

X. - Intervention of the spirit world.

Are they not all ministering spirits? HEBR. 1:14.

If, therefore, the fact of the action of the spirit world on our earth is to be upheld, just as it was declared by Christ, and if, consequently, the fact of the action of Satan and his demons on our world is to be accepted as having taken place, the question immediately arises of how and in what manner we are to conceive of such action. However, as soon as we leave the field of Scripture, we know absolutely nothing about it. Here we are faced with a mystery. But neither experience nor science can give us an answer to the question of how one spirit interacts with another or how our spirits interact with our bodies. The action of our minds on the minds of others and on our own bodies takes place in a field in which our perception leaves us in the lurch. We are dealing here with feelings, with impressions, with disorders, with sensations, and about the fact that our minds act on other minds and on our own bodies we are in no doubt at all; but we cannot ascertain or investigate how this works, because we can spy on the effect but not on the working itself, and so any attempt to analyze this working fails. We see clearly that sometimes the spirit of a single individual makes a much larger and more rapid impression on the minds of others than is usually the case; we also see that some are much more susceptible and receptive to such effects than others; and we can even see that it is easier to produce an effect with the mind on a whole crowd gathered together than on the same individuals separately; but how this hypnosis or suggestive effect begins, by what force it works, and how it achieves its goal, is hidden in obscurity. Even in the game of love we are faced with an unsolved mystery, at least in the most eloquent cases, when one look appeared to be unforgettable and irresistible, and that one encounter made such a deep impression on the courage of the young man or young woman that they felt irresistibly drawn to each other and linked soul to soul by a magnetic attraction. We ourselves carry a spirit within us, we daily come into contact with other people's spirits, and yet no one knows how to analyze what the spirit really is. A spirit is something, a spirit is somewhere, but it is immortal and therefore unseen. All description and all description fails here. One can say what a spirit is not, but not what it is. We also know that a spirit produces force, but how that force is located in the spirit, and in what way it comes into action, and to what law that action is subject, remains a mystery to us. We can deduce that our soul must come into contact somewhere with the finest extremities of our nervous tissue, because it is through our nerves that we take in the sensations of our existence and of our

senses, but we do not even know where in our body that point of departure is. Some say that the soul is spread throughout the body, others say that it has its seat in the heart, and others in the brain. Whole parts of our body can be removed by means of an operation without the spirit in us suffering any damage, and there are other parts of our body which cannot sustain any significant damage, or the consciousness escapes us immediately. One can guess, one can suspect, one can formulate a theory, but there is no certainty.

And yet, even though almost every how remains unanswered, and even though we are completely unable to clearly account for the way in which our mind may act on our body, the fact that that action takes place is not for a moment in doubt. Our daily and hourly lives confirm and demonstrate this to us.

If we now apply this to the spirit world outside our human circle and proceed on the basis of the fact, revealed to us, that such a world of spirits does in fact exist, it is reasonable to assume that the spirits of the world beyond this earth will have a certain affinity with the spirits of mankind. That they, too, are spirits, and that therefore the basic feature of our own spiritual existence, which distinguishes the soul in us from all that is visible, must also be found in these other spirits. But we must go no further. Our human spirit may have peculiarities which these other spirits lack, and conversely, these other spirits may have characteristics which are entirely alien to us. But whatever the differences, we must think of them as spirits and, to that extent, as a type of being whose fundamental existence is similar to our own.

There is therefore nothing improper or unnatural in the fact that these spirits could remain holy or fall into unholiness, and that we can thus speak of good angels and fallen angels, of spirits that have remained holy and spirits that have become demons. With these spirits, too, it may be assumed that one spirit is able to act upon another, and that in this sense one of the demonic spirits, as Satan, exerts a controlling influence over the other demonic spirits. It is also quite plausible that spirits, both good and bad, should act upon the spirit of man, and that influences for good or ill, from the bad and the good angels, should be exerted upon us. Finally, it is hard to imagine that, just as our spirit acts upon the body, and therefore upon matter, so too can these good and evil spirits act upon the visible world. The Scriptures raise this possibility to the level of certainty. It tells us that all spirits are ministering spirits, that is, that they have a service to perform, that they have been called to perform a service, and that they have therefore been given

the qualities and powers necessary to perform that service, and that the service of the angels is not limited to the spheres of heaven, but extends also to this earth and to the world of the children of man. In this way the good spirits have an influence on our lives, they have an effect on us, and they participate in the great battle for the kingdom of the Lord. They rejoice in the fields of Ephrata, they are eager to see the work of Redemption, they are sent out "to serve those who will inherit salvation", and in the Last Day they will triumph with Christ and His redeemed. Not so, they a separated life up there, and we a separated life down here, but they share in what befalls us, rejoicing with us or weeping for us, and performing God's service for us. The fact that poor Lazarus in the parable is carried by the angels into Abraham's womb is only an imaginary expression of this compassion of the angels for us.

