

XVI. - Preliminary situation.

For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and suffers the damage of his soul? Or what shall a man give for the redemption of his soul?

MATTHEWS. 16:26.

The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom because it is founded by a king and exists in its spiritual ordinance, as one calls an order of construction, monarchically. This cannot be otherwise, because it is not only moral, but for all things even religious in nature, and sets the beatitude and glory in the direct subjection of all creature to the Divine order. The reign of God must thus be complete in that kingdom, God must reign in it in its along all lines. God the Lord must thus be King in it, and it is God's all-embracing supremacy over heaven and earth that is expressed in this royal name, insofar as that supremacy concerns spiritual beings who possess consciousness and will, i.e., angels and men. The sovereignty over the inanimate creation is not therefore omitted; rather it is assumed, but in the sovereignty over matter and over the elementary forces of nature the royal character of the Supreme Government of God is not revealed. Kingship presupposes subjects with a sense of self, who are governed by the King, be it by force or because they want and desire it themselves. In the Kingdom of Heaven only the latter takes place. His people will be willing until His holy day. The relationship of Father and child becomes an expression of the personal relationship between this King and those over whom He rules. And His regiment penetrates to the extremes of the self-conscious existence of His subjects. Once this Kingdom of Heaven has become a reality up to the completion of a holy ideal, then the self-conscious life of those who have entered it has been fully developed to its richest expression, and this complete development along all lines and in all forms is controlled by God as our King. Just as the sun rules over all our solar system, so God rules over all His spiritual kingdom. Without a single hiatus, without any defect or deficiency, without a hint of anything that might be unholy or unfortunate. In perfect purity. And the entire inanimate creation will then have only one purpose, namely to illuminate the glory of that Kingdom in the external and visible.

This situation is not present yet. This situation will only come about when the consummation of the ages comes, and there will be no more night, i.e., when time will be consumed in eternity. Until then, this Kingdom exists only in the heavens, holy, and as the ideal that is to come, and is therefore called the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. But now it has begun to be realized on earth. Still imperfect. In a

condition that finds the reborn sinner as a "new man", but without the final cut-off of sin from his inner life; and as a "child of God", but without the servitude of destruction being entirely undone. There is still sin in this "new man" and he is still in a state of misery. Although God has become his King, God has not yet become everything in him. There is a provisional situation, and this means that the Kingship of Christ takes precedence over the direct Kingship of God. Christ, because he is not only the Son of God and God himself, but also the Son of Man, can have direct fellowship with the elect, even though their sin still clings to him, and he can also rule over us, even though we are still in a state of misery and not yet in one of glory. He himself took our sin upon himself and entered into our misery. From there Jesus continually speaks of: "My Kingdom", because it is he who appears as the King with the clothes on his back in the Kingdom of heaven, in the Kingdom of God. He is the Mediator and King. And only when all sin has been destroyed and the last enemy has been conquered, and all misery has been transformed into glory, does this adornment of place come to an end, God Himself will be all and in all, and the Kingdom will be handed over to God the Father. Christ then also remains the Head of the Body. He remains so forever. But the Triune God's sovereignty then operates directly.

The fundamental difference between the two thus lies in the fact that the vicarious Kingship of Christ serves to prepare and bring about the situation that must come in order to make the direct Kingship of God Triune possible. There is still impurity within, and there are still enemies outside. Sin and misery have not yet been eradicated. That does not happen overnight. A long process must be gone through for this. As the angel called out in the vision from Patmos: The harvest of the earth must first ripen. (Rev. 14:15). Those who fall away must first ripen for destruction, and those who enter must first ripen for glory. In such a situation only he can exercise the Kingship, who, being God himself, is at the same time the Son of Man, and thus has direct contact with our human existence. That is why Jesus himself says in Matthew 25: 31 ff. that when the maturation, when the spiritual process will be completed, not the Son of God, but the Son of Man will sit on the Throne of His Glory, and that the Son of Man, as King (v.34), will then execute the judgment and complete the separation.

