

XV. - Cohesion with life.

For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he the Son to have life in himself. JOH. 5:26.

The apostle testifies that in the Eternal Word, i.e., in the Son, is life, and that this life is the light of men. Instead of light, we might write higher consciousness, but the meaning remains the same. In Christ is life, and from that life emanates all higher flourishing, and thus also our salvation. Christ himself explains this further when he says "that the Son has life in himself", and that we, on the other hand, can only receive life from him. He appears to us as the one who gives life to the world. He calls himself "the way, the truth and the life". Hence the maxim: "He who has the Son has life, and he who does not have the Son has no life. All salvation is a transition from death to life. And Christ is at the same time the Bread of Life, i.e. the Bread by which he who once received life remains alive. Paul even draws this so far that our - life with Christ is hidden in God, yes, the Christ is our life. If now, in contrast to that life, all unholiness, all iniquity, all the inner weakening of our higher existence, is portrayed by Scripture in the image of Death, it follows that the reign of our King must be a reign of life over death, and that it is in life itself that we must seek the fundamental explanation of that reign. Death has reigned from Adam to Moses, and so now life will reign in those who are in Christ. In all Jesus' appearance, therefore, the most important thing is not the word that He speaks, but His own person; not what emanates from Him, but He Himself; and the whole struggle against Him ultimately draws together in the one aim, to destroy His life; while, on the other hand, His Kingship arises from the fact that the life that He possessed within Him could not be destroyed, but broke through death, and glorified itself in His Resurrection. Not sin, not even Satan, but Death, i. e. the antithesis of Life, is therefore the last enemy that must be conquered. The movement of grace starts from life as from its first milestone, and the last milestone is not reached until Life expels Death. The reign of the kings of the earth is not like that. It occurs externally. A command goes out. The subject hears this command. His will conforms to that command, and he carries it out. Or he does not, and then the strong arm comes and the King forces him. But here we have a rule, which rises internally from life itself, and rests in life. Christ, our King, shares his life. Those who receive his life are born again, and as such are members of his body; an image derived from life as well. And out of that life comes the hearing of his word, and the fulfilling of his word with one's own free will. But that is a consequence. It is an effect. It is the second phase; but the starting point, the

beginning lies in the life, and therefore in Christ's Kingship it is the life for all things, i.e., his life, that rules us, and makes him King in us.

Now Christ's life is the highest, the richest, the only unshakable life, but it nevertheless remains in its fundamental character one with all the life of the creature. It is the life of the highest order in the life of creation, and from that life, therefore, the Kingdom, which is far above all the realms of nature; but it nevertheless follows the law which governs all life, and is related to all the lower orders of life. He, the Christ, took on our human nature, not only in the soul, but also in the body, and our human body, in its turn, is directly related to the animal kingdom as well as to the plant kingdom. Thus, there is an ascending order of creatures. The lowest in order is the life of the plant, then comes in second order the life of the animal. In the plant, life rises in a soul, but not in the animal. All the same, Scripture tells us that the animal also has a soul. But in mankind this soul life ascends to a higher order, to a spiritual order. In the spirit world this spiritual order begins by rising above us through its ready completion, but in the end the spirit of man rises above the spirit world. The higher order of man's spiritual life then finds its highest revelation in the Christ, and in the Christ is the rightful connection with the life of God. A scale, as it is called, i.e., a ladder of life, along which life climbs higher and higher from rung to rung, but in such a way that even on the lowest rung life itself remains the great mystery, and it is said of plants and animals in Psalm 104 that the spark for it is ignited "by the Spirit of God. From God, through God, and to God is on all the range of life the set law. And the second law is that in this series of the lowest, the higher, and the highest life, the higher always rests on the lower and must govern the lower, and does so as long as it remains intact and unblemished. But then also vice versa, that if the life of the higher order decays and sinks, the life of the lower order starts to rule over the higher, and thereby kills the higher life. If the plant starts to rule the animal, the animal dies. If plant or animal dominates man, man dies physically, and if the animal soul dominates man's spirit, man dies spiritually. And that is why man's life could only become imperishable and eternal through that, that a spiritual life of a higher order took hold in man, a life that spiritually could not succumb and physically could break through death; and that has happened in Him who, as our King, controls all the lower orders of life so completely that no life of a lower order could ever again prevail over the higher. And so, this our King, who has life in himself and is our life, rules over all orders of creation. He rules the spirit world, he rules the world of human children, he rules life in the realm of animals and

plants. He rules over the plant life, over the physical life, over the soul life, over the spiritual life. And all things are subject to Him, because "all things exist together through Him."