The same is true of the angels who remained standing; the same effect on our lives, but then of course in the opposite sense, is equally attributed by Scripture to the angels who have fallen and now, as demonic spirits, seek our destruction. Not as if their purpose and intention was to destroy us, but because Satan begrudges us God and tries to draw us into His kingdom. Satan has been called "Christ's brother" in order to emphasize his great excellence as a spirit among spirits. It is precisely this creaturely excellence that has led him to rebel against God, and since then all his efforts have been directed toward preventing God's kingdom from coming into being and to establishing his own kingdom, and to this end he has also attempted to lay claim to the world of man. And of course, unusually strong powers are at his disposal in this endeavour. Because of his excellence he naturally possesses great gifts, outstanding powers. Gifts and powers which he was called and intended to use in the service of the Lord, but which he nevertheless retained in his apostasy and now uses against God and His Anointed. In paradise this unholy power of Satan manifested itself in the fall to which he enticed our generation, and since then the Holy Scriptures show him restlessly working to sow spiritual corruption among the children of man, to thwart God's work of grace for our salvation, and to maintain his own dominion on earth. He has now become "the ruler of the world". The kingship over this earth, which God had sealed for mankind, has now passed over to him, and Satan, through all kinds of unholy, mysterious powers, keeps the children of mankind and of the nations captive in his snares. Sorcery and guile are the unholy powers with which he holds the souls. And this reign of the demonic lasted indefinitely until the Christ appeared. And then he doubled his power and

prepared for a personal battle to maintain his rule as the ruler of the world against his God-anointed King and to thwart the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

In this development of power, Satan acts on the other demonical spirits by subjecting them to his will and making them subservient to his purposes. Likewise, Satan acts on the spirits of men to seduce them, to trap them in his snares, and to destroy the seed of piety in them. And he also acts on the physical and material, as is so clearly shown by the possessed in Jesus' day. Even in Jesus' own circle he brings Judas to ruin, and endangers Peter, and soon this temptation and temptation will continue so unrelentingly that Jesus will put the "deliver us from evil" on the lips of all Christians. Now Satan's attack is alternately strong and weak. In the days of Jesus' appearing, that attack took on particularly strong proportions, and in the madmen and lunatics of those days the demonic influence was so overwhelming that the demons themselves spoke to Jesus, saying: "I know who you are, the Holy One of God, and that you have come to destroy us" - until Jesus cast them out and once even drove them into a herd of swine, which, driven mad, crashed down from the precipice into the lake. Spiritual influence, therefore, turned back and exorcised by spiritual supremacy; but a spiritual influence that here also penetrates the body, and is by no means confined exclusively to the human spirit, but affects the whole of the human personality, even drawing the animal kingdom into its circle through Jesus' act of power.

Those who regard this effect of spirits on our lives as a mere exception will get nowhere; it explains nothing. But the Scriptures give no reason for this. On the contrary. The Scriptures portray Satan as "a roaring lion that goes out every morning to see whom it can devour. The spiritual evils" in the air are a power with which we must fight relentlessly. Every morning and every evening we must call upon our God to "deliver us from evil. And not only our spiritual life is exposed to these unholy influences, but the whole of nature "is subject to vanity, not willingly, but for his sake, who subjected it to vanity. Subjected to "a servitude of perdition, so that the whole creature groans and is in want until now," in the hope that one day it will be "redeemed unto the freedom, and therefore unto the glory, of the children of God. Here, then, we are not talking about something that takes place as an exception, but about a diurnal situation, of a calamitous effect on the whole of this earthly sphere of life, of a demonic pressure that is exercised on the whole of our human race and on the whole of our earthly kingdom. That pressure came with the curse; that pressure grew among the peoples who had been turned away from God; that pressure was broken at one point in its core by the appearance of the

Messiah; that pressure will be tempered by the action of the Church of God, thanks to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; But it will not be entirely relieved until Satan is bound for all eternity and the glory of God's children, and with it the glorification of this earth as a "new earth" under a "new heaven", begins with the return of Christ.

It is not the spirit that rests in the dust, but the spirit that carries the dust. It is the omnipotence of God, which, by the majesty of His will, preserves the whole of this universe. This omnipotence of God is omnipresent. There is not one creature spirit, or one material atom, that is maintained by anything other than the omnipotence of God. Everything in the creature is supported, sustained and enabled to function at every point and time by the indwelling, omnipotent and omnipresent power of God. But God is a Spirit; nothing visible, nothing material, is in Him. It is therefore the Almighty Quest, who gave birth to and sustains not only the creaturely spirit, but also the visible shell, and thus also this visible world; and however deeply natural science may penetrate into the essence and into the forces and into the laws of Nature, it never reaches that spiritual substratum which carries and upon which everything rests. Even if, in the final analysis, everything in the material world seems to dissolve into movement and power, its arm can never reach further than that movement is perceptible. How God, who is a Spirit, works His omnipotence in that material or makes it vibrate in that movement is beyond her reach. No one knows anything about this unless God reveals it to us, and that is why anyone who feels the need to form even a vague idea of this must always go back to Revelation.