Now it depends on this that our King is also our highest Prophet and our only High Priest. In a kingdom that is not purely spiritual, the power, the rule, is increasingly separated from the spiritual factors of the people's life. In the order of Melchizedek, Kingship was still combined with the Priesthood. Thus, it had

emerged from the father's regiment over his family. In the family, the father not only has the power to rule, but also the spiritual responsibility to lead his family spiritually. Power and spiritual leadership are still one in fatherhood. Thus, it could not be otherwise, than at the very beginning, when the Kingship arose, the King also had to be a priest, and this is the original position, which is portrayed to us in Scripture as the order of Melchizedek. Hence for Messiah the prophecy in Psalm 110: "The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent, Thou art a priest after the order of Melchizedek." And this was said after the Messiah's Kingship had first been proclaimed in the preceding verses: "Sit at My right hand, until I have set Your enemies as a footstool Your feet." Today the attempt to unite the Kingship with the Priesthood is still alive in the Caesaropapie, as it is continuing most strongly in Russia, but also partly in some Lutheran countries, since the king has also been declared Supreme Bishop, *summus episcopus*. This Caesaropapie, however, is nothing but an exaggeration of power against the Church of Christ. Both the royal power and the episcopal supremacy are bound together completely externally. All inner unity is missing. Even if the king is personally a complete infidel, he remains the "primitive bishop". In the good course of events, on the other hand, the royal authority and the spiritual highness have increasingly diverged. The one has been separated from the other. And so, the priest acted independently of the Kingship in Israel, and the prophet intervened between the two. The prophet, under the guidance of the Spirit, was to make the high ideal shine; the priest, through sacrifice, was to atone for the people's sins. The one full office thus splits into two. On the one hand there is the Kingship, to exercise authority and to govern the people, and on the other hand there are the two spiritual offices of the prophet and the priest, to take on the spiritual leadership of the people. For the external life the King, for the internal life the prophet and the priest.

But of course, in the Kingdom of Heaven this separation could not continue. The separation arose from the division of our lives, from the separation between the higher and lower life of the people, from the personal unholiness of so many a king among the kings of the earth. The power by which kingship was sustained was therefore the power of external force. The unwilling were not persuaded and spiritually converted, but forced by the strong arm to acknowledge the authority of the King and to submit to him. But in the Kingdom of Christ all this fell away. His regiment is a spiritual regiment. He does not coerce externally, but regenerates and convinces internally. He seizes the inner life. "The Kingdom of God does not come with outward countenance, it is within." They are spiritual factors, through which

the Christ rules over God's children. He takes hold of them in their souls, He takes hold of them in their spiritual lives, and He transforms them internally in such a way that their entire internal existence turns towards Him, yes, that He incorporates them into His mystical body. Thus, there could be no place for an isolated prophet or priest next to the King. This King could not be King, unless he himself is prophet for our conscious, and priest for our ethical life. Only by being our prophet and our priest can he be our King. These three offices merge with him into one all-encompassing office. The three lines of the threefold ministry in Israel combine in him to a higher unity. He gives in a perfect manner what the Prophecy in Israel gave only in a preparatory way, the complete revelation of the truth about heaven and about our earthly situations, and about the Divine ideal towards which everything is moving and for which everything is maturing. And also, he gives in a real and complete way that which the priest in Israel could only represent in an imaginary way, the unification of the sinner with the holy God. He does not sacrifice the lamb, but is himself the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. It is only through his reconciliation as a priest, and his clear insight as a prophet into what is, what was, and what is to come, that this spiritual and royal power, which enables him to rule over the spirits with absolute authority, is effective. What we have here is a purely spiritual power that will rule without limit, but which, in order to rule, does not repress the spirit movement and overpower the spirits with the sword, but which conquers the subjects within, seizes them within their own nature so as not to let them go, and now completes their spiritual edification in such a way that they become 'living stones' for the temple in which God will dwell.

Therefore, in Christ, the King and the Prophet must be one.

