

X. - King as Mediator.

To the King now of ages, to the immortal, the unseen, the only wise God be honor and glory for all eternity, Amen. 1 TIMOTH. 1:17.

Also is the Christ first of all the Head of His mystical Body. Second, He is the Judge of all mankind. And thirdly, he is the Lord of the angels. At the present time there is still resistance to his rule both in the human world and in the world of angels. We are still in the period of struggle. The struggle is not yet complete. But once it is won, the outcome will be that Christ will reign victorious over the entire spiritual sphere of life, which includes both mankind and angels. All opposition will then be broken. In the world of mankind, every soul that is not in Jesus will no longer count. Our human race will then only be the reborn humanity. And likewise, in the world of angels, only the host of good angels, after the demons have been cast out, will continue to exercise their effect. This reborn humanity, with that host of good angels, will constitute the spiritual world for all eternity, and in that world formed from man and angel, the man Christ Jesus will be King. In his creation man was made a little less than the angels, but if man completes his vocation, he will rise far above the angels. Therefore, looking at Christ, the letter to the Hebrews says: "He has become so much more magnificent than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name above them;" a statement in which the author makes the angels appear as "serving spirits", and on the other hand, the Christ as "the radiance of God's glory and the expressed image of his independence, bearing all things by the word of his power. Christ seated at God's right hand must therefore always be thought of in His threefold meaning: Head of the church, Judge of the whole earth, and Lord of the angels, and thereby clothed with such majesty that He can subvert the entire spiritual order of creation, can break down all opposition in that spiritual order, and in the end is assured complete triumph in all spiritual creation.

Here, of course, the question arises as to the manner in which we must conceive of the relationship between this complete dominion of Christ over mankind and the spirit world, and the original dominion of the Triune God. At no time must it be suggested that God Almighty had divested Himself of His power and dominion, that He had withdrawn from the providential administration of His creation, and that He was now merely overseeing the administration of the universe by the Christ in His name. That would be to put the Christ in the place of the Almighty, to dethrone the Triune God, to let Christ alone reign on the throne, and thus to worship a God who, if we may, with all due respect, express it in a human term,

had been abdicated, and had now become a God of non-activity. A God who saw from afar how things were going, but who Himself had relinquished all influence on the course of things. An interim government, established, not for ever, because in the end the Christ would return the Kingdom to the Father, but for now, starting with Jesus' ascension to heaven, and ending only after Jesus' return to judgment. In more than one mystical sect such an idea had taken hold, and now there are not a few who understand the reign of Jesus, as the God-anointed King, in this way and no other. And against this one extreme, whereby for the sake of Christ's kingship the royal rule of Almighty God had to be temporarily rested, the other extreme continually arose in reaction, that, in order to maintain God's rule unharmed, more and more refused to understand the kingship of Christ in any other than a metaphorical sense. Thus, they became caught in the dilemma: There can be only one King. If Christ is that King, then God ceases to be our King. Or, conversely, if God has remained King, then Christ's Kingship can only be a Kingship in name only. To think of both, the Kingship of God Triune and the Kingship of Christ, as existing together, did not seem possible. Hence there have always been, and still are, circles in which all things are so almost exclusively expected of the Christ that the worship of the Triune God is damaged by it; and on the other hand, by reaction, much wider circles have arisen in which all things are expected of the providential government of God, but then also the Royal Government.

hopes for, but has as good as given up the royal rule of Christ. Scripture does not know of this contradiction. In Revelation 17:3 it says: "Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints," just as Paul exclaims in Titus 1:17: "To the King of the ages, the immortal and unseen, the only wise God, be glory and honor for all eternity! And next to it, just as decidedly and sharply, stands the Kingship of the Christ, "who is the faithful Witness, the firstborn from the dead, the Chief of the kings of the earth." Yes, the Christ sits "above all government and power and strength and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the next." It is therefore important to understand the Kingship of Christ in such a way that the Kingdom remains with God, and it is this combination of both that the Scriptures express by saying that the Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, at the right hand of God, in heaven.

This "seated at the right hand of God" is metaphorical language and, like all metaphors, it is derived from situations here on earth, and specifically from situations as they existed in the East in Jesus' days. In particular in the Eastern

