

VI. - The power given to us.

Calling His disciples to Himself, He gave them power. MATT. X:1.

So then the immediate Divine miracle has restored faith in the supremacy of God's omnipotence over the power of Nature gone mad. And likewise, in the miracles of Christ, man's dominion over Nature. The significance of both of these series of miracles must be sharply distinguished. From Horeb the majesty of the Lord is revealed, but when Jesus conjures up the hurricane on the lake of Gennesareth, it is the Son of Man, who, as king over Nature, subjects her to his will. A peculiar meaning of the miracles performed by Jesus, which is especially evident in the fact that he gave his disciples power to do likewise, yes, he even gave them the promise that they would do "greater things than these things than these."

We first hear about this at the moment that Jesus leaves his disciples and sends them out to the various parts of the Holy Land to announce the coming of his kingdom to the children of Israel. At that time, as we read in Matthew, Jesus "gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all sickness and all disease. Jesus himself called it "his journey through the cities of Israel." Truly then the disciples passed through Israel, and they returned to Jesus in holy rapture, rejoicing that the spirits had been subdued to them, and that they too had been able to perform miracles. They themselves seemed to be too attached to this, so that Jesus had to warn them not to see the highest in this, but rather to rejoice that their names were written in the Book of Life." This statement clearly shows that the miracles they performed betrayed a power that belongs to the sphere of earthly life, and that their highest ideal should always be sought, not in this state of our earthly life, but in the coming state of human glory.

We receive a further explanation of this miraculous power given to the young people after Jesus' descent from Mount Tabor, on whose summit he experienced his Glorification. Only three of His disciples were present at that Glorification, the others Jesus had left at the foot of the mountain. It was just then that an unhappy father had turned to the latter, with his moonstruck boy who was violently possessed, and had prayed to Jesus' disciples to deliver this poor child from the demon. They had tried, but they had not succeeded. When Jesus himself came down from the Mount, the disappointed father went up to Jesus and cried out: Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is sick with the moon and suffering greatly, and I have brought him to your disciples, but they have not been able to heal him." Then Jesus rebuked the demon, and he left the boy, and the child was healed from

that hour on. But Jesus does not stop there. He also rebuked his disciples, and then spoke this wonderful word to them: "For the sake of your unbelief you were not able to cast him out. Verily I say unto you, if ye had faith like a mustard seed, ye might say unto this mountain, be taken up and cast into the sea, and it shall be so done". And finally, Jesus added this: This generation - that is, this type of devil - does not come out except through prayer and fasting. Jesus thus clearly expresses three things: 1°. That this miracle power given to them was not a magical power, but a power arising from faith; 2°. That this power arising from faith was an exercise of the power of the spirit over the power of matter, in its demonic substrate; and 3°. That this power could be increased by fasting and prayer. The ability to perform these miracles was therefore not an outflow of Divine power, for which they merely served as a funnel. Rather, it was a power that worked out of human nature, provided that nature had been sanctified by faith, and that faith had been strengthened by fasting and prayer.

Jesus' strong statement that young people, provided their faith was like a mustard seed, could even uproot a mountain, should not be overlooked. Mostly this statement of Jesus has been interpreted in a moral sense, of what was then called "the mountain shifting faith". By this they meant only this: that faith ultimately triumphs over all the difficulties of life, even if those difficulties were to rise high as a mountain for us. But this interpretation does not fit into the context. This interpretation would be audible if there had been any mention of the struggle the young people would be facing when Jesus was taken from them and they had to carry his Gospel into the world. But there is no such thing here. We are dealing here with a concrete case; of a moon sick child, who was demonically seized, and whom the youth had tried in vain to free from this demonic power. In this Jesus saw their failure of faith. For the sake of your unbelief you were not able to cast him out." In contrast, Jesus pointed out what faith and what power of faith had to work in them if they were to be able to heal such sick people and perform such miracles. And this power of faith, which is capable not of overcoming moral difficulties, but of miraculously curing the sick, Jesus showed them by saying: "If you had a faith like that of a mustard seed, you would say to this mountain, "Be lifted up and thrown into the sea, and it will be done. The ordinary interpretation cannot be the true one. There is talk here of miracle power, of a limitless power over sickness, and thus to perform a miracle.

Nor is it possible to interpret "a faith like a mustard seed" as meaning an extremely small, just beginning faith. The grain of the mustard seed is one of the smallest

