

IX. - The spirit world.

All these things I will give you. MATTH. 4:3.

Thus, it appeared to us, how the resumption by the Son of the kingship over Nature in two ways. Firstly, immediately by His miraculous power, and secondly, indirectly through the miraculous Christ, in the knowledge and ability of mankind, through the course of the centuries, in the Christian world. And we also saw how Jesus calls this last "the more work", that thanks to his action would be accomplished by the believers. Thanks to Jesus' intervention, because Jesus not only stated that his own would do more than he had done, but also added as a fundamental statement: "For I am going to the Father.

Yet this important point requires further explanation. For although the fact is indisputably established that our greater knowledge and ability with regard to Nature found its rise exclusively in those countries that came under the influence of the Christian religion, this does not yet explain in what way our richer knowledge of Nature is related to the effect of Jesus on the hearts. This would explain itself if the men who brought us this knowledge had been, almost without exception, believers; but it seems to suffer from inner contradiction, since, as we saw, the study of Nature and the spirit of invention to study it, remained rather strange to the believers, and as a rule was found rather among the unbelievers. An inner contradiction, which is all the more striking because Jesus just said: "He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also, yea, he shall do more. It is therefore not acceptable to want to explain this our higher power over Nature from Jesus' royal rule, and yet to separate it from faith. Thus, we are faced with the question of how to reconcile the two, i.e., whether Jesus binds our superior power to faith, or whether the study of nature is, as a rule, alien to faith, and even opposed to it. It is clear that there must be an intermediate link here that unites the two conflicting data, and the question is where that intermediate link lies.

In order to trace this, we have to go back to the temptation in the desert. The Messiah appeared in order to take back the kingdom of this earth for us men as the Son of man; but before Jesus makes a public appearance among Israel for this purpose, a demonic spirit, indeed the chief of demons, appears to him in the wilderness and says that he is in possession of this kingdom and that he is powerful and inclined to hand it over to Jesus, provided that he, falling down, worships him. It is not acceptable to take Satan's words for an idle pretense, because Jesus Himself has called him the ruler of the world, a title that is on a par with the royal

title in authority, even though the title of king is too beautiful and too noble to apply to Satan. Superior is the title of the man of violence, and that is why Jesus does not say "the king", but "the ruler of the world comes, but has nothing on me." And not only did Jesus wrestle in the desert with this ruler of the world for kingship, and going to Gethsemane he confessed how this wrestling with Satan would first be completed on the cross, but during the three years of His wanderings on earth we see Jesus continually working to break the works of the devil. The casting out of the devils is at the forefront of Jesus' daily task, and the power he granted his disciples also serves, yes, to heal the sick, but primarily to cast out the devils. In a moment of holy ecstasy Jesus said that he saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. And so much is in the foreground of Jesus' struggle against Satan that he explicitly included the words: - Deliver us from evil in the short prayer that he inspired in us. It is therefore a distortion of Jesus' action if one singles out that struggle of Jesus with the devil from the history of his life, and explains his powerful work, so called spiritual, from what Jesus did not say, leaving out what was always the background of his holy struggle. His apostles, therefore, are constantly expressing that struggle between the Spirit that Jesus poured out and the spirit of the satanic world. They resist every attempt to turn the believers' struggle into a mere moral struggle. No, as the redeemed of the Lord we do not fight with flesh and blood, but with "the spiritual evils in the air. Satan still walks about like a bristling lion looking for whom he can devour. And when the final triumph of the church is portrayed in Pathos, the unfolding of the spiritual drama comes together in a new release of Satan, and then, in his being thrown into the lake of fire, the complete defeat of the anti-Christian and anti-Godly being comes to an end. The man of sin described by Paul in 2 Thess. 2:3 will be "according to the working of Satan" (see vs. 9). An attempt by Satan to find his own human incarnation, just as the Son of God became flesh in Jesus and the eternal Word, but also to perish in this extreme of sacrilege forever. Luther expressed this by saying that Satan was God's ape in so far as, in his struggle against God for the possession of this earth and of our human race, he hijacks what God Triune in His mercy had ordered for our salvation.

From this extremely important demonic background, which is visible behind Jesus' entire appearance, later study has completely detached Jesus' appearance. Everything that appears in the Gospels and in the apostolic writings on this subject is now explained as imagination and falsehood, and people maintain that there was nothing wrong with it. They are said to have been the superstitious ideas of the

times in which Jesus was raised and brought up, and that is how he finally came to imagine that there was in fact a demonic spirit world. We know better, and we must therefore interpret the Gospel in such a way that everything it tells us about Satan and the demons is explained to us psychologically. That this is so among those scholars who honor in Jesus no other than a high Rabbi and religious genius, cannot surprise us. They do not accept the Savior as the Gospel offers and presents him to us, but appropriate a Jesus to their own taste and needs. But what we do not understand, and what goes against all right and reason, is that there are also scholars who call themselves "believers", who claim to honor the Christ in His Godhead, and who nevertheless go along with such untenable assertions, as if Jesus was caught in the errors of His time. The one completely rules out the other. One cannot, on the one hand, maintain that Jesus was a partaker of the divine nature and, on the other hand, find error in him. And what some of them, in order to save themselves from this inopportune situation, argue, namely that Jesus knew that all this was madness of his time, but out of love, and in order to have access to the hearts, conformed to these errors, is a pure fabrication that falls short of the facts.