It is only through this return to life that the Royal Lordship of Christ in its full splendor and glory appears to us in a clear light. His birth, His miracles, His death, His resurrection, His being the head of the angels and of mankind, His possession of power over all things, i.e., over all creation, only then forms a unity if you go back to the deepest core of His power, i.e. to the life of the highest, all-controlling order that was in Him. Everything can be analyzed, for everything a cause and origin has been discovered, but not for life. And whether you take this life of plant or animal, of man or angel, it always remains just as enigmatic, the great riddle that defies all solution. Suddenly life appears in creation, and to the question: Who ignited the spark of that life, there is still no other answer than: God did. All life in creation is an immediate testimony of God's action, both in the life of the nations and in Michael the archangel. Through all the orders, kingdoms and ranks of creation, that life therefore remains one in its essence. It unfolds from lower to higher. First it creeps and crawls; then it goes and moves on in higher consciousness; gradually it develops into ever clearer consciousness; it becomes spiritual in nature, and begins to show God's servitude to life. And finally, it appears in Christ in that higher, royal form, by which it is both human and divine at the same time. All these transitions from lower to higher are only brought about by an action of God. The animal is not of the plant, man is not of the animal, the angel is not of man, the Christ is not of the created spiritual world. Again and again the mystery enters in. The separate mystery in the creation of the plant, its own mystery in the creation of the animal, a special order in the creation of angel and man, and so also a distinct mystery in the Incarnation of the Word, but in this whole series of mysteries God Himself connects time and again the higher with the lower. There is no life of the animal except through the life of the plant. In mankind there is a connection with animal life. Between man and angel there is coherence, and the Christ does not appear except through the assumption of our human nature.

The dominion exercised by the Christ, as having in Himself the highest, the unshakable life, is therefore not an effect of imposed dominion, but a dominion that organically and naturally pervades the whole of creation. His is an unshakable kingdom, precisely because it is not externally formed and imposed, but is rooted in his life and, through this highest life, automatically exercises dominion over all

life of a lower order. It is not a scepter that is handed out to Christ so that, by the power of this scepter, he can subdue everything else. For him and for his dominion the image remains: The head of the body. In the dominion which our head exercises over our limbs, our head does not give external commands to our limbs, which our limbs, by bending their will, obey; but the dominion of our brains over our senses, and over our limbs, proceeds naturally and applies internally. If the head wants to walk, our feet automatically move forward. If we want to grasp something, our hands automatically move toward the object we want to grasp. If we want to see something, our eyes automatically direct to the object we are looking for. It is already in us a self-operating rule of the brain in this head over the other parts and conductors of our body. And now Scripture puts this image forward to help us understand the nature and effect of the royal rule of Christ, which differs so dramatically from the rule of earthly kings. The kingdom of heaven is within you, and it is through the life itself that your King pours into you and allows the blood to flow through your veins, through your whole being, that He establishes, carries out and maintains His rule within you. But in doing this you cannot and must not separate and segregate yourself from the rest of creation. You are part of that creation, you participate in all the life of the lower orders of creation, and thus the royal rule of Christ is not determined and limited to your spiritual life. It penetrates all orders and ranks of creation. Here too, and here in particular, everything lower is subject to the higher. Christ had dominion over the kingdom of plants and animals. We never read that the Christ was ill. His life and body were too much in control of him for that. In his resurrection, he shows how the power of his life over his body even broke through death. And only when you understand the royal rule of Christ in that perfect sense to which you naturally aspire, when you choose his life as your point of departure, does a light shine on those otherwise so mysterious words, that he has been given "over all things in heaven and earth.

