

XVIII. - The salvation of the world.

If any man have the good of the world, and see his brother in want, and shut up his heart to him, how shall the love of God abide in him? 1 JOH. 3:17.

In the announcement of the angel Gabriel to Mary, the Kingship of the Christ is immediately placed in the foreground. It is said of John the Baptist in Zechariah's hymn: "And thou, the child, shalt be called a prophet of the Highest□, but of Jesus the angel says, even before he is born: "This one shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest□, and God shall make him the King of the world. and God will give him the throne of his father David, and he shall be King over the house of Jacob, and his kingdom shall have no end." Jesus will also be a prophet, but John goes before Jesus as the prophet, and Jesus appears as King. Jesus will also be a priest, but this priesthood, too, initially recedes, and it is his royal majesty and royal calling, which, as all his life is controlled and all the rest included, to the exclusion of every other office, is announced to Mary by the angel. The Wise Men from the East also come to Jerusalem with the message that a great King must have been born in Israel and that they have seen his star in the firmament in the far East. Later, John the Baptist appears to usher in the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven and to prepare the multitudes for the appearance of the King who will sway the scepter in this kingdom. For his Kingship Jesus is judged by the Sanhedrin and sentenced by Pilate. It is his royal title that is nailed to his Cross in defamation. It is as King that He ascends into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. And when in the Revelations at Pathmos the end of things is shown to us in vision after vision, it is always Jesus, as the King of kings and as Lord of lords, riding on the white horse of his majesty, who defeats his enemies and causes the matter of God to triumph. Thus, the King first, the King from beginning to end, the King always in the foreground, and his honor as Savior and Redeemer first flowing forth from this Kingship. Not initially only a savior and a physician, only to climb up to royal honor as such, but precisely thanks to his Kingship able to be our savior and bring salvation. Not the Saviour becomes King, but the King becomes the Saviour, and can only be our Saviour because he is King. Christ is the Savior. He is the Savior of the Body, but also the Savior of the world. He did not come to the world "to judge the world, but to save the world." Judgment will come, but it must remain until the consummation. If Jesus had appeared immediately as Judge, there would have been no place for the work of salvation. His first and second coming are therefore not only different in terms of time, but even more so in terms of nature and character. His first coming is not to judge, but to save; His second

coming will be, not to save, but to judge. This distinct purpose of opposite character determines the peculiar form in which Jesus appears the first time in Bethlehem, and will one day also determine the peculiar form in which he will come to judge. First as Saviour, later as Judge, but in all those forms the King, who fulfills his vocation and completes his task, and who, appearing either as Saviour or Judge, both times realizes the Salvation of the world. Salvation, the first time by curing and restoring the sick, the other time by sorting out and putting to death all those who have turned out to be unpleasantly sick.

Jesus does not accomplish this work of salvation mechanically, not mechanically, not like a doctor who administers a medicine and then removes himself, and much less like a goldsmith who restores a precious stone that fell into disrepair and now returns it to its owner; no, that work of salvation proceeds organically. That is to say, Jesus himself enters that world which he will save. He does not merely descend into that world to touch its surface with the sole of his foot, and later to ascend again into heaven. Jesus enters the very life of that world, and dwells in that world and among the children of men, not as an alien heavenly being, not as an angel or messenger from above, but as a man he enters among men. Not as a newly created human being, who presents himself to our old Adamic race as a human being in his own right, who will be the founder and progenitor of a new human race, but as "sharing of the flesh and blood of the children," carrying the same blood in his veins as the fallen Adamic race. In order to preserve the world, he allows himself to be incorporated into that world in such a way that he now belongs to that world himself, has a share in its life, and can allow his power to act upon it from within. And it is in this that his Kingship is revealed. Our Queen is Queen of the Netherlands but she is not Queen of Java or Sumatra. Java and Sumatra are provinces subject to her crown. But we are her people. The past of our fathers is interwoven with the past of her fathers. Between us and our Queen there is a community of life. She our Queen and we her people. And so it is here. The world did not pass to Jesus as a province and, as foreign to him, was subject to his power, but he came to us, entered into our lives, became one of us. Thus, he is our King and we are his people, and it is as our King in that narrow and organic sense that he will preserve the world. It is one life that he has in common with us and we with him, and from that very life that is in common with us and him with us goes forth the power that drives out the poison, cures the sick, and will separate from us the incurable, in order to celebrate once and for all the being saved and kept of the world, when no blemish or wrinkle will defile it, and nothing that is unclean or

unholy will be found in it. Then the work of redemption will be completed and the salvation of the world will be complete. It is not this world that must go and another world take its place. This same world must remain. It must not be destroyed, but preserved. Renewed, recreated, be it so, but still always in essence and order the same world to which we belong, in which we live, the world of all our ancestors, the world which God once created and saw was good. God will not abandon the work that His hand began. There can be no question of God's work being destroyed. Seemingly all may be lost, but that appearance will be destroyed. Everything that Satan and sin have put into the world to destroy it will go out one day, but the world as a world will remain. What passes away is "this form of the world", not the world in its essence. It remains as "new earth under the new heavens", and to God will be the glory of His creative work forever.

