of the Charismata

Jesus said, "These signs shall accompany them that believe." But He did not state *just how long* they should do so. This is a matter which He expects us to ascertain from subsequent developments. Moreover, it is a matter that can be determined without any great effort by appealing to the book of Acts and to the Epistles. We have already learned that the extraordinary endowments of Spirit-power specified in this promise were authenticated, along with the evidential measure of the Spirit, by the laying on of an Apostle's hands. Hence, as none but Apostles had the power to impart this measure of the Spirit, to those who had accepted and obeyed the Gospel, which measure they evidenced only by the laying on of their hands, it follows that when the Apostles closed their earthly labors and went to their eternal reward, the power to impart the evidential measure of the Spirit ceased. And when all those Christians died who had received this measure of Spirit-power at the hands of an Apostle, the accompanying *charismata* naturally ceased to be wrought. This is made very clear in the New Testament Scriptures.

Paul says, Eph. 4:8, quoting and applying the words of Psalms 68-18, that when Jesus "ascended on high, he led

captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." What were these "gifts"? The answer is found in v. 11 of the same chapter: "And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." For what purpose were these gifts bestowed? The answer is given in v. 12: "For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." And how long were these special offices and endowments to endure? Vv. 13-16: "Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine . . . but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ." These special endowments and gifts were to remain until the Church became "a fullgrown man," that is, a firmly established institution with a permanent Book of Discipline or Rule of Faith and Practice.

The same teaching occurs in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. It seems that the Corinthian congregation possessed these special gifts in profusion. Yet this possession of extraordinary spiritual endowments had not prevented that church from becoming morally corrupt in many ways. The church at Corinth, for example, had become divided into factions, some saying that they were "of Paul," others that they were "of Apollos," and still others that they were "of Cephas" (Peter). Certain members of the church were guilty of social evils such as were not known among the Gentiles; others were going to law with one another before heathen judges; many were turning the Lord's Supper into a pagan orgy; and there were some who were even denying the bodily resurrection of the dead. Paul wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians to correct these evils. In 1 Cor. 12:1, he says: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant"; then, in vv. 8-10 of the same chapter, he enumerates these special endowments. In verse 31, the last verse, of the chapter, he says: "But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you." In chapter 13, he goes on to describe this most excellent way: it is, he declares, the Way of Love. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of

angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal." Obviously the reference here is to one of the *charismata*—the gift of tongues. He continues: "And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." Here again are references to *charismata*: prophecy, superhuman wisdom, knowledge, faith, etc. The implication is that the Corinthian church was sadly in need of love, more so than of spiritual gifts. Then, in vv. 8-11, in contrast to the supernatural gifts which were to "cease," to be "done away," he places the spiritual virtues which were to "abide." These are "faith," that is, the faith that leads to conversion, that engenders the new spiritual life—the faith which, we are told in Rom. 10:17, comes by hearing the word of Christ; "hope," which we have "as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast" (Heb. 6:19); and "love"—that perfect love which casteth out fear (1 John 4:18), and which is itself the fulfilment of the law (Rom. 13:10). The Apostle writes: "Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge"—that is special or superhuman knowledge—"it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known. But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (vv. 8-13). That is, "spiritual gifts" were for temporary purposes only; little by little they would give way to the Christian triad of faith and hope and love. And even of these three, Love is the supreme excellence. Love alone abides for ever. In the next life faith will give way to spiritual knowledge, hope to fruition, but love will continue to abide. The Beatific Vision itself is the union of the sanctified human mind with the Mind of God, in knowledge; and the union of the sanctified human will with the Will of God, in Love. Love, therefore, is the motivating power which should guide all Christians in their relations with God and with one an-

other. Love is the law which should dominate all congregations of the saints. What the churches of our own age, and of every age, need above all other things, is not "spiritual gifts," but Love. When Love comes in, the Holy Spirit comes in. When Love and the Spirit come in, all division, strife, malice, envy, false pride and selfish ambition, and like evils, vanish as mists before the rising sun.

When the Church became a man, the Church put away such childish things as miraculous supports. In a word, when the Church was fully established and the Word of Christ was fully revealed and embodied in permanent form in Scripture, miraculous spiritual endowments ceased, because they had served their purpose and were no longer needed.

I do not question, of course, the healing of many physical infirmities by means of innate psychic powers in man. Such healings have taken place in all ages, both within and outside a religious context. I do affirm, however, that the miraculous healing of physical infirmities is not necessarily a permanent providence of the Christian religion, and that to include it as an essential part of Christian faith and practice is to prostitute the Gospel Plan of Salvation, which looks beyond physical healing to spiritual regeneration and the preparation (sanctification) of God's saints for their eternal inheritance in that City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. As Jesus Himself said of believers in Christ: "*Greater works than these [miracles of healing, and in fact all miracles in the Bible sense of the term] shall ye do; because I go unto the Father*" (John 14:12). The preaching of the Gospel for the obedience of faith, the baptizing of believers into Christ, and the nurturing of saints in the admonition of the Lord—all these are greater works than physical miracles could ever be.

"But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:) or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) But what saith it? *The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach:* because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and halt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom.

10:6-10). Sinner friend, you need not pray for Christ to come down from Heaven to save you; you need not pray for someone to come back from the dead to save you. You have the Word, the Word of faith, which is being preached in every community in the land, the Word that Christ died for your sins, that He was buried, and that He was raised up the third day (1 Cor. 15:1-5), and that God's gift of salvation may be your possession on the conditions of your belief in Christ, repentance toward Christ, confession of Christ, and baptism into Christ. Miraculous manifestations, ecstasies, trances, visions, powers and endowments are not necessary at all to your personal salvation. You have the Word of the living God,—the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. You are fully capable of hearing, accepting and obeying that Gospel any time you desire and will to do so; and if you refuse or neglect to do so, you are utterly without excuse. If you will hear neither Moses nor the Prophets, neither Christ nor the Apostles, you would not be persuaded even if one should rise from the dead (Luke 16:31).