

III. - No more paradise.

And God said unto them, Fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion.

GEN. 1:28.

In order to gain a clear insight into the reign of Jesus our King, we must go back to the Kingdom granted to man by God when He created him.

The creation of man in the image of God involved the anointment of man as Lord and King over this entire earth, with all that was in it. And it is this absolute and all-encompassing dominion, which is not added to the creation in God's image, but which flows directly from it, and which in God's creation order is even the only specifically named consequence of man's conformation to God's image.

But this ordinance is not limited to this. It does not merely state that man is the most powerful spirit among all the creatures below and that he therefore excels all other creatures. No, a commandment is also given to man immediately after his creation, and that commandment serves to impose on man the obligation to exercise, maintain and extend the dominion granted to him. Not even the smallest beginning of the Law on Sinai appears at the beginning of Genesis. There was as yet no sin, not even a tendency to sin, and it was only by means of the trial commandment that the direction in which man's development would take place could be revealed. But what is immediately imposed as a commandment on mankind is that he shall fulfill the earth, subdue the earth and exercise dominion over everything on it. It says so majestically: "And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; and God blessed him, and said to him: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion."

This shows how man was destined to grow into a generation of a thousand and more millions. Already the earth is inhabited by one and a half thousand million people, and still half of the earth is empty or only sparsely inhabited. And this gigantic growth of our race would not only come when sin broke out and death set in, but lay, entirely apart from sin, in man's destiny. It was with that purpose that God the Lord gave him birth on this earth, and placed him at the top of the ladder of this earthly creation. However, this could be interpreted as a blessing pronounced on mankind, in so far as the intention to avoid marriage and prevent the birth of children only comes to mind after the occurrence of sin. But even if one interprets this exclusively as a blessing, the commandment, the ordinance of the Lord remains clearly expressed in the imposed obligation to subdue the earth to oneself: "Fill the earth and subdue it" is a commandment that places a demand on

mankind, designates a field of activity, and calls upon him to exert the powers granted to him. According to this word, the dominion over this earth was something that belonged to man by nature", according to God's order, but still something that would not fall into his lap by itself, but on the contrary had to be grasped, held and realized by him. No divine service is prescribed for mankind. His life in communion with his God should be a matter of course in his unsaved state. But it is imposed upon him that he should work out the dominion over nature, which had been given to him in his creation in the image of God, in its full length and breadth, in its full depth and height.

Now notice that this task was laid on man's shoulder before the curse came upon this earth. His would be the rule over the creation in its original purity. So, we must not think here of a struggle with the animals that were torn apart, nor of a struggle against the elements; all this came about later, but of a reign through spiritual supremacy and majority, and through the exertion of the normal powers granted to man. Something of this is still to be found in the animal trainer and the snake charmer. The tamer rules over his tigers and lions by impressing them and mesmerizing them. The taming itself does take place through discipline, confinement and food abstinence, but still, whoever does not possess the peculiar biologizing power of the tamer, cannot subject a wild animal to himself by these means. The ability to tame a wild animal is now no longer a general human trait, but a special characteristic of a very few individuals. It is an ability that is on a par with the ability of some to biologize and hypnotize a human being. This ability is a kind of mystery, which has by no means been explained, but still shows all the signs of a weak after-effect, a sporadic remnant of the spiritual majority over the animal world, which was originally given to man in general. That originally the animals were not wild, ferocious and tearing, it is hereby admitted. But a single human being, with his small physique, still stood in contrast to the countless animals with their gigantic stature. And now Scripture tells us that in Paradise the whole host of animals came to Adam; that Adam stood as lord and king among them, without any animal harming him, and that he gave them names, not at random, but according to their nature. This points to the high superiority of man over all creation, and also to a now lost ability to understand the nature of each species. An entirely different zoology than that possessed by zoologists today, but of still greater value.

As speaks for itself, the multiform nature of animals is not accidental. Each of their many species has its own reason for existence. With that reason for existence

depends the construction of their bodies and the sphere in which they will live. The waters, the earth's soil, and the air are the three spheres of this earthly creation, and each of these spheres has its own ground type of animals. But also, in each sphere that type of soil of the swimming, walking, crawling or flying animal is again separated into numerous subspecies, and also each of these subspecies has its own form of appearance and this with its own purpose. There is no capricious play in God's creation, no random creation of creatures at random. No, each species of animal is the peculiar expression of God's own thought. Each species has its own calling to glorify its God. A sacred order also prevails in the animal world. We know almost nothing about this now. We can make certain distinctions with regard to size, shape, means of weathering and clothing, but we can no longer fathom the real reason why these different species were created in this way, and not otherwise, each in its particular idiosyncrasy. Yet it is still clear from the creation story that the purpose lay precisely in that species distinction. Why else would there be such a broad description of the animals in the water, the animals that fly in the air and the animals that move on the earth itself? Our animal scholars, however, know nothing of this higher knowledge. The relationship which exists between the various forms of the many species of animals and the idea of God eludes them completely. It is precisely this knowledge, however, that was innate to the first man. He looked at the different kinds of animals according to their essence, and gave a name to each species accordingly. Thus, Adam's dominion over the animals originated not in the strength of his hand, nor in the cleverness with which he was able to master the animal, but in the supremacy of his mind.