This has also been tried outside of Revelation, but only to lapse from error into error. The more superficial then sought refuge in the so-called Deism. That is to say, they imagined that God once created this universe as an

created this universe as an eternally running clock, and that now this clock always ran by itself, without God and without Him. Others, however, not satisfied with such a superficial, meaningless idea, sought salvation in Pantheism. Just as we are a body with a soul inside, which fills everything with life, so the universe was thought of as one immeasurable body, and the all-soul of that immeasurable body was then called God. A God who rises in the universe, only to become conscious in mankind, a God without independence, without holiness, without self-consciousness; a dreaming spirit bound to the universe. This was the wisdom of the world, and to this kind of wisdom now returns those who reject God's holy Revelation; and it was against this delusion that Jesus and his Apostles set forth the

divine wisdom which is hidden from the wise of this age, and which God has revealed to the children. But it is precisely in this revealed wisdom that the spirit world appears. It is not this small earth, high above us, our God, and in between nothing but the emptiness of death, but the whole of God's creation, filled with a rich and glorious life. Ten thousand times ten thousand angels, the thousands multiplied, as the seer of Pathmos expressed it, and even the omnipotence of God represented in the four cherubs. And that infinite number of spirits is not merely a jubilant and praising host, they are not extras in the great drama of the universe, but they are "powerful heroes" who carry out God's Word. "All his hosts are his servants, doing his will". They have a service, a calling, a task, which always consists in this, that "they obey the voice of his Word." They do not slumber or rest, but are always busy, and always "performing their service". God's Omnipotence also carries them, but acts in them as a personal power. He makes His angels spirits, His servants a flaming fire", i.e., a center of ever vibrating, ever outgoing power, and over all these hosts Christ is head, and under Him are the good angels of God, who form the host that confronts all demonic influences, tries to overcome them, and will one day overthrow them.

To say this only applies to the spiritual is absurd. In the visible world there is no line anywhere that would prevent any contact between the spiritual and the visible. It must be possible for the angels to have an effect on the visible world as well, as the Scriptures repeatedly show us, and this is especially true of the evil, the demonic spirits. It is precisely through what is visible that they seek to seduce and topple us. Apparently the least of these is the sin of pride, which is purely spiritual and satanic in nature, but even that sin always clings to money or goods, to honor and dominion in the visible. In contrast to the good angels, who restlessly perform their service for their God, are the fallen angels, who did give up their God's service, and now know no other purpose than to break the rule of their God, but who nevertheless kept the powers and gifts with which God once provided them for His service in their creation. They thus retain the ability to approach souls, to entice souls, to seduce souls, to influence our minds; And likewise, to exert influence on the sensible and material, this may have manifested itself more strongly in the possessed than we now perceive, but the "servitude of perdition" of which the apostle speaks nevertheless persists, and all wrongdoing in life that is incompatible with God's love and holiness must be explained by these demonic influences. A veil hangs over life, and behind this impenetrable veil the workings of the spirits take place, which completely escape us and of which we can only

observe the effects in our lives. It was from this mysterious background of our lives that all superstition arose. People felt that a mysterious power was working on our lives, and they felt the need to combat that mysterious power. But instead of seeking help and relief from their God and good spirits in the face of this oppressive power, they tried to obtain counsel for themselves and to ward off evil through sorcery and witchcraft. In fact, this ultimately amounted to serving and worshipping the demon spirits themselves. People feared the power of these spirits and tried to make them favorable to themselves. There are circles in which this has come to the point of openly serving and worshipping the Evil One, an Arhiman or whatever. But whatever form it took, this superstition and devilry always sought to ward off demonic influence by means of the demonic. As a result, the spirit of the nations was increasingly caught up in the snares of demonism. There was fear, but no release of the spirit. We felt the net that was tightening about us and did not know how to cast it off. We felt surrounded by a demonized nature.

Moses then said to them: "All these peoples listen to hypocrites and soothsayers, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so. A prophet of your brethren, like me, will the Lord your God raise up for you; him you shall hear." Thus, among all nations, only for Israel had this demonic power already been broken at first, and when at last the promised Prophet appeared, and it had resounded at his Baptism in the Jordan: Then immediately thereafter in the wilderness the struggle between Christ and Satan began, then Satan's head was crushed on the Cross, and then in the hour of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that new power entered the world through the congregation of the living God, creating an atmosphere in which the spirit of man was once again set free, and the freedom of God's children began to unfold. From that moment on, therefore, the free development of the human spirit became evident; gradually, all superstition was repressed; and no longer by grasping at magic powers, but by research, by study in the sweat of his brow, man could prepare himself the bread of science, and thus regain his power over the power of Nature.