countries there was a Grand Vizier, as there still is in some Eastern countries. Such a Grand Vizier is the ruler of the King's realm, who orders all things in the name of the King. He was and is the highest dignitary among the princes. Even though there are ministers, and even though there is a Council of Ministers, the Grand Vizier is far above these lower officials. Even today in Turkey the Grand Vizier, and he alone, has the title of His Highness. The Grand Vizier has the complete confidence of his Sovereign, his Sovereign grants him his full powers, and even though the reign remains with the Sovereign, so that he can depose his Grand Vizier at any time, as long as the Grand Vizier remains, he is the person through whom the Sovereign exercises his sovereignty. This unique position of the Grand Vizier gives him the right to the highest seat of honour on solemn occasions, and that seat of honour is on the throne, to the right of the Sovereign, and so sitting at the right hand of the King is the standing expression of the Grand Vizier's high position of honour. And this expression was already in Israel's prophecy, and was later transferred to Christ by the Apostle; not as if His majesty were fully expressed, for nothing on earth could be compared to Jesus' rule, but because a metaphor was needed, and our earthly society provided no other image in which the subordinate rule was more strongly expressed than in the position of such an Eastern Grand Vizier. But it was no more than a metaphor. No Eastern Sovereign possessed a majesty as befits God. The Grand Vizier of such an Eastern ruler was not his son, but a stranger. The Grand Vizier was often deposed and replaced by another, and then returned to the position of an ordinary subject. These are all additional circumstances that already show the fundamental difference between the rule of such a Grand Vizier and the Kingship of Christ. Jesus is King, the Grand Vizier was merely a paid official. Sitting at God's right hand should, as far as imagery is concerned, never be taken any further than to indicate that among all creatures no one is clothed with the majesty of Christ, and that God Triune exercises His dominion through Him.

The basic idea remains, therefore, that in the royal rule of Christ we are dealing with a transferred, an imposed, an instrumental rule. In God, the reign is self-existent and original; in Christ, the reign is a consequence of an act of God by which Christ is anointed King and clothed with power. But never in the sense that God, by anointing Christ as King of the Kingdom of God, would Himself have renounced His Majesty. God Almighty is and remains the King of kings. His is and remains the supreme rule. And where the Christ serves as an instrument through which God exercises his dominion, it nevertheless always remains God, and God

alone, from Whom the dominion emanates. If a mother entrusts the care of her offspring to a servant and this servant rules in the children's room, this never means that the mother has ceased to have control over her children. Rather, it is by virtue of her maternal authority that she appoints a servant over her children, for that servant must obey her orders and govern in her spirit. And as often as she herself appears in the children's room, no one thinks that her authority has been broken or even diminished by that servant. A teacher at a school with several classes is not present in all classes at the same time, and therefore he appoints teachers for the lower classes, who supervise the children in their classes who are entrusted to him. But always the Master remains the responsible person and every pupil as well as every teacher knows that the Head of the School exercises his authority in all classes. This is how it is with a king who places a commander at the head of his army. Every soldier and every officer of that army must obey the commander and carry out his orders, but in none of them does the idea arise that the King would thereby relinquish his authority. On a ship at war a chief officer commands, but if the whole fleet steams out under an admiral who has the supreme command, the whole crew knows that this admiral keeps the whole fleet in his power, and that the commander of each individual ship derives his authority only from him. And also, both the admiral and the ship commanders never think for a moment that the authority with which they are vested would exclude or nullify the supreme authority of the Sovereign of the country. Thus, we have before us examples from our earthly household which show us how a high authority can be exercised exclusively by other authorities without there ever being any question of the Sovereign of the country, a father in his family, a commander-in-chief in the army or an admiral in the fleet, relinquishing his authority. Rather, the power of those who use other persons to exercise it remains unharmed and unimpaired, and the original authority is not affected in any way. And thus, the supremacy of God the Triune remains entirely what it was and is, even though the Christ acts as the Mediator to exercise, in the name of His Father, His divine authority over the world of men and the world of angels.

Paternal power does not replace God's power over the child, and both, father and child, understand very well that it is God who rules them both. The power of the king who rules by the grace of God does not replace the power of God over the country and the people, and both, king and people, insofar as they serve God, understand that God remains their Lord and Master. And thus, the rule of Christ does not replace the supremacy of the Almighty, and it remains Christ's honor,

never to mean anything but the honor of his Father, to find his savor in accomplishing the Father's will, and not to keep his own from the Father, but on the contrary to bring them to the Father. All derived authority as such, be it that of a father in his family, of a ruler over his country, or of Jesus as King of the Kingdom of God, rests on and proceeds from the authority of God Almighty, remains subordinate to it, and does not abrogate it, but serves it and serves to glorify it. But while there is considerable equality between the derived authority of a father and king and the authority of Christ as King of the Kingdom of God, there are two profound differences between the two. The first difference is that the authority of the father and king is limited, whereas the Kingdom of Christ is all-encompassing. And the second difference is that the authority of a father and king on earth is often exercised imperfectly, and even against God's will, whereas the authority of Christ in the Kingdom of God is always pure and holy, and is never exercised except in accordance with God's will. A brief word about these two differences.

