

XXII. - The two Realms.

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet are; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. REV. 20:10.

The only thing that has so detracted from Jesus' Kingship in the faith of the Church is the greatly increased indifference to the spirit world. For the world of angels as well as for the world of demons. It was not as if the believing congregation would go along with the denial of the existence of such a spirit world. This could not be done, insofar as one still maintains one's faith in the Holy Scriptures. The existence of such a spirit world and its effects on the life of our world are taught so clearly and thoroughly in the Scriptures that the acknowledgment of the existence of such a spirit world was bound to stand. Even if it were only the prayer in the Lord's Prayer that we may accomplish God's will on earth as it is accomplished in heaven, together with the other prayer: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil", which sustained this recognition, it is nevertheless certain that all those who still pray the Lord's Prayer as a sacred prayer, automatically profess their belief in the existence, both of good angels and of demons. But this bare external belief lacks force if it is not accompanied by an acknowledgment of the effect of these spirits on our own fate and soul existence; and it is precisely this that is lacking. Much more than we might think, believers are also under the sway of public opinions and of generally accepted ideas. It is often thought that one lives by Scripture alone, but unnoticed, public opinion also has a, oh, so strong influence on the believers' understanding of Scripture. In the days of Luther and Calvin, the notion that Satan exists was part of the general conception of those days, and therefore the Scriptures were read and understood by everyone in such a way that the effect of Satan on the fate of the world and on the heart of mankind was part of everyone's conception. But when, especially in the eighteenth century, belief in spirits completely disappeared from public opinion, it also began to weaken in religious circles. At present it is often the case that, while reading the Scriptures, the existence and the effects of the spirit world are readily accepted, but when the Bible is closed, no further account is taken of it in life. Even in the sermons of convinced preachers, the spirit world is not often and deliberately ignored. The spirit world ceased to be a permanent part of education. It can still be heard in the singing of angels, and also in the last prayer of the Lord's Prayer. But otherwise both the world of angels and that of demons are often only touched upon *pro memoria*. Even in the course of spiritual events there is almost no mention of

demonic powers. It is as if man does it all, man does it all, and no other creature power apart from man is at work in history. It is remarkable how in this same era the clear conception of Jesus' Kingship, on the one hand, and the clear conception of the power of the spirit world, on the other, have become, though not worn out, half illegible in the representation of the church. This is compounded by the fact that the last book of the Holy Scriptures, in which both the Kingship of Christ and the demon world are most clearly portrayed, was left unread by an all too large portion of the congregation during the same period, or even if chapter after chapter was read or recited from it, the book as a whole nevertheless ceased to occupy an indispensable place in the imagination of the faithful. There is therefore every reason to dwell for a moment on this connection between Christ's Kingship and the workings of the spirit world. What was seen of Jesus' Kingship when he was on earth remained veiled; the regiment of our King in these centuries of silent process can only be discovered by the eye of faith; and it is only then that the Kingship of Christ will shine forth before heaven and earth in its full majesty, when the last battle has been fought, victory will be assured forever, and our King, after his final triumph, will have subdued the last enemy at his feet on a new earth and under a new heaven.

This is what the Scriptures express by contrasting Kingdom with Kingdom. Jesus spoke emphatically of the Kingdom of Satan, when he asked, "If then Satan cast out Satan, how shall his kingdom exist?" Satan is not alone, and does not stand alone. Satan has a power under him. As long as that power remains one and subject to him, it forms an empire, and that empire cannot last if one part of it turns against the other. This empire is therefore called a "power", as we now tend to express it, what was then called a "might". The grace of God is that "He drew us out of the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love". Often this is understood to mean out of the hand of Satan, out of his power. But that cannot be the intention. One is transferred from one field to another. The "power of darkness" here is the realm of Satan's kingdom, and from that realm the redeemed is taken away and transferred to the realm of the Kingdom of Christ or the Kingdom of Heaven. The essence of Satan's Kingdom is then hereby sought in Darkness, as opposed to Light, which is the life element of the Kingdom of Christ. In this "Realm of Darkness", too, Beelzebub the Prince has a mighty army at his disposal, which fights for him as his army to defend his kingdom and consists entirely of fallen angels, demons or evil spirits. Insofar as the Prince of this Kingdom of Darkness had also extended his power over our globe, he acted as

"Commander of the World', a title which Jesus himself uses of him. This Prince of Darkness said to Jesus that all the kingdoms of the earth had been placed in his power, and that he gave them to whomever he pleased. Commander of the world is not his title as Lord of his own kingdom, but his title insofar as he, as Lord of the Kingdom of Darkness, had taken this earth as a province. This earth did not originally belong to his Kingdom, but to the Kingdom of God, and it is to God that he has dismembered this earth. He has torn it away from the Kingdom of God, and added it to his Kingdom. According to the Scriptures, the giant struggle between God and Satan is only about the possession of this earth. Through temptation and temptation in paradise, Satan has caused man to succumb, broken his power, and taken from him, as God's appointed steward, the power over this earth. And this lasts until God sends his Son, to smite back Satan's dominion on this earth, and to re-establish once more, and now for all time, the dominion of God, and to regain it for the Kingdom of God.

