

XVII. - The existing order is maintained.

All the soul is subject to the powers that be; for there is no power but from God, and the powers that be are ordained of God. ROM. 13:1.

Should now the royal rule of Christ be understood in such a comprehensive sense, that from the moment of his ascension all authority existing on earth is to be regarded as emanating from him?

Does the government in particular, after Jesus' ascension, derive its authority from the Christ? Does Christ govern not only the Christian emperor of Germany, but also the pagan emperor of Japan? Especially in earlier centuries this question was of such great importance, because the "Vicar of Christ" asserted that he also had the authority over thrones and crowns. But although this theory of papal authority has now been almost forgotten, the question itself still carries weight, and we have to consider whether authority on earth has an independent sphere or whether all worldly authority among men is now to be regarded as emanating from the Mediator. We will not now speak of the authority of the Church. That all ecclesiastical authority descends to us from Christ is indisputable. The question before us refers only to temporal authority, to that authority which, not only among Christians, but also among pagans and Mohammedans, is exercised by one man over another. Authority is exercised among men by a father and mother over their children, by a husband over his wife, by a ruler who rules, by his officials and appointees, by the judge in the court of law, by a general over his army, by an admiral over his fleet, by a teacher over his pupils, by a patron over his workmen, by a gentleman or woman over her servants, by genius and talent in the sphere in which they shine. Wherever superiors live together, there is one who leads and there are others who follow. Without this dominance of an official or an inbred authority there can be neither orderly society, nor development and progress. Supremacy also exists in the plant and animal world, but a supremacy grounded only in violence. A higher society has arisen among men alone, in which authority takes the place of violence and, if necessary, is also upheld by the strong arm, but which nevertheless rests on a moral basis. A king who knows how to mainline himself by the power of the sword alone is lost, and the nerve of his supremacy is not to be found in his soldiers, nor in his police force, but in the conscience of his subjects. As long as only a part of his subjects resists, he can deal with them by force, but even then only on the assumption that the great majority of his subjects will remain loyal to him and adhere to his authority. Even the troops that have to suppress a rebellion would no longer support his authority if he could not count on

their loyalty. The violence is secondary; the basis of his rule can only be found in the loyalty of his subjects, loyalty which arises in their conscience from the conviction that they must honor and obey him for God's sake. The power which rests on this foundation has the character of authority, and it is this authority which is the cement of all human society. Is it to be said that this authority among men (apart from the Church) is given by the Triune God, or that it is given by Christ, as King of the Kingdom of God, to those who are vested with it? Or also, if this authority emanated from God Triune in earlier centuries, should it at least be confessed after Jesus' ascension that it does not emanate from God Triune but from the exalted Messiah, who is seated at the right hand of the Father?

The answer to that question is that, before and after Jesus' ascension, all worldly authority among men emanates not from the Christ, but from God Triune. The king rules by the grace of God, and not by the grace of Christ. The dominion due to the kings of the earth, as well as the spiritual dominion of the Christ, is assigned to them by God Triune. Jesus is King in His Kingdom, and they are King in the Kingdom assigned to them, both under the order, disposition, and regulation of God Triune. The reign of Christ is far superior to their reign. Their kingdom is not the same in size, duration or inner strength, yet it stands beside them, not under them. The Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, not because he appoints kings and lords, but because among all kings and among all lords he is in all respects the highest, the most excellent, the most exquisite, and because one day he will spiritually judge them and be their judge. But the source, the origin of their authority is not to be found in Christ. That origin, that source lies in the Triune God, in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and thus also in the Son, in so far as he is in unison with the Father and the Holy Spirit; but not in the Son of Man, not in the Mediator, not in the King of the realm of God as such.

This is most clearly felt if one looks first of all at the parental authority, which is of the same kind as the governmental authority. This parental authority, however, as far as its origin is concerned, goes completely outside the work of redemption. It arises from the division as far as the parents are concerned, and from the birth as far as the children are concerned. This division and birth arise from a creative order. In itself it would have been quite conceivable that all human beings, like Adam, had been created directly by God. Why not? The angels were no different. There is no marriage among angels. Jesus himself pointed out that in heaven no one is given in marriage, even among the blessed. What we call the generation of one creature from another exists only on our earth. It exists in the plant kingdom,