A father must take care of his children, ensure their existence, guide and educate them, and thus train them to act independently in the world. But in doing so, the father is limited in his resources. He must receive the bread of his God himself in order to be able to hand it out to his children. He has only partial control over the health and welfare of his children. He is not always with them. He is not in control of the influences that are exerted on his children from all sides. He has to use all kinds of help to guard his children, to lead them and to have them taught. And above all, no matter how intimately he lives with his children, and even though they are the flesh of his flesh and the blood of his blood, he has no access to their hearts other than in a very indirect way. Neither their inner life nor their destiny is in his hands. In so far as the authority of God is exercised by a father over his children, it is thus only exercised to a very limited extent, and it can never be said that the father is the instrument through which God exercises all his divine authority over the child. This concerns the first difference. And stronger still speaks here of the second difference. A father, himself a sinful, defective man, cannot but be a sinful and defective instrument for the exercise of divine authority. This often goes so far that a father not only exercises his authority over his child in an extremely fallible manner, but also abuses that authority to go against God's will with his child. There are fathers, unfortunately, who break down God's authority over their child instead of building it up. Fathers even caused their child to go against God at their insistence. And this not only through bad example and lack of

education, but even through the deliberate cultivation of unholy principles in the child's heart and the pouring out of ungodly seed. What is true of the father is also true of the princes of the earth. Their power, too, is on the one hand limited and goes beyond the inner life of their subjects, and on the other hand often turns against the honor of God, instead of inculcating and confirming respect for divine authority in their subjects.

But it is precisely these two obstacles that are completely removed by the Kingship of Christ. His influence on our hearts is unlimited. There is nothing in our existence or inner life that is beyond His power and influence. To make this clear, Jesus himself said that to him, not to the father nor to the prince, but to him alone all things were given, yea, that all power in heaven and earth was at his disposal. There can and must be complementarity with a father or a prince, but there can never be complementarity with the Christ. His reign encompasses the entire existence of His people. The Lamb that was slaughtered", God's angels sang, "is worthy to receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and thanksgiving. And, in the other place, in Jesus any defective exercise of divine authority is unthinkable. Never can anything fail or go wrong in the exercise of the authority due to Him, and never, especially, can the exercise of Divine authority by Christ be contrary to the honor of God or His holy will. With all other imposed authority, it is the limited, the defective, the sinful; with Christ, the exercise of the Fathers' authority is always comprehensive, complete and holy in the most sacred sense. This means, on the one hand, that in the reign of the Christ no supplement is necessary, indeed no supplement can be questioned, and on the other hand, that it is precisely the divine authority that is always and fully expressed in His rule.

This is only possible because Christ is God's only begotten Son, and is himself partakers of the divine nature. It is so, as Jesus and his Apostles clearly state, that he is vested with this royal power as the Son of Man. As the Son of God, as the second Person in the Holy Trinity, no power could be given to him, but he possesses that power in and of himself. Nevertheless, even as the Son of Man he continues to carry his divine nature within himself. He humbled himself in the state of divine glory and is found in the form of humiliated humanity, but his divine nature could not be discarded. It could be shrouded, it could be shrouded, but it never left him for an instant. And precisely this makes that in his royal rule as the Son of Man, divine authority always reigns supreme. Both are inseparable from each other in his own person. We cannot delve deeper here, for who will say, albeit stumblingly, what the bond is between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in

the Divine Triune Being? Is it therefore enough for us that the Apostles, when they present us with the Royal Government, always refer back to the Divine power through which Christ, as the Son of God, created all things, being and remaining the reflection of God's glory and the expressed image of God's self-existence, so that we not only owe our existence to him, but also still exist through him. Thus, there can be no separation or opposition between the authority of God and the authority of Christ.

But his being King does contain the Mediatorship. The rightful fellowship of our spirit with the Spirit of God was broken by sin. By that sin there was an interruption. The divine authority, now taken in its holiest sense, could not be done justice in us sinners. It could be exercised over us, but not holily in us. And in this breach now the Mediator provides. As the Lamb who was slaughtered, he breaks through the poisonous stench of sin, which prevented the right of God from coming into being, and as our One, as the Son of man, he enters into communion with our sinful human race. This meant that the Christ gave us an approach to the divine life that we did not have directly with God Himself. In this way he was able to penetrate the divine authority to us and within us in a much more intimate way than communion with the Father, in our inadequate state, still allows. But, of course, it cannot stop there. The ultimate goal must be that we become directly subject not only to Him through Whom all things are, but also to Him from Whom all things are. The divine authority must in the end penetrate us directly from God Triune without an intermediate link and govern us completely. Well then, the Apostle testifies that it will come to that. Until the end of days the Mediatorship remains indispensable. But when the end comes, the Mediatorship will no longer exist, and the Christ will surrender His dominion, insofar as it ensues from the Mediatorship, to God and the Father, so that at the last all separation will be annulled, and it will then be God all in all. Then the divine authority, the divine authority, without intermediary will directly govern all hearts, and the world of mankind together with the world of angels will form, in glorious harmony, that spiritual creation in which God Triune will rule spiritually. It is not as if with this the royal rule of Christ were to disappear. He remains forever the Son of God, and He remains the Head of the mystical Body. But the veil of the mediatorship will then fall away; that mediatorship will then have fulfilled its fruit; and it will no longer be through the mediator to the Father, but in Christ in blissful fellowship with God Triune.