The temptation in the wilderness was a battle he fought himself, without one of his young people getting involved, and he was led to fight it by the Holy Spirit in the wilderness. The casting out of devils in Jesus' action is not a compliance with incorrect propositions, but a struggle against the demons, in which they themselves speak to Jesus. Completely unprovoked by his disciples, Jesus said on his way to Gethsemane that the ruler of the world was now going to make his final attack. And how would Jesus have inserted into the prayer the prayer: - Deliver us from evil, if Jesus had not known that Satan was present and working on the hearts? All such statements are therefore to be rejected without prejudice. The struggle with Satan to save the sheep of His pasture from the clutches of the wolf is not an afterthought but the main issue in Jesus' performance, and the sacred history from Paradise to the end of the centuries remains inexplicable, unless Satan's struggle against God for mankind's sake is the all-important motive. This is so much the case that, during Jesus' time on earth, the demonic influence was even more pronounced than usual. The influence of the spirit world on this earth may be weaker or stronger, on the part of both the good angels and the fallen angels. And so, we see that when, in principle, the spiritual struggle is about to be decided with Jesus' coming to earth, both the angels and the devils will make themselves known

more than in the past, and that the whole of Jesus' appearance will be lifted out of its natural frame of reference if the effect of the demons is not done full justice.

On closer inspection, the question is even more far-reaching, relating not only to angels and devils, but to spiritual life in general. The result shows that those who began by regarding demons as a product of false imagination, and who subsequently repudiated belief in the existence of angels, did not stop at this, but, under logical pressure, also began to deny the existence of the soul, gave up belief in immortality, and finally advanced to the denial of the existence of God, leaving in the end nothing but nature, body and matter. In fact, the one and the other are connected.

Whoever imprisons himself in this finite world, concludes his finite thinking, derives his criterion from it and now uses the criterion thus obtained to decide what is or is not possible and what can or cannot exist, shuts the shutter on the window that gave us an insight into the spiritual world and sees nothing more of that spiritual world. The standard of visible things does not fit spiritual things. The latter, of an entirely different nature, operate by entirely different forces and follow entirely different laws. It is therefore inevitable that the scientist who wants to evaluate spiritual things according to the nature, forces and laws that apply in the material and visible world, can, if he is consistent, arrive at no other conclusion than that there are neither miracles nor spirits, and that there is no soul nor God either. Just as a fish discovers nothing of the splendor of the cedar forest because its water world is all its own, so too does a scientist bound by sight discern nothing of the splendor and glory of the spirit world, because the world he can measure, weigh and reckon is for him all the world he is absorbed in. And even if such a person assumes that there is a world of the beautiful and the good, and even if he finds his ideal in it, in the end he must always try to explain those ideals from the visible, as having arisen from the material, or more correctly, from the cell or from what gave birth to the cell. He does not know or recognize a separate, distinct world of its own, which as a spiritual world cannot be measured against our visible world. If that were the case, then the monopoly of his highly sensitive science would be over. Science, which as a mistress places itself above and in opposition to faith, is a complete negation of the very existence of a spiritual world. The two are mutually exclusive, and a quasi-faith that began to bend and conform to such a one-sided science forfeited its honorific name.

This tense relationship was only eased, at least to a certain extent, by the impartial recording of a series of phenomena associated with spiritism, telepathy, clairvoyance and so much more. Dr. Mijers in his *Human Personality*, and only recently Flammarion in his *Forccs naturelles inconnues*, to mention only these two, have, by rigorous research, recorded all those strange phenomena which in their opinion were abundantly covered by sufficiently reliable testimony; and in our own country too, writings of a similar nature have appeared. In not so small circles one now hears the admission that apparently certain mysterious things exist and certain mysterious forces work, and that it is good to study these, but that it will most likely lead to nothing, since our knowing mind cannot penetrate the shifting world. However, so much has been gained that scholars outside the circle of faith are beginning to admit that, completely apart from this earthly world, there must be such a thing as another spiritual world, and that certain forces from this mysterious world have an effect on ours, which appear not to be without influence on many a soul's condition and life. Even with this, not much has been gained, but still something. That this finite earthly existence is not yet all existence is then admitted. People get used to the idea that, apart from this order of things, there is another order of things. It is recognized that we are connected with this other world in a completely different way than we are connected with the ordinary world around us. It is recognized that there are people who do not notice this other order of things at all and laugh about it, while there are other people who practice communion with it and firmly believe in it. And one can no longer hide the fact that there is a certain similarity here with what has been revealed by prophets and apostles concerning the existence of a higher, spiritual world order. It is not as if the Prophetic and Apostolic Revelation were the same as what appears in this spiritism, in this clairvoyance, in this mediumistic system and so much more. It is rather the profound differences that stand out. But the common factor is that both Revelation and the spiritistic phenomena presuppose the existence of a world order other than the one in which our earthly life is conducted, and that there is a definite means by which the forces and effects of this other world make themselves known to us in our earthly existence. There have even been those among the semi-believers who were on the verge of losing their faith, and who now confessed with delight that these phenomena had clearly shown them to be immortal after death. The poltergeists at the table dance seemed to them to be as reliable a witness to immortality as the Resurrection of Jesus on the third day. Of course, a true believer will never fall into such a tangible error. He has an entirely different fellowship

with the real world than the medium has with the spirit world, and his firm faith rests not on spiritistic testimony but on his spiritual bond of faith with his God.