It is remarkable in this context how little Christ, in all his actions and words, withdraws into the detached spiritual realm, how seldom he utters doctrines, and how he dogmatizes only in exceptional cases. Almost always Jesus moves in his actions, in his words, and under his preaching in the life that he finds around him. And then we see our King occupied with the creature life of the spirit world, with the ordinary manifestations of human life, but also with the creature life of a lower order in the plant and animal world, and even into the realm of the material. Already under Israel the connection with the higher life in the Tabernacle and Temple was given from time immemorial in the fruits of the field and in the

offering from the flock, which was carried up to God in His sanctuary. And far from loosening that link, we hear Jesus, even in the Sermon on the Mount, pointing out to the multitude the lilies of the field, which neither labor nor spin, but which God Himself clothed with a glory, far beyond the splendor of Solomon and his palace. And likewise, he points to the birds of the heavens, which neither sow nor reap, and yet are all fed by our Father who is in heaven. Jesus also uses an image from the animal world to illustrate his break with Israel. Just as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, so I, your King, wanted to gather you, O Jerusalem, but you refused. He himself is presented by the Baptist in the image of the Lamb of God. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And in the Revelations on Pathmos this own image for the heavenly realms is taken over in the heavenly vision, and John sees "a lamb standing as if slaughtered." Always from the lower order of creation the image is taken for what in the higher order demands our worship. Jesus Himself serves as the Bread of Life. And when the moment of separation from his disciples approaches, the journey to Golgotha begins, and definitive signs for the New Covenant must be established, Jesus once again takes from the world of plants both the bread and the wine, and presses the sacramental seal on both. We already pointed out how the same thing happens in his miracles. Miracles in the plant world, when the loaves are multiplied and the fig tree withers, and miracles in the animal kingdom, when the miraculous catch of fish amazes the young, or the fish are multiplied for the multitude of 5000. Jesus hardly ever moves in the distracted, almost always he is busy in what is in front of his eyes; and the two lower orders of the animal and plant kingdom are so little forgotten in this, that they rather come to the fore, and constantly offer new material for the existence of a higher power and for the unveiling of holy mysteries.

This connection of Jesus to the ordinary life around him is even more evident in his parables, which are almost always presented to us as parables of the Kingdom. After all, in these parables too we are reminded of the effect of the sour dough in the flour, of the miraculous mustard seed, of the sowing of the seed in the field, and of what becomes of the sown seed in connection with the condition of the soil. We are referred to the wheat and the weeds, and to the collection of the harvest. The catching of fish comes to mind, and so does what happens to the fish when they are being sorted out after they have been caught. In his parables, Jesus deals with ordinary human life, with what happens when people buy a field, with the workers who are hired in the vineyard, with a woman who loses a penny in her

house, with a king who is planning a wedding, with the virgins who are waiting with their lamps for the king's entry. But stronger than all of this, the image of the shepherd with his flock comes to the fore. We are the sheep of his pasture, as it was already sung in the psalms. There are still other sheep, which Jesus must also bring. It will be one flock and one shepherd. The wolf that attacks the flock is repelled. And when Jesus foretells His final judgment, He pronounces that the Son of Man will sit as King, and that He will thus separate the sheep from the goats. Now, according to Jesus' own word, this speaking in images was certainly also intended to cover up the sacred and spiritual, but in itself all such speaking about the Kingdom in constantly new images, borrowed from the lower order creature life, points to a connection with that lower life. There had to be a sense and a thought in all this creaturely life, through similarity, if it was to serve as an image. Now we do not even need to guess. After all, it is expressly stated in Matt. 13:35 that Jesus spoke in parables in order to reveal things that had been hidden in them since before the foundation of the world. What else does this mean, than that in the creation all the lower order of nature was a prophecy of the highest order, which was about to be revealed? What else does it mean than that the same idea of God has dominated the whole of creation, and that in all the realms of creation, this one holy and highest idea was first expressed in the rudimentary form; that it becomes more and more refined as creation progresses to the highest order; and that it is finally fully expressed in the highest order? And this always so, that whoever knows a higher order, discovers its foundations in the lower orders that preceded it, and that whoever finally enters the highest order, clearly sees the connection with all the lower orders of creation.

