

XIV. - Triumph of the higher order.

That the mortal of life may be devoured. 2 COR. 5:4.

To clear insight into Christ's royal rule is best gained by observing the rule of the principle of life in those orders or realms of nature which possess a life of their own.

Nature is not a monotonous one, but infinitely varied; so much so, however, that in this great diversity there appears to be a certain order, by which the phenomena we observe are divided into certain groups, which are then called orders or realms. The lowest kingdom in order is the mineral kingdom, followed by the plant kingdom and then the animal kingdom. The name "mineral kingdom" is certainly not a good one, and in any case, it would be more correct to refer to this kingdom as the inorganic one. To this lowest realm of nature belongs everything that does not yet exhibit the action of its own life germ. The question whether crystals do not do this to a sufficient degree remains unanswered. We cannot go into the details here. We shall confine ourselves to the three realms of nature in general. Between each of these realms there are boundaries, but boundaries which it is not always possible for us to draw sharply. For our present purpose it is sufficient to count all that lives on its own principle among the plant and animal kingdoms, and on the other hand all that lacks such a principle of life, among the inorganic, or what used to be called the mineral kingdom. The possession of a life of its own is manifested first in the vegetable kingdom, and to an even greater extent in the animal kingdom, in such a way that the higher you climb through the animal species, the more strongly it comes to the fore, and most strongly in man, who according to his lower disposition is always classified in the animal kingdom. But man is not included in the animal kingdom because the principle of life in him takes on the even higher form of spirit. Through this spirit man is again related to the higher spirit world, and in the order or realm of all that is spiritual the Christ again occupies the highest position. He is the Lord of the angels and the Son of man and, as such, completely controls the order of spiritual life here and there. And because He is the Eternal Word, the entire spiritual world consists of the Father of spirits, but only through the Christ. Thus, starting from the lowest, you find this creaturely stage. First there is the material world, then the plant world, then the animal world; within the animal world emerges the world of man; man is connected with the world of spirits. It is thus a combination of all the orders of the lower natures and of the spirit world, which reaches its highest zenith in Christ. A universe, originating in God's creative word, ascending in its own sphere from the lowest to the highest;

finally culminating in the Christ; and in and through the Christ again bound to God Triune. Beginning with the unconscious, inorganic, and ascending through all levels and stages to the God-manifest life-consciousness in the Christ, and in him sealing the creative bond with God. Is it a rule that every higher order controls the next lower order? If we now take it as a rule that every higher order controls the next lower order: the plant the material; the animal the material and the plant; man the material, the plant and the animal; man's spirit all these things and, furthermore, his own animal nature; and Christ, in all these things, the spirit in man, until Christ too surrenders the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all and in all, then this shows how the power of Christ, along the whole range of creation, reigns royally in all Creation, and how all things in heaven and on earth have been handed over to Him. In his miracles, the Christ demonstrated his power over material things, over plants, over animals, over mankind, and over the evil spirits he cast out, in every way, from the outside. Hidden and internal, that bond existed from the beginning, for all things, i.e., all realms and orders of nature, were "created by him, and exist together through him." Through his mediatorship he raises this all-embracing and all-embracing bond to the highest spiritual consciousness. And once his mediatorship has been completed, the transition of this broken world into the realm of glory will take place at the same time as the last judgment, through tremendous events in all the realms of nature, which will emanate from him. His royal rule, founded by the Eternal Word in the creation of all things, thus permeates all spheres of creation, and in the end, it will appear that nothing in heaven or on earth is excluded from that royal rule.

Now we see life emerging in the realms of nature in a way that is completely unimaginable to us, and as soon as that life, in its first, lowest and weakest form, has not revealed itself, it immediately exercises dominion over the lower parts of creation. The seed germ of a plant may be so small, but it immediately rules over the material things it finds around it. From that germ, which emerges from the seed, the plant builds itself up, and in doing so it has access to the substances it finds in the soil and in the air. The plant processes these substances in itself, transforms them into its own nature, masters them, and perpetuates its life by procreating, in order to rule over the material again and again and to subject the material to itself. Only when the plant is weakened in its life stock and is no longer able to exert its full dominion over the matter in the soil and air, does its life become endangered. The material then begins to resist its dominion, reasserts its

own power, and if this continues, it finally extinguishes the life in the plant, and the plant withers, petrifies, and dies. Death sets in.