With the anti-Christian power, on the other hand, you see just the opposite in the vision on Pathmos. First the Beast rises out of the sea, and in this illusory human form the anti-Christian kingly power presents itself. But then another Beast rises from the earth, and the reified human form that appears in it is not a king, but a prophet; a prophet only; and he now prepares to give spiritual guidance to the people, so that they may worship the image of the anti-Christian king-power, receive his mark, and exclude in their conduct and walk, i.e., in their social society, all those who do not bear this mark.

Now the Kingdom that comes with Christ is called a Kingdom because it exists in a monarchical and spiritual sense and because a King rules it, but this Kingdom appears in very different forms. Taken as it was in the order of God, it is one, but

in the course of its historical development it takes on very different forms. It is a kingdom that has boundaries, which determine what belongs to it and what does not. This empire also has its own territory, and beyond this lies a territory that is under a completely different dispensation. The boundary that defines what belongs to this Kingdom and what belongs to the area beyond must be crossed in order to enter this Kingdom. One can approach it, and even not be far away from it, yet not be able to take the last step across the border and still be outside it. In the same way that it was said to the rich young man: "You are not far from the Kingdom of God"; but still he could not take the last step, and so he did not enter, but remained standing on the area that lies outside, albeit right next to the border. This, of course, rules out all vagueness in the conception of this Kingdom. There is not a floating spiritual sphere that passes imperceptibly from one to the other

and to which one can add everything that hints at the true, good and beautiful. It is a realm that shows where it is and where it is not, and therefore always requires a transition. It is a transition from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of the Son of Love. Being drawn out of the power of darkness into the kingdom where His wonderful light shines. A passing from death into life. Especially this last expression of Scripture draws the line very sharply, and takes the contrast between what is inside and what is outside the Kingdom very concrete. It is precisely this transition, this being transferred from the unholy to the Kingdom of Christ, that John the Baptist, and Jesus in his first appearance, emphasized so strongly. The Kingdom of Christ did not exist at first. Not even in Israel. But now it came, it was near at hand, and everyone who feared God was now called upon to cross over and enter that Kingdom, to enter through conversion; and to seal this transition and conversion symbolically by undergoing the Baptism in the river Jordan, to be followed later by the baptism by fire of Christ. Even a gradual transition is out of the question. What was, did not flow unnoticed into what was to come. There was a break, there was an exit from that in which one was, in order to pass over into the new that was to come, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

If you now take this Kingdom of heaven according to its divine specifications, in its ideal conception, and as it will be one day at the consummation of the ages, then it stands before you as the Kingdom of perfect bliss, holiness and glory. Then two things are acquired. First, the expulsion and elimination of all that which, from the demonic world, from mankind's sin, and from the misery that followed sin, both in the spirit world and in our human world, had nestled itself against God in the creature world and had set itself at enmity against Him. Secondly, does not the

state that existed before the fall, with Paradise as it was, return? After all, in that state of paradise, human development had only just begun, and was in no way complete. Now, after the elimination of sin and misery, life in paradise does not begin anew, but the creaturely world appears in its final and completed development. In paradise man could still fall, but in the state of the completed Kingdom of God this is impossible. The saved angels and the saved human beings are elevated above the danger of falling into sin, and everything that would have come forth from man, had he not fallen, in a richer development, is, after the Last Day, in the Kingdom of Heaven, not only potentially, but in a full sense and to the full extent realized. Satan's power and influence over our human race will then have been nullified, and man will no longer be left to his own devices, but everything that has spiritual life will be controlled in its spiritual existence by Christ as its King. Fallback is unthinkable. No one can snatch from His hand what was given to Him by the Father. The high ideal has then become reality. All the fruit has ripened. The perfection of God is reflected in a perfect creation. The "God saw that it was good", from the hour of creation, is therefore also applicable to what has become of creation. Nothing stands against it anymore. The "Holy, holy, holy!" in the hymn, rises from the pure holiness of the spirits. And God is all and in all.

