

II. - The man lord over nature.

Thou hast crowned him with honor and glory. PSALM VIII:6.

HANS follows up the question, whether the gigantic height of development, to which man gradually ascended, was a bold and overconfident grasping for the forbidden, and therefore to be disapproved of; or whether the possession of this power lay in the calling given to him by God, and thus the acquisition of it deserves acclaim.

Jesus' kingship, it was impossible to conceal, was forced back into the lives of the nations. The shepherds of the nations, the leaders who set the tone among them, no longer derive any inspiration from calling for Jesus. And even within the walls of the Church, singing the praises of Christ as the King of Glory has declined in tone and hue. To explain this disappointing phenomenon, we pointed to the undeniable fact that, for whatever reason, the stream of Godly life, the stream of Religion, has everywhere sunk into its bed. And in order to prevent the believers from exalting themselves too proudly above the doubters and unbelievers in this respect, we stated unequivocally that among us, too, there is a decline in grace, and that particularly among us, the enthusiasm for Jesus' royal honor has been all too much tempered. The distinction between the believers in the Holy Place, the name believers in the forecourt, and the unbelievers, who even retreated beyond the forecourt, indicated the difference between what we observe in our narrow circle and in our broader national environment. And in order to warn against self-aggrandizement and to dissuade us from passing too harsh a judgement on the downtrodden and the doubting, we tried to give an explanation derived from reality of the general error in the stream of religious consciousness. If we are to be able to work for the good in our national environment again, and if the wider public is to understand something, at least, of the honor of Jesus' Kingship, it does not matter whether you denounce all the evil of the human heart in them. Exercise of influence requires sympathy, and sympathy for those who have perished will only arise in you if you understand clearly and unambiguously that the current of general human consciousness in every area is controlled by times and circumstances, and that those times and circumstances in the days of our fathers were just as extraordinarily favourable for interest in religion as they have become extremely unfavourable at present; and if you, recognizing how you yourself share in that unfavorable time, feel yourself in common with your down-trodden people, and therefore let the anger, but even more the searching love towards the people

who are in the court, and towards those, whom you already see wandering around outside the court, speak in your heart.

To explain this fate that is common to us all, we have emphasized three facts that cannot be denied. First of all, the supremacy that mankind was able to conquer over nature in such a short period of time. A power, in the one century that lies behind us, more strongly increased than in the eighteen centuries of Christian life that lay behind it. Something which caused the feeling of dependence, that broad framework for the general piety of God, to fade so remarkably. In the second place, we pointed to the widening of the horizon, which, having previously been confined mostly within national boundaries, now encompasses, spans and joins together the whole world under a single view. And thirdly, the astonishing increase in our human knowledge, not so much in depth and height, but in the width and length of things. Furthermore, we showed how from these three factors a restless movement had arisen, which broke the silence, to which the pious heart aspires, and disturbed the quiet, hidden intercourse with the world above. And where, in this way, man's high sense of self was eroded, and the data for religious life became more and more unfavorable, we showed how unnoticed a kingship of man himself came to the fore, leaving no room for the Kingship of Christ. That kingship of man himself established his throne of honor in the great cities of the world and, from there, controlled entire nations and peoples through what is called the modern spirit of the age. That modern spirit drove back the workings of the Holy Spirit, like the kingship of man, the Kingship of Christ. But deceived by that high delusion, the king-man himself became the slave of King-Mammon. And although modern man then turned to art in order to satisfy his more ideal needs, the love of art soon turned into worship of art, and the king-man knelt down before the god of beauty, in order to lose himself once again in this idolatrous worship of the idol of beauty.

This now places us before the quite different question of whether mankind, by aspiring to that higher power over nature, has sinned in itself, or whether he has fulfilled his God-given calling. And the answer to that question can only be that God Himself has called man to subjugate nature to Himself; that Christianity, in the days of its unlimited rule, has neglected that calling all too much; and that to that extent it is to blame, that today, in the acquired supremacy over nature, a power has arisen which is hostile to God and His anointed King.