It is the same with the animal. The animal also carries life within it, and life of a higher kind and order than the plant possesses. By means of this life contained in its being, the animal uses both what it finds in the material world and what it finds in the plant world to build and maintain itself. It is true that the plant kingdom also knows parasites which live off other plants, and likewise the animal world knows a devouring of one animal by another, but this is an exception to the rule that the plant lives off the material in the soil and air, and the animal lives off both the material and the plant kingdom. This too is dominion. The plant serves the animal. And the animal plants

And the animal plants and propagates itself in order to continue its dominion over the plant kingdom. But here too the same phenomenon occurs as in the plant world. The animal can weaken. Both the material and the plant world can wage war on it in that weakened state. Plant tissues can cause devastation in the body of the animal. And even without that, the life of the animal can lose its controlling power. Then life in the animal also dies out. Decomposition and decay set in. And here, too, the end is destruction.

If you now look at man, you will see the same phenomenon in him, insofar as he belongs to the animal kingdom, as in the animal. Man, too, is built from a germ of life, which serves and controls the elements of the material and vegetable world. But in mankind something even higher occurs, through which man also controls the animal world. And here too you see a struggle emerging. Poisonous plants and wild animals threaten his life, and even in the form of germs and microbes, of maggots and tapeworms, you will see the plant and animal kingdoms fighting against the life of man. If these elements of a lower order succeed in establishing themselves in the human body and in attaining independent development in that body, so that the life force of the body can no longer control and stop their proliferation, then here too destruction will occur, the life of man will be affected, and death will follow. Or, if man's life force diminishes and he dies, chemical substances, plant germs and indwelling animals resume their dominion over the human body, and decomposition sets in.

But with man this goes further. In mankind there is not only, as in animals, a soul as an element of life, but that soul, that element of life in man, also possesses a spiritual character. And that spiritual element in man rules over his lower soul life,

which he shares with the animal. It is precisely because of this dominance of his spirit over that lower, animal part of his soul life that his value and power as a human being are revealed. The more the spirit in him rules not only over the material, vegetable and animal elements in his body, but also over the lower elements of his soul, the higher he stands as a human being. And conversely, the less the dominion of the spirit in man succeeds in subduing the animal parts of his soul, the more mankind's value as a human being diminishes and he returns to an animal existence. What Scripture reveals to us about the Beast that arose from the sea, and about the animal forms of the ungodly kingdoms, says nothing else than that man as a group, as a people, can also descend from the high spiritual order to the low animal order. Even popular custom calls man, who has lost all dominion over his animal life, a beast of a man. And this is not metaphorical, nor figurative, but very factual. If man's higher order recedes, all that is left is his lower order, which he shares with the soul life of the animal, and his kinship with the animal becomes conformation. Now this too is destruction, is dissolution, and ends in death. Hence the Scriptures present the consequences of sin as the death of the spirit in man. Death cannot be a power here, and cannot enter into any sphere, unless the high in the soul, which has dominion over the low, is broken in its power, and stripped of its dominion. It can even be said that the resurrection of Christ was nothing other than the final reign of his holy, spiritual life over the lower orders of nature that took up arms against him and tried to destroy his body. This they could not do, because his inner life force, which emanated from his spirit, had remained unbroken.