In order to bring about the salvation of the world, Jesus has seized that world with mankind. That man here on earth is the crown of Creation. Man is the ruling and all-controlling creature of this world. There is an inanimate nature. In the midst of this inanimate nature, the life of the animate creation emerges in plants and animals. But this is not the end of creation either. The building still lacks its façade and cornice, and it will only be completed when man appears in paradise to receive from God's hand the scepter over all creation. Thus are all the parts of creation in this world combined. The inanimate nature serves the animate; the plant world nourishes the animal kingdom; and the animal kingdom as well as the plant kingdom are subject to man; and only these four orders together constitute what is called the life of the world, and it is that life of the world which must be preserved. That is why Jesus, in coming to this earth, takes hold of it in mankind. He enters our human race, joins the ranks of mankind's children, and replaces Adam in this human race. Whereas Adam was the naturally appointed King of mankind in Paradise, in his place Jesus now becomes the Head of mankind, the King of our gender. We human beings are one and the same; one differs from the other; among us there are superiors and inferiors; from the superiors emanates dominion over the inferiors; and it is precisely this naturally arising dominion that links us into one whole. The effect of this power from man to man is not limited to the time that we live on this earth. Powerful spirits work after us, even when they have left us. It is the influence exerted by these more powerful spirits that unites the people, shapes peoples and nations. If there is now one among all these powerful spirits who surpasses them all in power and spirit and consequently controls them through his spirit, now and in future generations, then that one, all-transcending spirit is the

King of all, the King of the spirits, the King of our generation, the King of mankind in this world, not only in name and title, but actually, truly, because he rules royally over all and subjects all spirits to his majesty. That was originally Adam, and Adam could have remained so, but he fell out, and then everything lay dejected, precisely because we had then become a kingdom without a King. This lasted until the coming of Jesus into this world and the entrance of Jesus into our human race. From that time on, mankind and the world once again had a King, their King, the spirit that surpasses all spirits in power and whose rule came naturally. The world did not notice this, and it was not heard of in the royal residences. Israel itself did not understand it, nor did the young people understand its meaning from afar. But in fact it was so. From the moment that Jesus was conceived in Mary's virgin womb, and Jesus began his existence as the child of man, he belonged to mankind, was in our lineage, and was his spirit, which surpassed the power of all other spirits in our lineage, not only in relation to it, but completely, and therefore he was our King. He did not become it first after his ascension, but was it from the beginning, because the strength and power of his spirit and truth at once potentially surpassed everything else. It was only after His ascension that this Kingship could reveal itself outwardly in its brilliance. At first it was allowed to take shelter, just as even the power of speech takes shelter in the newly born child. But the royal majority did not have to be conquered first. It was there from the moment of his conception. This is the mystery of the eternal Sonship. The Word became flesh, God was revealed in the flesh. Thus, in our generation there could not be or come anything creature-like that went beyond Jesus. He was, He is above all, and will always be above all. Hence, his is the dominion and the power over all the spirit of mankind, naturally and without transfer. There may be temporary opposition, there may be resistance, there may be struggles, but the final outcome must and will seal his rule, break down all opposition, and one day the hour must come when all knees will bow before him, and when all tongues will confess him as all Master, Lord and King.

But between Bethlehem and that glorious final outcome lies a long historical course, which has already lasted for twenty centuries, and who knows how long it may continue. It is not only the preservation of mankind that is important, but the preservation of the world. Entered into our human race, Jesus must thus, from there, also subject that world to His royal power. That world does not stand alone, but is connected with the world of spirits, as well as with God's holy angels as with the fallen angels that form Satan's hosts. As our King, Jesus must therefore also

order in the spirit world what is necessary for the salvation of our world, and he can do this because he is also the Lord of the angels. The following are therefore distinguished: 1. what Jesus as King does for and in the individual persons; 2. what he as King does for and in the society of our people; 3. what he as King does to subjugate the world outside mankind to mankind; and 4. finally, how he as King fights to nullify the power of sin and Satan and death. The first, the infliction and salvation of the few, is spiritually the most profound, because divine power directly transforms the spirit in a person's soul. With the few chosen people, it finally comes down to personal rebirth. Conversion is not a strong enough word. Conversion is the personally-aware effect of rebirth; but the transformation of life, objectively brought about in the miracle of rebirth itself, is a mystically Divine act, which defies all explanation. Through that rebirth the converted person already becomes, without knowing it himself, a subject of King Jesus, and through personal faith the conscious connection between that rebirth and the once accomplished atonement arises. Thus, the subject also becomes the purchased through the blood of the Lamb, and as such, in soul and body, Jesus' subject and property.