Now understood in this way, the Kingdom of heaven itself is the highest order to which the life of creation ascends. It is therefore repeatedly said that we are not far from that Kingdom and that we enter it; which can only mean coming under the rule exercised by Christ our King over that highest order. Just as man was called to be king in this earthly household and, as man, to rule over the three lower realms of nature, over the material, plant and animal kingdoms; yes, as man as such in a certain sense still actually exercises that kingship over these three realms of nature; And in that realm of the highest order, the basic idea of all creation was realized. Christ is the head of mankind and of the angels; man the head of the visible creation on earth; the animal the head of the realm of plants; and the plant the head of the realm of minerals; and all this is subsumed in Jesus' Kingship and extended in one line of dominion. Thus taken, all lower realms could and should already

contain the basic features of the higher and highest, because God had put them there, and thus Jesus found ready, in nature and in the environment around Him, all the images by which He would explain to us the nature and essence of His Kingdom. Jesus did not put all that in, but it was there from the foundation of the world, and Jesus took it out because he saw it in it, and pointed it out to us, so that we too might see it in it. Wherever we turn, we must never erect a wall of separation between the Kingdom of heaven and the lower orders of creation, as if all of that, as soon as we enter the Kingdom, would no longer affect us. To do so is to promote a false spiritualism, which is not supported anywhere in Scripture. It is not the case that only souls are saved, and at most the human race as a whole is saved. The reign of our King must encompass the whole of creation, and therefore it is inevitable that all orders and kingdoms of creation will be freed from the pressure under which they are suffering. All of them, as if in distress, await the revelation of the freedom of God's children," and this in the knowledge that "all of creation itself will be made free from the servitude of destruction. Jesus himself testifies that he will drink the wine anew in the kingdom of his Father, and all that is prophesied to us of the kingdom of glory steadily points to an effect of Christ's royal power in all creation. Already the prophecy in Israel foretold a future in which the desert would bloom like a rose, the wildness of the beasts of prey would depart from them, and a child would play in the viper's den. And whether you read the prophetic or the apostolic scriptures, everything points invariably to a future in which the whole earth will be renewed and the Lord's glory will radiate from a new heaven onto a new earth.

It is never about the soul without it also being about the body. Christ's resurrection from the dead dominates so much of the Gospel that we are constantly being told how our mortal body will also gain immortality and how our humiliated body will be made like Jesus' glorified body, not of itself, but by an act of our King, an act that will be the result of that wonderful power by which he can also subdue all things, even material things, to himself. The addition of the Kingdom of Heaven should therefore not mislead us for a moment, as if we were to be separated from visible things forever at our death. It is one line that the Apostle Paul particularly extends from Christ's Resurrection to our spiritual resurrection, but also to our bodily resurrection in the last day, and to the glory that comes afterwards; and that same line he finally extends to all the creature that now groans under vanity. And when in Revelation the visions are presented to us, in which this final unravelling of the mystery of salvation is portrayed, then we see before our eyes how the royal

power of Christ penetrates all realms of nature, controls the abyss and the earth and the heavens, and breaks them loose from their distorted order, in order to put them together in their God-given order. Because Jesus' Kingship is rooted in the very principle of life, and all life, lower and higher, is one in its starting point in the mystery of God's Almighty power, nothing that lives can and may remain excluded from His Royal Dominion, and this all-embracing character and the urgent power of Jesus' Kingship must always be held fast to the one-sided spiritualism that only has an eye and a heart for the closed spiritual. Unspiritual man sees only the trunk and the branches, the leaves and the blossoms, but Jesus sees from the trunk the root that lies hidden under the earth, and it is to that root of all higher life that he constantly points us in all the realms of creation of a lower order. Not the tree as the trunk that has been cut down, but the tree that blossoms on its intact and undamaged root will one day, under its royal rule, be the image of the glorified creation.