But although believers have quite rightly never attached to these phenomena the special importance that others have attached to them, in the great struggle between faith and science the study of these phenomena nonetheless provides the indisputable advantage of dealing a heavy blow to the short-sighted pretensions of exact science, which even denied the possibility of the existence of an order of things other than that in which our ordinary lives revolve. The possibility of the existence of a different order of things is now admitted, and it is also admitted that forces can act from this different order of things that cannot be explained by ordinary data. The spirit world, with which one comes into contact, automatically opens the way for believing in the existence of a spiritual world, and this, of necessity, raises the question of how we should think about this spiritual world and how it affects our visible world, and especially mankind.

In spiritual science the same process can be observed. Modern spiritual science is no longer at peace with the vague data on which it used to rely. It proceeds from the assumption that what we call psychic phenomena must somehow reveal themselves to the outside world through the body or in the body. Insofar as these healthy or sick, normal or abnormal phenomena are visible or audible, they can be observed, touched, compared, related and some data can be deduced from them. But even though many people would prefer to explain all these phenomena by physical means, and even though not a few people deny that there is a separate soul, it appears time and again that physical data are completely inadequate to explain what we observe. Thus, one is forced to assume that there is something else in man than what emanates from matter and also to recognize that this spirit in man forms its own sphere of life, in which quite peculiar activities take place and to which the ordinary laws of nature do not apply. Even in man's thinking life, in his imagination, in his dream world, in his artistic creations, in his sense of beauty, in his moral motives, yes, even in the regulation of his law and power, one encounters phenomena that are shrouded in mystery. And when one approaches the power of religion, the mystery of love, heroism and so much more, one finds oneself confronted with phenomena that have a profound effect on life and which, in short, without the influence of a spiritual world on mankind, defy all explanation. Materialism therefore gradually lost ground among the finer and deeper thinkers. A more ideal view of life is breaking ground. One feels and recognizes that there is a my- tical world, with which one oneself has been put in a

certain connection. The ignoramus (we will be at peace with our ignorance) gives way to the tendency to seek a certain mystical communion with this world, Oh, yes, there really is such another sphere of spiritual life, for whose knowledge our heart thirsts, and we even open wide the gates of our heart to see if the influences from this mystical world may penetrate us. This is the prevailing mood among the nobler scholars today, and only among the semiotics, the business people, and the revolutionary elements among the lower classes can you still find the obtuse materialism that ruled almost without exception in the circles of the scholars half a century ago.

But - and this is the characteristic feature of our time - the Revelation which has come to us from this mystical-spiritual world in God's Word is still unknown in those circles. They cling to what has come to us from Buddhism, they immerse themselves in Theosophy, they try to raise the spirit of Hegel to power again. One lends an ear to everything. Only the special revelation of God in prophecy, in Christ and in his Apostles, remains opposed. There is indeed a spiritual world, and it is true that we are connected with it, and that it is of the utmost importance to know this connection; but that knowledge must come from us, from mankind, from our own guesses and inventions, from our own thinking and meditating. We must owe all knowledge of this to ourselves. What is not allowed and what is not wanted is for this knowledge to be mysteriously revealed to us by God.

Certainly, the believers themselves are also to blame for this. Not as if they would deny this Revelation. On the contrary. But it is precisely the broad, mysterious background of Revelation that has been overshadowed by them. Just ask yourself what significance the company of angels still has for most people, and especially what significance they still have for the actions of demons and Satan. How many of the faithful no longer count as angels? Not that they deny their existence, but for most they have become meaningless figures. Take them away, and their shrunken faith remains what it was. The effect of the Holy Spirit on their souls, oh yes, of course. But the casting out of devils by Jesus and his apostles, what else has it become for many than a spiritual healing of the mentally ill and insane? Also, from the preaching so much of the rich content that Revelation gave us about that spiritual world has disappeared without trace. And if, in order to understand Jesus' Kingship, you refer to Satan as the ruler of the world, who took by stealing what belonged to the Son of Man, and who had to relinquish this stolen dominion to its righteous possessor on Golgotha and at the opened tomb, you lure your listeners to a terrain that has become completely alien to them. They have never conceived of

Satan's power over this world and over the spirits as real power. They could not, therefore, see the greatness of Jesus' victory over Satan. And for this very reason they were unable to grasp how the Christ, by bringing his church into the world, broke Satan's spiritual power in that world, set man's spirit free, and only thereby made possible the subjection of Nature to man's spirit.

What is so painful among idealistic scholars, their grasping at the mystical in their rejection of the Revelation of God, is prepared by the fault of the Church itself.