among the seeds, but there is no question of a very small, fledgling faith. Jesus does not deny in the least that the disciples had faith. This was not the case with so many miracles they had actually performed. No, Jesus is punishing them because their faith was not great enough; not great enough against this particular kind of demon. Here it was a very powerful demon that did not come to pass, unless the power of faith had been especially increased by fasting and prayer. The mustard seed should not be seen here in its smallness among the seeds, but in a completely different capacity; in the capacity namely, that from such a seemingly insignificant grain such a great power can develop, that from that small grain a whole tree grows. That it was this that Jesus found interesting in the mustard seed appears from Matthew 13:31. There Jesus also referred to the mustard seed and said of it, that it is the smallest of all seeds, but that once it has grown up, it "becomes a tree, so that the birds of the heavens can nest in its branches'. Thus, Jesus had taught His disciples to look upon the mustard seed, and it is this same understanding that is perfectly appropriate here. The disciples had faith, but not enough power; and what they had to become was that their faith, like the mustard seed, was extremely small in germ, but that from that germ an incredible power developed, and became like a tree in whose branches the birds could nest. Thus, the emphasis is on the surprising power, beyond all expectation, that develops from the mustard seed, and must likewise develop from the seed of faith. They had fallen short in power, not because they did not have a grain of faith. They certainly had that. But because the sprouting of the stem from the seed of their faith had not been powerful enough. If Jesus applies this to the mountain that could be thrown into the sea, it certainly does not refer to magical experiments, but to the fact that the power that could develop from the seed of their faith would prove to be a power that would defy the resistance of matter and the demonic effect that lurked behind it. This power that Jesus gave to his young men to perform miracles was thus the power of the spirit that was laid down in our nature, which collapsed through sin, but was restored through faith, and could be raised to a higher power through that faith. And it also appears that Jesus directs their power first and foremost to removing the consequences of the curse. They will cast out demons and heal the sick. All sickness, all disease. The spiritual character of their power of faith is so much in the foreground that Jesus, who penetrates the demonic influence of the curse in all illness, also makes the holy triumph over the demonic in their spiritual power.

In connection with this, we should also consider Jesus' completely different statement in John 14: 13. He who does not believe in him for his words, believe in

him for his works. Something which, of course, can refer to nothing else but his miraculous works. And now Jesus adds: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do, and shall do more than these. This also shows that Jesus does not place his own miracles outside his human nature, in order to derive them from his divine nature. Then there would be no question of the miracle power that resides in Him also revealing itself in the disciples, who of course were only partakers of human nature. He does not separate himself from his disciples, nor does he reject them, but chooses a domain where he and his disciples form a unity; he as the Son of Man, they as the children of Man. But this also shows that the works that his faithful were to accomplish were also intended to be a spiritual power over nature, to free it from the curse, and likewise over the demonic activity that manifests itself in the curse, and that they were to exercise this power by virtue of their faith.

However, there is something else here. Jesus says that this power will come from his disciples "because he is going to the Father". Thus, the believers, in doing similar or greater works, were not on their own, separate from Jesus. On the contrary, they are thought of as being one with Jesus, as being in His mystical body, as working from Him as their Head. This situation would only come about after Jesus had died and been resurrected and ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. And yet, he continues: 'Whatever you desire in my name, I will do,' and in vs. 14 Jesus repeats this again: 'If you desire something in my name, I will do it. He does not say: God will do it; but I, the Son of Man, your Head and Lord, will work it in the members of my spiritual body. Thus, there is no question of a power or capability over which they themselves had free control. It will be a royal-manual power that resides in the Son of Man and that, emanating from him, will be manifested in the believers as members of the spiritual body. It is the Kingship of man over Nature under the curse, which, now that sinful mankind has lost it, was resurrected in Jesus as the Son of man, and which radiates from him, as also in this respect our King, into his faithful, and manifests itself through them.

This convincingly shows how borderline superficial is the widely held idea that Jesus' words had no other meaning or purpose than to reveal his divine power to us. It would make no sense that his disciples also received power to perform miracles, since they were ordinary human children; and it is even less understandable that they would do greater works than Jesus himself. All this can only be understood, if you understand the miracles of Jesus Himself as miracles performed by the Messiah, i.e., by the promised one of the Fathers, who had come

from God, and who, as one of us, sharing human nature, and as the Son of Man, revealed that restored and increased power which, in accordance with the creative order, had been placed in man by God Triune. Only thus understood are the miracles of Jesus directly related to Creation, to the fall, to the curse, and to the effect of demonic power on this world, and do they form an indispensable link in the great work of Redemption. Only in this way do the miracles of Jesus come to stand in the context of sacred history. And, only thus understood, do they govern the further development of man's dominion over matter, over Nature, over the curse, and over the demonic power working in and through the curse.

Immediately after their appearance as the Witnesses of the Whore, the Apostles show how the same kind of miracle power as that of Jesus now works in them; and already at the first miracle, the healing of the lame man, it becomes clear how they were clearly aware that they were performing such a miracle, not by virtue of some magical miracle ability, but by virtue of their communion with Christ their King. Peter asked, "What is it that you look upon us as if we had done this by our own power? No, the God of the fathers had glorified Jesus and crowned him in majesty. They had believed in that Jesus, and it was the Name of that Jesus, i.e. His exalted majesty, that had saved and healed the lame man. And that miracle, too, had come about through faith. Faith" is the restoration of the spiritual powers of our human nature, not in itself, but in communion with the Son of Man, and that faith worked here in two ways: both in Peter and in the lame-born man. This faith, which breaks the power of demons and reconnects us to God in Christ, was given of Christ and through Christ to the apostles and to the lame man, and that is why Peter adds: "the faith which is through him (i.e., through Christ) has given to the lame man this perfect health, in all your counter- words." The revelation of this miraculous power in the apostles made such an impression that they carried the sick on bed blankets as the apostles passed by; and even though Paul had not been in the circle of Jesus' disciples, it soon became clear that this miraculous power was also at work in him. For that power did not come from his relationship with Jesus, but was granted by him, and could only flow in its fullness after his exaltation at God's right hand, from him as the Head of the Body, from him as the King of the new humanity. What James tells us, that the elders also anointed the sick and prayed with them and thus tried to heal their infirmities, is along the same lines, and up to our days this healing by prayer tries to maintain itself.