Neither as far as Christ nor Satan is concerned may the word Kingdom be taken metaphorically or figuratively. It is meant both times in the most actual sense. Both Kingdoms are two organized powers. Both are governed, managed and led according to a fixed plan. Satan opposes God's decree with his cunning and crafty plan. Although it goes without saying that Satan remains only a creature in power and might, he has been granted the highest conceivable power among all creatures. We know of no spirit that was more richly endowed and more wonderfully equipped before his fall than this created spirit, and it is precisely the greatness of the gifts conferred on him that made the madness to measure up to God arise in him. This madness of its own accord meant that he had to be on the alert to draw as much as possible from all that was created to his advantage and to conquer it for himself. He did not have his own terrain, his own sphere of life, his own area of power. He was the highest creature, but still remained a creature, and as such was created for no other purpose than to serve God and glorify His majesty. By becoming unfaithful to this service he robbed himself of God and robbed and robbed the honor of God with everything he took with him from the spirit world. And that which he took with him was organized, just as everything in God's creation was created in organic form. The lower spirits he seduced were soon under his control, in mutual association. His personal superiority gave him the power to control all lower evil spirits completely and to place them at his service. The demons do not wage guerrilla warfare each on their own, but are incorporated into His army and wage their battles in mutual association, using all their strength

and imagination to increase Satan's honor in the face of the honor of God that they oppose. Satan has been able to capture our human race in this unholy service, and although the common grace and redemption that began in paradise have always prevented Satan from taking complete possession of this earthly realm, he has still been able to dominate worldly life under the rule of law, He has brought worldly life under his banner, subjected the heathen peoples to the rule of his spirit, succeeded in penetrating the reign of earthly kingdoms, and thus became "First of all.

His kingdom therefore consisted of two parts: his actual kingdom in the fallen spirit world and the province he had occupied on this earth. It was into this earthly realm that he had extended his power. It is often imagined that the earthly realm itself is neutral, and that the struggle between Satan and God takes place exclusively in the hearts of men. The earthly realm itself would then remain the same, before the fall, after the fall, and after the Redemption. The scene, if we may express it this way, would always have remained one and the same, and all the difference would have consisted of mankind's estrangement from paradise, his spiritual estrangement from God, and, thanks to the appearance of Christ, his recovery to God, at least in part. But Scripture does not teach us this way. Many people even deceived themselves that, before the creation of mankind, Satan's break with God in the spirit world had already devastated the whole of creation and thus also this earth, and that we must therefore account for the "desolate and empty" state referred to in Genesis 1: 2. Paradise, then, would have been but an oasis in the incalculable wilderness, and in that paradise, man would have been called to life. Quite apart from anything else, however, the fall is immediately followed by a curse, a curse that makes paradise disappear and affects the whole earth in its way of existence, so that it now produces "thistles and thorns, and death, the terrible death, makes its appearance in this world. Not only is man's spirit tempted to waste, but his body, which is organically bound up with his spirit, is losing its high quality of life. Sickness and disease, all kinds of suffering and misery set in, by no means only as far as our soul's existence is concerned, but also our physical existence and our external society. And also, outside mankind the elementary forces of nature were 'dissolved, and destruction inflicted all over the earth.

Of course, this does not include everything that later, based on the Germanic doctrine of the gods, penetrated the peoples of Europe, of which the so-called witch trials are the best known. This, however, has nothing to do with the

representation of Scripture. And what came out of the Persian dualism must also be left out of consideration here. In Scripture, Satan and his henchmen are always God's own creatures, who exist only through His power, and who will ultimately be subject to His power again. But even so, it is in the nature of spirits to exert power and influence also over visible things, even over what is before our eyes. Everything is connected. Between them everything is organically related. Hence the power of Satan, once he has broken into this world, has gradually affected the whole of creation. What natural science and spiritual science now teach more and more clearly is that man's spirit is bound up with his body, and that there is also an organic connection between all the realms of Nature, and finally even between the organic realms of Nature and the material world, to the inmost bowels of the earth and to the finest elements of nature, has been expressed since time immemorial in the fact that the fall of man in his spirit was followed by the curse that came upon the whole earth in all the realms of its nature. The Kingdom of Satan consequently permeates everything, and seeks more and more to encompass everything. The example for the Kingdom of Satan is and remains the Kingdom of God. Just as God rules over spirits and men, rules over spirit and matter, and encompasses all creation, so too Satan seeks to establish his kingdom over God. God's power must be destroyed, and Satan's ultimate goal is to take God's place when God's power is finally broken, and to become and be and remain what God Himself is, the Controller of all things, the King over all creatures, the Lord over all creatures. And now this is the majestic thing in this battle: that God Almighty does not crush Satan, who has rebelled in the heat of the moment, by his overpowering power, but first allows him to become, and even to develop, enormous power, and then first starts the principled battle against him, and finally in that principled battle brings him down and destroys him. Satan is and remains a spirit and must therefore be spiritually conquered. He must not be crushed once by force and supremacy, but only when he can come out in his full armor can he be spiritually attacked in the hearts of men and thus spiritually nullified. Only then can the spiritual supremacy of light over darkness, the triumph of truth over falsehood, the triumph of life over death become apparent. Not only Satan must be conquered, but in that victory over Satan the high glory of God's righteousness must shine forth.