That only the animals are now mentioned as separate objects of his dominion cannot be surprising. Of course, Adam, in the same way, also stood with a spiritual majority against the plant world and against organic nature. But in these there was no action. The plant is idle. The plant does not move. There can be no question of resistance and struggle, in the truest sense of the word, with the plant. In the fact that man possessed the power to pick flowers to adorn himself or fruits to feed himself, no dominion could emerge. That was custom. A taking of what happened to him. But the absence of all resistance and struggle did not make a dominion emerge. And so it was with the mineral kingdom. Later, when after and through the curse the elemental forces of nature arose to destroy by storm and hurricane, by lightning, fire and flooding, by earthquake and landslide, by heat and frost, powers also arose in these spheres against mankind, threatening him with destruction. But in paradise all this was still unthinkable. In this sphere of creation, there was no

question of struggle, opposition or imminent danger. It was therefore perfectly natural, and spoke for itself, that only the animal world could make an impression on Adam as if it were a military force standing against him, and it is therefore entirely in keeping with the situation that existed then that the conflict with the animal world is made more widely known in the Creation Order, and that nothing is said about the plant world, the mineral kingdom or the elemental forces of nature. Or rather, they are not kept silent, but they are all summed up in the one broad concept of the earth. Besides the animals, the first man also had the dominion "over the whole earth", and it is explicitly stated: "Fill the earth, and subdue it." Where the animals are mentioned separately, this could only refer to the other realms and forces of nature, and thus the dominion over the world of plants, the world of inorganic nature, and the world of elementary forces was actually entrusted to man. The "subjugation of the earth" does not refer to the difficult cultivation of the soil. It is not mentioned until after the fall, when it is said: "You shall eat bread in the sweat of your brow". Here, too, it refers to the rule of the majority of the spirit. It is man, created in God's image, who is appointed viceroy under God over all the visible creation here below. A dominion which he exercised through a knowledge of all of nature imbued in him, and which has now been almost entirely lost.

But not entirely. Reference has already been made to the animal trainer and snake charmer. But there is more. From ancient times we have received reports, e.g., about the wisdom of the Egyptians, which, however vague and uncertain, still indicate that in some circles a certain mysterious knowledge lived on, which has since been completely lost, but which at the time still represented a real power. This mysterious knowledge, which lived on in tradition, may have been mixed up with a lot of superstition and conjuring tricks, and thus may have degenerated completely, but this does not alter the fact that it still points to something instinctive, which worked long after the demise of paradise. And we find something similar, though of an entirely different nature, in the poetry of nature. The nature poet lives with nature as no other does. It is as if the distance between human nature and the nature around him has been reduced to much smaller dimensions for such a poet. He feels with and for nature. He listens to and experiences her speech. He lives with nature in a mysterious, often very intimate relationship, and knows how to elicit beauty in it, which we ourselves would never have found. Thanks to this poetry of nature, life with nature is also maintained for us, within certain limits, more for some, less for others. But even so, to no small

degree, the beneficial influence that nature's life and words have on us is still alive. It hardly needs reminding, how in the book of Proverbs and in more than one prophet, and how above all in our Lord Jesus Christ, this living together with nature and receiving the speech of nature, more than once, is expressed in a most impressive way, and, thanks to the influence of the Holy Scriptures, has been passed on to the whole of Christendom.

After the fall, on the other hand, the relationship between man and nature, in which the kingdom of his dominion had been established, changed fundamentally. His peerage was not taken away from him. He has not been stripped of his dominion. He remained king over nature. But now he was faced with this completely different situation, that he himself was weakened in spirit power and that all of nature rebelled against him. A weakening of man as man, and a rebellion of nature against man, which went so far that his kingship over nature only lasted nominally, and only remained true in an ideal sense. The spiritual weakening was the result of his break with his God. Mankind's only strength lies in his close attachment to his God. As long as the bond between his inner being and his God remained undisturbed and unbroken, the power and might, the strength and instinctive knowledge flowed to him undisturbed from his God. For as long as he had spiritual supremacy over nature, it was a matter of course. But when man turned away from his God, and removed himself from his God, he also removed himself from the source of his strength. Now what used to flow through his inner being as a never-ending stream of holy power no longer flowed to him. From being strong in unbroken strength, he now became weak, brittle and self-absorbed. He no longer ruled by virtue of his nature. The spiritual supremacy that used to work automatically eluded him, and with this collapse of strength came fear, anxiety and worry. Man in Paradise was like an oak tree with firm roots; after the fall he became like a trembling reed. Weak not only against the temptations of sin, but weak in his sense of self, weak in his inner consciousness, weak in strength and instinctive knowledge, weak in the sensations he receives from the nature surrounding him.