It is not acceptable to dismiss all that is said about this as mere fabrication and deliberate deception. If no real healing took place, especially the alleged healings

of the sick that are linked to a certain place or a certain person could not possibly have lasted for such a number of years. Therefore, without further investigation or proof, no one has the right to deny the possibility that the same miracle power that worked so frequently in the days of the Revelation could not also work today. The only thing that must be denied is the assertion that they must still be working today in the same way as in the days of the Revelation, in order to deduce from this assertion that what no longer occurs to the same extent did not really take place then either. Whoever sees it this way completely misses the unique and unique character of Revelation. From the fact that Israel, as a people, could only be formed into God's people through the mighty miracles at the Red Sea and at Horeb, it by no means follows that every people today needs to have a similar origin. The faith first had to be established in Israel as a people; the other nations have taken over from Israel. Also, in nature there are what are called climactic periods. A seed that sprouts and later becomes a tree, lives through forms in its first emergence, which later disappear and do not return. A child has completely different characteristics than an adult man, and what would have been unthinkable with a child is revealed in an adult man. Old age brings other information that did not occur to the adult man. That is how it is in all history. In all history there is a succession of very distinct periods, each of which has its own character, requires different information, and has a different purpose. And so, it is also in the history of Revelation. Here, too, the tree arises and grows, and later it bears fruit. For this first period in the history of Revelation, the miracle has a wholly peculiar significance, but it must never be inferred from this that in the second period of Revelation, i.e., when it enters among the nations, the same phenomena must be repeated in the same way. Nor should it be overlooked that, according to the clear verdict of Scripture, the seducers will also make signs, even to the Antichrist himself. Therefore, when miracles occur among us, we must always pay close attention to the source of the power that is said to appear here.

But provided that both the special character of the first period of the history of Revelation and the danger of monstrous miracles are carefully observed, there is not the least reason to regard the revelation of a spiritual healing power in our days as impossible. We must not deny the possibility that God still delights in working miracles today, nor that through faith in Christ a power can still be exerted to heal the sick. It is not as if, for that reason, we should take everything that is told to us for granted. The facts must show it, and those facts must be under strict control. Credulity does not help here at all. On the contrary, everything depends on two

questions: 1°. what power can emanate from our soul to our body, and 2°. what power can be awakened in our soul by faith. The relationship between our soul and our body has not yet been sufficiently explored. We have already pointed out in another connection the doubling of muscular strength that sometimes sails from the mind into the body of a madman. There is, of course, somewhere in our being, hidden from us, a point at which the soul has its connection with our nervous system. By means of that nerve touch, the soul acts on the muscle tissue. It is not the body which sees, hears, moves and lifts or drops something, but it is the soul which does all this through the body as a means. In the sleepwalker it is the soul, which unconsciously guides the whole body. Courage is a quality of the soul, and history shows us how often courage performed greater miracles than the muscular strength of the giant. Seven times Joshua and his people are told: "Be strong and have good courage", of course on the assumption that increased strength could emanate from the soul to the body. Who then would say that the soul lacks the capacity to transmit a higher power to the body under certain circumstances? Even doctors attach more importance than one would think to what they call the patient's morale when it comes to healing. In itself, therefore, it is by no means impossible that the soul should undergo an intense process by which it can exert its healing influence on the body. The soul may undergo this intense process through faith, which is limited to faith in its own healing, and faith in healing may be inspired in the sick person by what he hears or sees from others, and by the urge to pray in the soul that he, too, may partake of this healing. The spiritual influence exerted by one person on the soul of another may also be taken into account. It is not true that we can only approach someone's soul by touching his body. Napoleon inspired his armies miles away by his name alone, and biology and hypnosis show convincingly what a direct influence the mind can have on the spirit. Belief in one can thereby directly awaken and strengthen belief in another.

We do not mean a mere psychic explanation. Belief in healing must always be based on faith in Christ, and this faith, which transforms the soul, comes only from above. It is always in fellowship with Christ and through His Name, as Peter expressed it, that the healing we are referring to here is effected. Although we are opposed to any attempt to declare that healing by the spiritual power of faith is inconceivable in our day and that it is based solely on deception, we do not deny that it is often accompanied by deception and fabrication, and that there have never been any shortage of peculiar individuals, who, possessing a strong biologic power, have mixed it with spiritual perception, and in this way have come to

regard themselves as a kind of do-gooder, abusing the credulity of the superstitious crowd for their own glory and benefit. In any case, as will further appear, it is not in these spiritual healings that we have to look for the further development of Jesus' Kingship over the powers of Nature. This lies elsewhere.