That body, too, must be reckoned with here. If nothing more and nothing further had happened than that the separated souls of the elect had gone up to heaven after dying, other spirits would have been added to the host around God's throne, but what God created in man, so completely different from that in the angel, would not have been done justice. The great significance of the world of mankind as compared with the world of angels lies precisely in the fact that in man the visible and the invisible are united. In the inanimate creation there is only the visible, in the angelic world there is only the invisible, but in man both are interwoven. That is why Jesus, in order to be our King, also had to accept the flesh and blood of the children; had to suffer not only in spirit but also in body; and had to seal his love in the shedding of his blood. In this, that the Word became flesh, lies the starting point for the salvation of our generation. The resurrection has only become necessary and possible through the incarnation, and even the ascension into heaven is nothing other than the necessary consequence of his victory over death, not only spiritual, but also moral on the part of the body. How many dear pious people could imagine a Kingship of Jesus that still triumphs in His glorified body, and yet could not imagine it any other way, or the departed would in fact only continue to exist in the soul, is, with the Scriptures in mind, a complete mystery. The conception of the flesh demands the resurrection and ascension and the reign of

Jesus at God's right hand in the glorified body. And from this it follows with necessity that the redeemed will through the blood of the Lamb in their turn be partakers of the resurrection, and that their humiliated body too will one day be made like His glorified body by Christ. And this now provides proof that the Kingship of Christ is not limited to the unseen, but extends to the visible as well, and that on that account all one-sided spiritualism must be condemned. After all, our bodies are not the fruit of an isolated creation. The whole work of Creation is like one chain, the single links of which are riveted to each other. As far as his body is concerned, man was created from the dust of the earth. His creation completes the series of the separate creations. What was created in plants and animals had to precede to point to what would become so much richer and so much nobler in the body of man. And if we still dissect the human body today, or scientifically study the nutrition, preservation, care and healing of that body, it appears again and again that almost everything that exists in the visible world outside man is certainly related to what we observe in and on the human body. If, therefore, Jesus' Kingship is to extend over all mankind, and to guarantee to all mankind full glory both in soul and body, then you cannot and must not isolate the Christ from the rest of the visible creation in any way, but it is a requirement that you also subject the whole of the visible world in its composition to Jesus' Kingship and incorporate it in your confession.

And the same applies to human society as a whole. This human society is not meant here as a community, but as the rich, organic life that arises out of the many people in their mutual connection. In the Libyan desert in the 8th century, tens of thousands of lonely cliques roamed the streets, seeking higher sanctity in the seclusion of human life. And, although we will refrain from condemning out of hand the intention that drove them to do so, one need only compare the rich human life on the Nile with these wandering loners to feel at once how the human composition is something entirely different, something much richer, something much more elevated, than the life of many individuals, each on his own.

Everything that manifests itself in such a human society, in family and society, in agriculture, industry and trade, in science and the arts, in moral development and, above all, in Godly exaltation, has been planted in our human world by God Himself as a seed. He did not create just a single human being, but a world of human beings, and in that world of human beings His manifold wisdom shines forth. Now it is true that sin has also affected this society and has poisoned and spoiled its life,' but this is not the reason why God gives up the treasure He placed

in that world of men. Rather, under His Redemption System this human world must be cleansed of the impure, unholy and satanic elements, and then raised to a higher and richer level of development, so that only at the end of the centuries on the new earth and under the new heaven can the full wealth of the human society be revealed in undimmed glory. But if this is so, then the human world in its organizational development cannot lie outside Jesus' Kingship. Then Jesus' Kingship must extend not only to our soul and our body, but also to our society as the human world. And only in this sense does the statement of Scripture, that God gave his Son to save the world, come into its own. Any attempt here to understand the world to mean only the souls of the elect would miss the deeper conception of the work of Redemption, which always comes to the fore in Scripture, as encompassing the whole of our human existence, soul, body and community.

But even with this, the ultimate limit of Jesus' Kingdom has by no means been reached. Our human world is not limited to this earth as we know it. Our human world also includes the host of martyrs and redeemed who are already jubilant before the Throne, and this human world is in contact with the spirit world both here on earth and beyond. Just as our human world, through our physical existence, is in contact with all of creation, so, too, as spiritual beings, we are in contact with the unseen world of spirits, both sacred and unholy. It would therefore be of no avail for our King to set us free according to our souls and to bring our human coexistence to its fullest development in the Kingdom of Glory on the new earth, if he did not also assert his power as our King in that spirit world. His must be a power to resist, to break and to destroy that which in the spirit world is bent on our destruction, and likewise to place at his service that which in the spirit world is favourably disposed toward us, and to make it work for the preservation of the world of men.

It is only in this way that the Kingship of Christ will be complete. It is a Kingship for the soul, a Kingship for our body, and in connection with this for the entire creation. In the third place, it is a Kingship that penetrates our whole human society, in every area and in every way of life. And fourthly, it is a Kingship that rules over the spirit world, in order to preserve our world in a fuller and richer sense. We shall deal with this later, while pointing out our obligations in this regard. But beforehand it is necessary to point out the two distinct periods in which Christ's Kingship manifests its power: the period of the gradual process in which we now find ourselves, and the final period which, quite differently, will bring the great trial to a conclusion with supremacy.