In this fearful struggle of the ages, Satan always seeks to remain behind the scenes. The thief, if he breaks in, does not want to be noticed. The assassin hides until the last moment. The robber lurks on the road from a place where he can remain unseen. And so, it is with all of Satan's endeavors, to mist up, to envelop, to veil,

and to do his work in the hidden. He is and remains the Prince of Darkness, who seeks his strength in the Darkness. Satan's laughter never rises higher than when he notices that the wise men of the world are saying that there is no Satan and no kingdom of demons, and when even among the faithful counting with his devilish snares is a high exception. He likes it when he is forgotten, when no one speaks of him, when people keep quiet, so that no one is suspicious of his tricks and schemes. There is no more glorious time for Satan than when the general cry goes out that everything previously and in Scripture professed about devils and demons is based on mere fantasy. It is precisely then that he can carry out his work undisturbed, only to appear when his efforts have been successful. But that is precisely why the Prince of Light must appear opposite the Prince of Darkness. A King must appear who will attack this ruler of the world and later destroy his kingdom. Man in himself is incapable of this struggle. Whatever will do battle with this Prince of Darkness, with his organized demonic power, must itself be an organized power.

Mankind, in order to be liberated, must also be able to act under a King, and this King must not only be a man, for the spirit of Satan is far more powerful than the spirit of man, but, appearing as the Son of Man, must also carry within himself the fullness of Divine power. Such a King alone is powerful and able, not only to defeat Satan personally for himself, but also to shake and shake loose the very foundations of his Kingdom. Whoever takes up arms against Satan must be able to sink as low and aim as high as he himself. In order to wrest the province, this earth, from Satan, Satan's power must fundamentally be eroded in his own spirit realm. Not only must his power among the people of this earth be broken, but he must also be dethroned in his own spirit world. The hero of God must both oust the "Commander of the World" and become himself King over all the kings of the earth, and at the same time be Lord and head of the angels, in order to fight the last battle in the spirit world as well. It is only in this context that the Kingship of Christ appears in its full reality. He does not appear as a King who will hover high above mankind and subdue it by force. On the contrary, he becomes one of us, human like us, organically incorporates all the elect into his mystical Body, and rules over them by reigning in them and making them spiritually free. In this way mankind, as transfigured by him, forms with him one power, one whole, an organic unity, and he is King, not in the sense of our earthly kings, but King by exercising complete dominion over all. What he incorporates as King is forever withdrawn from Satan's power. Thus, in the midst of the unholy life a holy oasis of heavenly

life is created, and from this holy focal point the Christ, as our King, expands his power and influence on earth, and at the same time he wrestles with his holy angels in the world of spirits in order to cripple Satan's influence and effect on this earth.

But just as he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness at his first appearance, so too the end cannot come until our King has personally entered into the struggle with the Prince of Demons once again. And now Satan is released, yes provoked and challenged, to confront the Kingdom of Christ for the last time in his full power and full armor; and then comes the final battle. Satan, who in the Antichrist and in the false prophet thinks himself once more master of the world, and against him rises up "the King on the white horse, surrounded by the armies of heaven, and he judges and makes war in righteousness, clothed with a garment that is quilted with blood, and his name is called: the Word of God" And now this King expels Satan and his demons with the spirit of his mouth, and the Hallelujah rises in all the heavens. "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Almighty has reigned as King." That King has power over men, power over spirits, power over soul and body, power over all the forces and elements of nature. The poison of apostasy and sin, of lies and darkness, of misery and death, is destroyed to its last creeping corner. And now it is not as if Satan had never been there. Rather, a glory now breaks through, far greater than once shone forth in paradise. It is a new earth under a new heaven, and this is the surprising final result, that Satan as Prince of Darkness appears in the end to have accomplished nothing but a higher manifestation of the glory of God, which would never have been known without his rebellion. And this can only be brought about by the appearance of our King. Kingdom over Kingdom, Prince over Prince, Commander over Commander, King over King! And that is why the glory of Jesus' Kingship must fade in your consciousness of faith, as often as belief in the rebellion and the resistance of the Prince of Darkness loses the clarity that God has sealed for you in His Word.

History is the seal of this.

Or is it not the case that precisely those heroes of faith, who most deeply experienced in their own souls how their struggle was not against flesh and blood, not against mankind, but against spiritual evil in the air, were the men who felt the strongest need of the Kingship of Christ and who glorified this Kingship of Christ at its highest?

A cloud of witnesses, from the man of Tarsen to the man of Worms with his: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me!"