And at the same time as this slump in his sense of his strength and power, a sensation came over him as if all of nature, having escaped his dominion and now disputing it, wanted to throw itself upon him to destroy him. We are used to the voice of thunder, but can you imagine what it must have been like for Adam, when for the first time the sky combined in darkness above him, when the thunderous rolling of the clouds started, and when for the first time the flame from heaven

struck the earth like a bolt of lightning? We usually form far too limited an idea of the curse that came upon the earth. It was nothing less than a complete reversal of the order of nature. The solemn peace of paradise passed into unrest, disturbance and endless turmoil. Thorns and thistles emerged in the plant kingdom. Poison got into plants and animals. Devastating wildness began to show in the faces of many of the most powerful animals. The wind of the day in paradise changed into stormy winds and into the roaring of hurricanes. The same temperature changed into a mighty change of cold and heat. The streams overflowed their banks and flooded the land. Weeds and vermin were devastating. Toxic bacteria began to threaten the lives of man and beast. The earth itself in its hidden depths stirred, trembled and quivered, and vomited up streams of glowing lava and fire. It was as if hell broke out of the abyss and wanted to wrap itself with giant arms around all of nature, and in nature around all of mankind, in order to destroy and pulverize everything.

And in the face of that power of destruction which had broken loose, there stood a single pair of human beings, wracked with guilt, forsaken of God, small, broken and despondent. With rapid fingers he had played the whole organ of nature in paradise, in a masterly spirit, and now the bellows of that organ were torn, and his fingers trembled like paralyzed over the rattling keys, from which no melodious heavenly tone could be extracted. We, who have never known his reign in paradise, cannot even begin to imagine the terror, the dismay, the bewilderment that must have seized Adam at that moment. All we learn is that he fled, fled from his God, who came to call him in His mercy, to outline the way of grace as in silver dots before his half-sleeping eye. And at the end of that mapped-out path of grace the Kingship of the Son of Man shone from afar. One day, one born of Eve would nullify the power of Satan, and thus restore the Kingship of man over nature that had now rebelled, and establish it forever. But even though the star of hope lit up at the dark horizon, for Adam this was largely misunderstood language. He was threatened with sickness and death. The whole of God's creation seemed to be in rebellion against him. Not deposed, but actually dethroned was the king whom God had ordered for his creation down here. Suffering for dominion had become his portion. The struggle, which had just begun, would take on ever-widening proportions. And then, on the one hand, stood the mighty, the all-pervading nature, with its gigantic powers, and on the other hand, in contrast, the stooped, the 'dislocated', the human being reduced to a mere mortal.

And yet: in this way also the ordinance of creation retained its unimpaired power. However, much man seemed destroyed, the high command remained unchanged:

"Your is the dominion over all this earth. Get ready, multiply, fill the whole earth and subdue it." This is the tremendous significance that nature has for mankind. This wild, powerful nature throws itself upon him to destroy him. He tries to cover himself, to protect himself, to defend himself against her anger. But this is not enough. No, he must not only resist her attack, but also attack her, throw himself upon her, and he must not rest until he has regained his supremacy over her. He, as a human being, remains the bearer of the spirit. This spirit must triumph over the material and must not be inferior to the material. That spirit is God's, and God's honor depends on the spirit triumphing. No one person can accomplish this. All mankind sees this giant struggle as its task in life, and one day the Son of Man will appear at the head of this mankind, who will gain the central triumph and will pour out his forces to it in order to regain its dominion. But the struggle will be a struggle of centuries. And during those ages sickness and death, destruction and dismemberment, destruction will rage among the children of men. That cruel, savage nature will spare no effort to make it impossible for man to regain his dominion. Weeping will multiply on earth, there will be no end to the sorrows and sufferings. Nature will choose her victims from among us. Time and again it will be as if nature and not man triumphs. Despair and despondency will shrivel the heart of man. And yet, through it all, God's care will see to it that the spark of hope in the human heart will not be extinguished, that the core of its power will never be completely broken. The spirit will continue to fight against the power of nature. Not the tiger and the leopard, but mankind will keep the field. Though the streams seem to swallow him, in the end man will also control the flood. And the day will come when mankind will regain the glorious awareness that, although not a king, he has once again become master of nature and its awesome powers.