Look up the story of the Creation and you will see that man is called to rule. God said: "Let us make men in our image and after our likeness, and let them have

dominion." And not only over the animal world, which comes first, no, it says explicitly: dominion over the whole earth. That the animals came first was self-evident. Before the appearance of man, the animal world was the highest and most powerful expression of creature life. The plant world already stood high above the elements and the dust of the earth. But how much higher was not the lion above the lily of the field, in its abundance of power and freedom of movement. Thus, it had to be made clear in the first place that man would also be the king of Creation over the animal world. The lion was the king of the forest, but man was also the ruler over the most powerful and beautiful appearance in the animal world. Something which was all the more important because, measured by physical strength and greatness of appearance, the lion won so far from man, and the animal world as a whole rallied around the one, comparatively speaking, so weak pair of men. The high idea of God to create man after plants and animals, to create man in his own image and likeness, thus pervaded the coming course of the whole history of this world, when the high command went out, that this seemingly so small and so insignificant man should be clothed with dominion over the whole earth. Herein lay the all-important contrast between spirit and matter. In the higher animal world, yes, even in insects such as the ant and the bee, a spiritual element is undoubtedly present, but it is weak, does not develop, remains in the earth, is bound by instinct, and operates only to a very weak degree by the free choice of will. In the animal as such, the material still prevails. But it was different, completely different, in man. In man, the spiritual element is the controlling element. He can also exercise physical power, but this is of secondary importance, and the higher a man climbs, the more he even renounces the use of physical power in order to gather all his strength in his spirit. The Divine order to give man dominion over all the earth thus rested on the irrefutable notion, embedded in the whole plan of creation, that spirit would rule over matter. In him the spirit would rule over the flesh, and through that rule of the spirit over the flesh he would exercise that spiritual supremacy which, as a spiritual being, gave him dominion over the whole earth, over all of God's creation here below, over all of this world.

This basic idea goes even deeper, since the word spoken by God places this dominion of the spirit in man in direct connection with his having been created in God's image and after God's likeness. Spirit in itself, as we noted, is also present in the animal. Scripture always states that not only man but also animals have a soul. This is already evident in the Creation story. It even begins with the fish. God," we read in Genesis 1:21, "created every living, wriggling soul, which the waters

brought forth in abundance. And likewise, we read in vs. 24, when it comes to the creation of the land animals: "The earth bringeth forth living souls according to its nature, cattle, and creeping and wild beasts. And so, it was". Even stronger in vs. 30: "All the beasts of the earth, and all the fowl of the air, and all the creeping beasts of the earth, in which there is a living soul". The difference between man and animal is not that we have a soul and animals do not. On the contrary, we have a soul in common with the animals, and our great excellence does not lie in the fact that we also have a soul, but that God Himself breathed into us the breath of life, and created us to bear His divine image. Spirit is a general term, soul is a general expression, but what impresses upon us as human beings is not that we have a spirit or a soul, but that our spiritual soul life reflects God's own image. There is an ascension in creation from dust to plant, from plant to animal, and from animal to man. All this emanates from God and is effected by His word of power, but it is only in man that the chain is closed, because in man God Himself prints His own image.

This high calling of mankind is not only expressed in the inner counsel of God, when God spoke: Let us make man in this way, - but is also proclaimed as a holy ordinance to man himself, and given to him as a high commandment on his wanderings on earth. The newly created human being had to feel small and almost powerless in the face of the power of nature and the animal world that surrounded him. Even though the destructive powers of nature were not yet absent in paradise, the majesty of creation had to impress him and he had to feel deserted and small compared to the countless hosts of the animal world. Even assuming that the tearing element did not yet speak to him from the sight of the mightier animals, man nevertheless saw creatures before and around him of far greater size and number. The question of what his rank and place would be in that world and in relation to that world, therefore immediately came to mind. And to that question God the Lord immediately gives man this answer: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion." (Gen. 1:28). Thus, mankind was crowned by God Himself as king over His creation, over all this world, over all this earth. Man did not yet understand the how. It was a completely unsolved mystery that came to him in this ordinance of God. He, the physically weaker man, frail, slender and small in his appearance, who could only move from step to step, and had no more than his two hands at his disposal, would not only possess and walk the entire earth, the entire world, no, he would have to submit to it. That indicated resistance, opposition. It pointed to an effort of strength that would have to break

that resistance. As dependent as he felt on nature, the whole of nature had to become dependent on him. Not only was she not allowed to dominate him, but he had to control all of nature. Manage it in such a way that it was finally completely subject to him and so subdued that his rule, his royal supremacy and his spiritual domination would become an absolute fact.