But this is not the situation that immediately arises. Even in the heavens the revelation of perfect glory still remains. Even in the high spirit world the battle is still going on. Michael and his angels are still battling the Dragon and his henchmen. And so also on earth the Kingdom is beginning to be confined within very narrow limits. A small flock. A circle of a few faithful. And even within that circle, as small as it is, the struggle still continues. Gradually a people will come before this King, a people of their own, an acquired people, but that people will stand as a small band against the mighty nations of the earth. And though this small multitude has grown after Jesus' ascension, and though Jesus now finds his subjects among all peoples and nations, even now that group among the children of mankind, which has definitely made the transition and has passed into the Kingdom of heaven, is not comparable in number or power to the broad multitude standing outside. In the course of its history, moreover, the glory of the Kingdom has by no means yet been revealed or revealed to the world. The outward show of the world hates God's child, because it would not be able to satisfy his high demand, but also the outward appearance of the glory is still held back. The misery continues; it is often increased for those who have entered the Kingdom, precisely

because of that entry. And not only the fact that the glory still remains, but also the effect of the holy character of the Kingdom can only bring it to the beginning of its high splendor. Not even a small beginning of perfect obedience, says our Catechism, is found here on earth in even the best and most pious, and only in their death do they die to sin. The battle that always precedes the full revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven in the spirit world, in a struggle between evil and holy spirits, thus finds its counterpart on earth in two kinds of struggle. First, in the struggle between those who fear God and those who oppose Him. But also, secondly, in the subjects of King Jesus himself. Sin is still at work. The demon world still tries to lure the subjects of our King into infidelity. And it is only because the spiritual supremacy that emanates from Christ is so overwhelming that the decline of His subjects is prevented. It is not they who maintain themselves. It is their King who protects them and stretches out his hand over them. But with all this, the Kingdom also reveals itself in them only in an imperfect form. He who has been incorporated into Jesus can no longer sin with the sin of Adam and fall away, because he has been born of God, but the glow of holiness still remains numbed by the dust of sin.

Even though the reign of our King is still limited by this, it is by no means limited to the reign over the new life in the born-again. By having a spiritual effect on his own, he has a spiritual effect through them on the whole of the conscious life of our human race. His own are not taken away from the world, but are kept in the world. Thus, they remain in contact and intercourse with the world and exert an influence on the development of the conscious human life. Thus, the rule of our King is not limited to the borders of his Kingdom, but extends beyond them. When heathen nations such as Japan and China undertake to abandon the former cruelties and barbarities in war on land and sea, to allow the higher human to come into its own in war, then this is a fruit of the reign of Christ. He has awakened these holier feelings in his own people; through his people they have passed into the general human consciousness; and through the power of human society these feelings then triumph far beyond the actual borders of the Kingdom. And so it is in every field. Had the Christ not brought His Kingdom to this earth, human development would never have become what it is today. It is not man himself, but the Christ, who by the power of his spirit has placed us on this higher plane. In an empire like ancient Egypt or one like China, which completed its development through centuries of struggle, we see what becomes of that development when it is left to man. But likewise, in the development of human life that has now come about in so-called Christian Europe and America, we see how much greater flight this development

owes to the influence of Christ. For though all manner of discord may be heard in this development, indeed though it may not be denied that it also came to a terrible pass in the unholy realm, it cannot be disputed that better feelings have prevailed and that the power of the human spirit, now taken in a good sense, has expanded in an encouraging manner under the banner of the Cross, even though that Cross has actually been denied. And this did not happen outside of Christ. It is through the power and influence that emanated from Him and His people that this result has been achieved. Just as our country has colonies outside the Kingdom, so also the Kingdom of Christ has the whole world as its outside possession, and in that world He works with blessing, softening and energy-giving effect. Already among the peoples of the world the influence of a powerful and energetic people is not limited to its borders, but extends far beyond them. Just think of the influence of the French spirit or the spirit of England and Germany exerted on all peoples. And so also the rule of the spirit of our King is not confined to his realm in a narrower sense, but penetrates beyond those borders into all our human life.