But even if in this way the law that the higher prevails, when that which is of a lower order triumphs, could also be applied to man, so that poison, parasite or devouring by the power of the plant and animal kingdom would destroy his body, and even if the animal in his soul life could also lower him spiritually, all this is still not enough to explain the breaking of the power of his spirit. It did not come about outside the realm of plants and animals, for we also read of a tree fruit and a serpent at the time of his fall. Generally speaking, we count only the three realms of the material, vegetable and animal, but the realm of the spirit must not be forgotten for, through his spirit, man is in contact with the spirit world as well, and from that spirit world effects may consequently be produced upon him. Now, compared with man in his glorious completion, the angelic world is of a lower order than man. It is true that man was created slightly inferior to the angels, but his consummation lies in the fact that it is not the angel that is crowned with glory,

but man. It is written explicitly that we shall judge the angels, not them us. This can be explained by the fact that the angels were created in consummation from the very beginning, and therefore did not undergo any developmental process, whereas we, on the other hand, are dependent on a steady development, which can only be completed in stages. We start lower, but go higher. In fact, man in paradise was less than the spirits in the high spirit world; potentially, according to his ability, he was more. Now the workings of this higher spirit world can be of benefit to our higher development, inasmuch as the angels are sent out for the sake of those who will attain salvation, and the Christ Himself says of the children that their angels are always standing before their Father in heaven. An unstoppable army of high spirits surrounds those who do God's will, and only eternity will reveal to us what we owe to the higher spirit world for our salvation and sanctification. But from that higher spirit world an infuriating element can also penetrate us. In this higher spirit world there is a demonic realm as opposed to a sacred one, and this demonic world is organized under a spirit that is richer than any other, Satan; and this Satan, or devil, like the plant world and the animal world, imposes himself on us in order to become a parasite within us, that is to say, a parasite on our spirit.

As a mere spirit, this demonic parasite has no hold over the plant world; it can, however, come into contact with the animal world, as we see that Jesus put a number of demons into the herd of swine so that they tumbled down the mountain and drowned in the sea. But this spiritual parasite only has its real effect on mankind, because in mankind life also contains a spiritual element. Like the parasite in the body, this demonic parasite also nests in our spirit. This took place especially in Jesus' day, as evidenced by the many possessed persons whom Jesus met on his way, for possessed persons are precisely those in whose soul a demonic spirit has managed to nestle as a parasite, to speak through his mouth and to feed on his spirit.

Yet all this was only the aftereffect of Satan's first incursion into our human race. At that first intrusion it was decided. The natural bond of man's spirit to God was severed by him and, on his part, a cord of dependence was thrown around the spirit of man; and since then, this influence has continued, and is still continuing, until it will not be nullified by Christ until the end of days. Thus here, too, the dominion reversed. Man, as a potential of a higher order, had dominion over the spirit world and should have retained it. But the demonic world, however much of a lower order, then rebelled. It has taken upon itself the rule over mankind. And if no other order of God had intervened, this demonic world would gradually have destroyed

all that was high in man, pushed him back into animal life and caused him to vegetate like a plant. Always as a result of this fixed law: If the higher is weakened, the lower immediately resumes its attempt to nullify the rule of the higher, and itself attracts the rule of the higher. Therefore, only by the entrance of the Eternal Word into our nature could our human dominion be restored. Once weakened by the fall, the spirit of man could no longer shake off the demonic yoke or resume its dominion in the spirit world. Only when the spirit of man emerged unimpaired, unbroken and inviolable in a human child could the Son of man again overthrow the tyranny of the demonic parasite. What entered now was death. Not as if all life had been extinguished at once. On the contrary, the animal life persisted, and the spiritual life remained as the wick of the night-light, which glows with soul. As a result, the animal life of man gained the upper hand and the destructive power of the material, vegetable and animal world was thrown upon him in order to weaken him physically by all kinds of illness and danger, until finally the battle had to be given up and physical death occurred. The same weakening, poisoning and destruction occurred in the society of mankind, which brought it into complete disorder. And what was most frightening, the spiritual in man was also poisoned and forced by Satan to serve his highness instead of God's honor.