In the 8th Psalm, David sang of man's dominion over nature, as also applying to our fallen, sinful state. His song does not jubilate about man in paradise in his unbroken state, but about man as he was in his days, and as he knew himself to be. Hence his deep amazement. He feels within himself, sees before him man in his fallen state, man in his brokenness and misery. In all its depths he therefore feels the contrast between the void, sinful man and the majesty of the Lord. And now he sings about it, how God has prepared praise even from the mouths of infants and children, and how He, by His power over the hearts of His own, casts back the enemy and the wrathful. This mention of "the enemy and the wrathful" proves that he is speaking of man in his days, not of man in paradise. Hence his exclamation: "What is man that thou hast remembered him, and the child of man that thou hast visited him? It is precisely because of the sinfulness of fallen man that the contrast between what he is inwardly and what God calls him to is so sharply defined. And of that man David now rejoices: "You have made him a little less than the angels, and have crowned him with honor and glory." Once again, the crowning of mankind. The crowning of man with royal dominion; something that comes out even more strongly in vs. 7: "You make him ruler over the works of your hands, You have put everything under his feet". Putting everything under his feet" is the fixed Eastern expression for the power and dominion of the King, just as it is written of the Christ that he will "subdue all his enemies at his feet". Even more than one interpreter, including Calvin, wants to understand the expression: "a little less than the angels," as if it would read: "You have made him a little less than a God. In the Hebrew language this is the word Elohim, which is usually used for God. And it cannot be denied that this interpretation is poetically more beautiful, and that on the other hand the comparison with the angels in this place has something unusual. However, since both translations can be defended, we will not go into this further. What is certain, and this is the main point here, is that in the 8th psalm a dominion, as granted by God to man, is also sung about, which presses the crown of kings on man's head.

However, it goes without saying that this cannot mean that each individual person is called to exercise this rule to the full extent. The child cannot handle the lion.

The weak woman cannot wrestle with the Behemoth. Not one man alone can rule over all the works of creation. What is granted here to mankind is granted to humanity, is entrusted to our human race. Man must be fruitful and multiply. From the first pair of human beings the multitude of human armies must develop. Not so on the It is not a single human being, but the multitude of the children of humanity that is referred to here. Not in one generation, but in the generations that follow one another, will the dominion over nature be established. And it is only in this sense that mankind will prove to be more powerful than all the powers and forces of nature around him. Not every man in himself will be king, but man, taken as an expression of the whole species, will be vested with dominion. Time and again a man will fall victim to the fury of the elements, killed by lion or tiger or swallowed by the waves; but man, as an expression of the whole, will have the upper hand in the struggle against the wild beasts, and will triumph over all forces and elements. Hence, in the New Testament this song of David's jubilation is transferred to Christ, because in him, the real king of mankind has first appeared. But it is precisely this that shows that the Kingship of Christ is not to be honoured in him as the Son of God, but in him as the Son of Man, and that it springs from the royal rule with which God Himself had clothed man in paradise. And this dominion is not attached to his physical strength, for one bull can throw a strong man into the air or run him over. Nor does it reside in his soul, for the courage of the lion also comes from his lion's soul, and not from his mouth or claw. No, it is in our being created after the image of God. It is a divine dominion placed upon man, in which God, through man, glorifies Himself.

Thus, according to the ordinance of creation, there is no hint of conflict between the high dominion of our God and the derived and imposed dominion of man. Rather, the one flows from the other. Dominion is so much an indispensable feature of the image of our God, and so much the high sign of His sovereignty, that a creature created in His image would be utterly inconceivable without such derived dominion. This dominion over nature does not come with man, no, it lies within his own being as man. Without this dominion he could not be a bearer of God's image. If he did not rule over nature, nature would rule over him. Not he, the creature with the spirit, but the brute substance, the wild, savage creature without spirit would be master of him. The highest creature would be subject to the lower, and the image of God would be distorted in man and turned into its opposite. This is precisely what has been lost sight of. The image of God has been sought far too unilaterally in the spiritual and religious fields. It is only in the sacred that attempts

have been made to discover the expression of the likeness of God in the reborn human being. And yet, this is possible, this is not allowed. Our confession of our God is, first of all, that we believe "in God Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth'. His omnipotence and sovereignty are in the foreground. Whoever loses sight of this, runs into mysticism or, before he knows it, loses himself in the abyssal depths of pantheism. The Almighty is his name, the Most High his honorary title, and that Almightyness is his dominion, his supremacy over all creatures, his royal-sovereign majesty, with which he subjects all creatures to his feet. And how do you want a creature to appear, to be "bearer of His image and likeness', if you take from that creature image the main feature, the basic feature of the Divine being, and withdraw into the moral and religious sphere. And for this very reason it must be emphasized that in the ordinance on Creation and in the account of Creation, in the characterization of the image of God according to which we were created, not even a word is mentioned about the moral or religious life, but that all the emphasis in the characterization of the image of God in us falls on our royal dominion over all this earth.