which was created by sowing seeds. It exists likewise in the animal world, where the one animal is born of the other or springs from the egg. And so, God has also ordained for mankind in His Creation Ordinance. After Adam, Eve was created by a separate act of creation, but after Adam and Eve, every human being has a father and a mother. In that birth from father and mother, both their authority over the child born from them is founded. With the animal, there is no question of authority in this relationship either. As soon as the young animal stops needing help, it goes its own way, looks for its own food, and it is not long before it does not even recognize its own mother. It is only in very exceptional cases that it temporarily knows its father. With humans this begins in a similar way, but soon takes an entirely different form. The need for help is not even felt by the child at first. The young, newly born animal is immediately much more developed than the young, newly born child. The child knows nothing, notices nothing. It cannot walk, it cannot look for its mother. It is carried, and it goes through its first life completely unconscious and helpless. And not only that the young child is much less developed than the young animal, but also when the development and the growth start, they take much longer. A young animal, one year old, often already finds its own way, a one-year-old child is still dependent on the mother's care for everything. It takes at least seven, and often ten years, before the young child begins to gain some independence, and the vast majority of them are not able to stand on their own two feet and provide for themselves until they have been under the care of their mother for fifteen or sixteen years. In addition, the young animal needs only physical development and is driven by instinct, while the young child, in addition to its physical development, also needs spiritual development. This not only creates a second need for help and dependence, but also creates a completely different bond between child and parents. In the case of an animal, all understanding with its mother is sometimes completely broken off just a few months after birth. With the young child, on the other hand, in a series of years of life, an ever-closer bond is woven between its heart and the heart of its parents. It is in both of these, in the child's long-standing need for help and in the spiritual bond from heart to heart, that parental authority rests and from both rests the child's recognition of that authority.

Now we do not say that this goes beyond sin and grace, and thus beyond the work of Redemption. Rather, it is in the nature of things that sin in the parents and sin in the child steadily undermine this authority. It is the sin of the parents that constantly weakens the care for the child and the authority over the child of the

father and the mother, and conversely, it is the sin in the child's heart that undermines obedience and encourages disobedience, if not resistance. And likewise, it is perfectly true that grace stops this corruption of sin both in the parents and in the child, and establishes the parental authority on a firmer basis. Baptism is also a support for authority. But even though it must be acknowledged that sin and grace also have an effect on this relationship, grace is not the basis of it. This is strongly emphasized if you notice how, for example, in China paternal authority is much higher than in Christian Europe. No son, even if he is 40 or 50 years old, will sit down in the presence of his father in China unless his father has invited him to do so. Respect for the father at least, and partly also for the mother, is the nerve of all moral development in China: And even if for some other reason this relationship may be questioned, what still exists in China today proves in any case that paternal authority can flourish and endure among a people who are still alien to all influence of special grace in their national life.

Now, if both the ordinance that not every human being is created separately, but born of parents, and the ordinance of the utter helplessness of the new-born child, added to its only very slow development, are founded in creation and not in the work of grace, it necessarily follows that the parental authority that arises from these two ordinances is derived from Him who created the earth and all that is in it, and not from the Mediator. This authority may be restored by the Mediator, where it is in danger of being disturbed, and sanctified in its exercise, but in itself it forms an independent sphere, which, being founded on the natural order of things, exists independently of the faith to which salvation is conferred, and which has survived even in countries and regions where the people have not at all been Christianized, and sometimes more powerfully even in heathen countries than among many Christian peoples. As far as we know, it has never been claimed that parental authority could be derived from Christ, and would be the consequence of his royal order. If we think of the centuries before Christ's arrival and of the life of this world, in so far as it did not receive Christ's baptism, then parental authority is the starting point for all human society. Throughout all ages and in all regions, human society has developed from family life, and that family life always found its unifying bond in the authority exercised over the children by either parent, or father or mother. If parental authority is not derived from Christ, but from the ordinance of creation, it follows that the further structure of the social and political life of nations cannot be derived from Christ either, but must be explained by the order and disposition of Divine Providence.