Thus, the parasitism of the lower orders and kingdoms penetrated ever more into the higher order of creatures, and our whole world was faced with the question whether the higher order would be able to regain its dominion, or whether it was doomed to perish in the domination of the lower. Would the plant and animal kingdom continue to destroy man physically; would the animal in us destroy the spiritual; and would the demonic world continue to poison the spirit in us? The question was not whether God would allow the human spirit to break away from Satan and take back its own dominion over all the lower orders of creation. The question was not whether God Almighty could break this resistance of the lower orders. His Almighty, who created everything, could, if necessary, turn it all back to nothing and create a new world. No, it was about the spirit of man. The question was whether the spirit of man could be restored to its original strength, and thus regain the dominion originally granted to it over all the lower orders of creation. It is therefore the Son of Man who always comes to the fore in this new struggle. The Son of man was God, but he had humiliated himself, yes destroyed himself, and taken on the form of a human being, yes, of a servant. And this is the marvel of salvation, that in this Son of Man the spiritual is entirely unweakened and

unbroken, and that his spirit has dominion over all the lower orders of creation. In his miracles he does this over the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom and the realm of demons. But this demonstration of regained human supremacy served only to start the battle and to show his supremacy. But this triumph in the periphery was not the salvation of our race. The battle must be fought spiritually in the center, in the center of human life itself, and this took place in the Temptation, in the spiritual duel between the Son of Man and the Ruler of the world. Hence, at the time of Temptation, the fasting to suppress the animal, the wild animals that prowl about, and finally the bread question when Temptation begins. And when it turned out that the Son of Man could not be wounded or hurt spiritually, it had to be Satan's intention to make Jesus disappear, and if possible, to destroy him with death. That is what Satan set out to do, and Jesus died. But it was in that death that the spirit of the Son of Man proved invulnerable. He devoured death by the power of His spiritual life. He arose, and it was in the resurrection of Christ that the power of the higher order over all the lower order of creation was restored. The life of the spirit overcame death. The life of the spirit broke through into the glorified body, and from that moment the great process begins of taking what is to be saved from the world into Jesus and making it like Him. This power carries the souls and transforms them into eternal life, that is, into a life that is no longer controlled by a lower realm, but controls itself. A completely different order of things now pervades human society. And the prophets foretell us of the moment when, having been renewed, a new humanity will shine forth on this earth, one that, glorified in body, will shake off all dominion of the lower realms over this body, and one day will stand before God glorified as Jesus Himself, yes as crowned King. And here too is organization. It is not each man in himself, but all mankind in one Body, and in that Body Christ as the Spirit-providing, all-leading, all-controlling Head. That is His Kingship. Thus, a Kingship that begins in the spirit of man, but through the spirit of man subjugates all the lower realms of nature to itself, and thus penetrates all these realms, i.e., the whole of creation. A re-creation that encompasses man in his soul life and his society, but also extends to the lower orders of animal, vegetable and material life. A kingship that may have been temporarily interrupted, but that restlessly pushes on, and will reveal itself at the end of the centuries as a complete, all-embracing dominion. And once this is complete, everything that stood between the Triune God and man as created in His image, and that hindered the full, rich and intimate fellowship, will fall away. Then the Mediatorship will also be complete, and God Triune in Christ will control all of our gender, and through our gender all of creation, and be all in all.

And what else will have triumphed than life? That wonderful principle of life, which rises in the plant, develops more abundantly in the animal, and completes itself in man. And that life, which was continually encroached upon by the proliferation of the lower realms, and thus stripped of its power, that life was the Son of Man himself; that life in its highest and richest manifestation. And it is that life, which in the Son of Man acting unconquerably, has devoured the material, and thus triumphs over death. The last enemy to be vanquished is Death; and He, who overcomes Death, is the fundamental Life in its highest expression of power. When God will be all and in all again, it is Life that will flow forth pure and undefiled from the Fountain of Life and will flow through all of His creation.

We dare to trust that what was said in our first series about the revelation of Christ's royal rule also in the increasing power of the human spirit over nature, will now be understood in its deeper meaning.