Patriarchal authority developed naturally out of the family and parental authority, and the patriarchal relationship passed unnoticed into the tribal relationship. In these patriarchal circles and tribes too, the need is felt for a certain order and regulation, but also for a certain unity, in order to be able to defend oneself more strongly against third parties. In this way, a unified authority arose in various forms, and this authority too had nothing to do with the coming of Christ. It existed before he appeared. It remained after his coming what it had been before his appearing. And it held good even among the tribes who continued their existence outside the sphere of the Baptism. If the tribal connection has gradually grown out of the tribal connection and the state connection, long before the Christ was born in Bethlehem, and if the formation of these states has also continued from time immemorial outside of any connection with the Christ, it is hard to see why the same should not apply to the governmental authority over a whole people as to the paternal authority in the family. The fact is, the governmental authority has been established for sin's sake. Without sin, the authority that arose directly from the family would have sufficed, no violence would have been committed, no violence would have been reversible, and the greater part of what we call State structure would not have arisen. Also, the division of the peoples, which now emanated from Babel's confusion of speech, would not have occurred. The state authority is thus a corrective, which serves to counteract the distorting effect of sin. However, this rise of the state authority was not due to the special work of redemption, but was the result of the grace of God. Grace has a twofold character. It is sanctifying with a view to eternal life, but also temporarily restoring with a view to this earthly life. As a salvific power it redeems only the elect, as a temporary restorative power it extends to all mankind, and the actions of the State must therefore be explained not by the Beatific, but by the Common grace, inasmuch as State life and the related Government authority arose among all peoples, lasted both before and after the appearance of Christ, and constantly asserted itself there, where the name of Christ is not even mentioned. The corrective effect of state authority was directed toward human society as it existed according to the order of Creation. The defect brought about by sin in the life that arose by virtue of that order of creation indicated the form in which this state authority had to act. It was determined by it. It was influenced by it. Given the Creator's ordinance for our human life, and given the disruption it had undergone through sin, the lines for the erection of the State building were automatically indicated by this, and thus, by its very nature, the construction of the State went entirely beyond the work of Redemption. Suppose for a moment that salvation in Christ had never appeared, nevertheless the State

would have arisen, nevertheless a Government would have arisen, and nevertheless this Government would have asserted its authority. Everything that would have been the same if the Christ had never appeared cannot be explained in terms of the Christ, but must find its origin and the source of its creation in a Divine ordinance that was ordered by the Creator of our human race for our entire race. This is by no means a denial that the Christ also influences state life, as it exists today, and that those who profess the Christ allow themselves to be inspired by the Christ in their state policy as well. This will be extensively discussed in the third series of our articles. But all of this is grafting onto the original stem, and the stem on which it is grafted has its own origin and can never be explained from the graft.

It is therefore remarkable how the Apostles, who were always anxious to exalt the royal authority of Christ to the highest level, when they came to discuss worldly authority, never pointed to Christ, but always to God. Especially what the Apostle Paul explains to the Church of Rome in this regard speaks volumes. He writes: "All souls are subject to the powers that be, for there is no power but from God, and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore, he who opposes the power resists the order of God; and he who resists it will bring judgment upon himself." Thus, the name of God is emphasized three times, and in what follows the government is once again called a "servant of God", without the name of Christ even being mentioned in this context. Jesus himself, in his testimony before Pilate, declared in the same way that Pilate would have no power over him if that power had not been given to him from above. Jesus does not say: if that power had not been given to you from me, but if it had not been given to you from above. Jesus has always submitted himself to that power given to him by God. And the great sin of the Israel of old, and for a short time also of the young, was precisely that they imagined the Messiah to be a worldly power that would raise Israel to dominion over the nations and the King of Israel to a kind of Emperor over all the princes. Jesus never claimed that the secular Davidic kingly power had passed to him. He never extended his hand to the reign over Israel, but rather always recognized the actual governing sovereignty himself, and obliged his disciples to recognize it. His descent in the flesh from David did not in the least refer to the inheritance to him of the worldly authority that had once been exercised by David. David's kingship was secular and had no other meaning than national symbolism. Israel was the image and prototype of the Kingdom of God, and David was in a higher sense only the foreshadowing of what the Christ would be in the spiritual Kingdom. Jesus and his Apostles therefore left the existing order untouched and undisturbed. It is in

that existing order that they act. They make no attempt to replace it with another order, and it is of the existing powers that the Apostle says they are of God. So it was then, and so it is still. The framework for our human life is given in the creation itself, both for our body and our spirit, and both for the individual human being and for the human community. It is according to the order of these specifications that human life still continues. And all these lines of this original plan lie before and therefore outside the work of Redemption, and therefore cannot be explained by Christ, but must be derived from the Wisdom and Omnipotence of the Triune God, Creator of all creation. It is not the basic structure of the Creation that has conformed to the Redemptive Work, but the Redemptive Work that has conformed to this basic structure. It is God the Lord who has ordained both: first the Work of Creation according to His appointed ordinance, and then the Work of Redemption, partly in the common grace, partly in the special grace, and God the Lord has directed this work according to the principles of the first work. Thus, it is that Christ was instituted as Head of the Church and King of the Kingdom of God by the decree of God, and it is by an equally holy decree of God that the authority of man over man in the worldly realm has been established, both of the parents over the children and of the government over the nations. Both the Christ as King of the Kingdom of God and the princes of the kingdoms of the earth reign by the grace of God.