

XXIV. - The Superman.

Therefore God also exalted him supremely, and gave him a name which is above all names. PHIL. 2:9.

The royal regiment of the Christ proceeds from a certain place. As our Mediator, the Son of God cannot be conceived apart from his human nature. In body he has risen from the dead, in body he has ascended into heaven. He has not discarded this body either during the ascension or afterwards. In that body he lives. In that body he has appeared. In that body he will return in judgment. Now a body must be somewhere, is bound to a certain place, and if it were to discover itself to our eyes, the body of Jesus, and therefore also our Mediator in that body, would also appear to emanate from a certain place in the universe. It is not disputed that a created spirit, and thus also the soul of a human being, does not occupy a certain place somewhere; but, if there is talk of a spirit, there is so much else involved that it so easily confuses our understanding. Hence the special emphasis we lay on Jesus' being in the body, because this immediately establishes Jesus' local existence for everyone. Where we have to imagine this holy dwelling place is not open to much further description. To say that our King is "seated on his throne at the right hand of the Father" does not give us any local definition. The expression "right hand" is nevertheless figurative. God is a spirit, entirely disembodied, and thus does not possess a right hand. This metaphorical expression expresses the majesty and power of the Lord, but does not indicate any particular place to which the searching eye can turn and where our gaze can rest. It is no different with the expression "Father's house. And whether we say that our King is enthroned "in heaven" does not give us a clear, fixed idea either. We are pointed upwards and upwards, and this remains the same even though we know that our counterparts on the other side of the globe also point upwards and upwards, even though they think of a region of heaven that sinks into the depths for us. We need not be uncertain about this, provided we only remember that we have no language for expressing the spiritual other than metaphorically, in images derived from the material. We therefore know almost nothing about the distances which separate the heaven of God's glory from this earth, and the idea that the heaven of God's glory, also called the third heaven, arches far above the last fixed stars, has no basis whatsoever for this idea. It even has something that runs counter to our feelings. Those last fixed stars lie so immeasurably far away that even their light beam needs thousands of years to penetrate us. Therefore, when the psalmist sings: "I lift up my soul, O God of hosts, unto thee," it cannot be intended that our soul should walk that

immeasurable distance in its outpouring in order to find its God first. God's omnipresence is not enough for us. We also need to think of a central point of God's majesty, to worship our God as our Father in the heavens, and with the *sursum corda*, i.e., the heart upwards, to think of our God in the majesty of His palace. But we can go no further. Where, in what sphere, in what direction these heavens of God's glory are situated, how far they are from this earth, and anything that resembles further local definition, escapes us entirely; nor can we say anything definite about the manner in which the transition from this world to these heavens of glory takes place. We do not know how Christ's ascension to heaven took place, nor do we know how the soul of one who has died in Christ reaches the Father's house, nor do we know the course of his prayer when it leaves our lips and goes out to the Highest. All this escapes us because it concerns an entirely different order of things, of which we have neither knowledge nor imagination. These are mysteries, which only the future will reveal to us. And so, it is also entirely impossible for us to establish anything more about the place where Jesus, our King, lives; about the environment in which he finds himself; about the sphere that surrounds him; about the physical existence that he leads. We do know that he is surrounded by his holy angels and that the blessed enjoy his presence, but both these angels and the blessed lead a purely spiritual existence, and therefore they too tell us nothing whatsoever about the material existence of our Savior and King. The only thing that can be established on the basis of Scripture is that the material existence of our King is not the same as his material existence on earth once was. For the Apostle expressly tells us that "flesh and blood do not inherit immortality. Although the body remains one, it is still in a completely different form. It is a bodily existence in glorified form. And the appearance on the road to Damascus to Paul and that to John on the island of Pathmos already tell us how much, although the basic type remains one, the appearance of the earthly body differs from the revelation of the heavenly body.

Two things come into play here. First, the difference between the physical in its germ and in its completion, and second, the difference between what the human body derives from its earthly and what it derives from its heavenly sphere of life. The first difference between the physical body in its first and in its final development is even evident in the persons, when we compare the appearance of a savage, man-shaped negro with the noble figure of Solomon on the throne. Both are human beings, but in their appearance, they are so completely different and divergent. And this already applies to the external appearance, even more so to the

knowledge, the effect and the revelation of power of a human being in his first and lowest development, compared to a human being at a high level of development. We will not discuss Adam's situation in paradise. Mankind is now in its degraded state, and the Christ, too, did not assume the paradisiacal form of man out of Mary, but the flesh and blood of children, i.e., our humiliated body. If we now compare the knowledge, the workings and the revelation of power of a savage tribe, which is still at the lowest level, with the knowledge, the workings and the revelation of power we have in Christianized Europe and America, we immediately sense the profound difference between man, in whom the development of his faculties is still hidden, and this other man, in whom the first hidden faculties have already been revealed. If you now compare the situation of mankind before 4000 years with the situation today, you will notice an immeasurable progress in man's power. But it is by no means said that the end of this development has already been reached. Rather, the last century shows how significantly man's power and ability have risen again in that one century. We can therefore very well imagine how much more powerful that development will be when another two or three centuries have passed, and how amazing that development will be even then, once it has reached its completion point. If you now think of the human existence of Jesus our King in the heavens, then it goes without saying that in him you have to think of human development as entirely completed, and that the strongest development of power to which we have now arrived on earth gives us only a faint idea of the human development of power in which the Christ is enthroned in the kingdom of glory. You must not, therefore, think of your King as our own, nor measure his knowledge, activity and revelation of power in terms of what is available to us, but you must think of his human existence in its perfection, in the full development of all the gifts and powers that are seeded in our human nature.

This becomes even stronger if you think away humiliation completely. If the paradise condition of mankind had been developed without hindrance, our existence would have shown even more wonders than is the case at present. And yet, that is precisely what you have to think of in the glorified Christ. The Christ thus lives not only in the highest state of development to which mankind on earth will have attained at the end of the ages, but his existence is even more glorious. Everything that was seeded by God in Adam before the fall and that would have developed in us on this earth had it not been for sin, has come to its full and glorious development in the Christ. There is nothing more that lurks in Him; His unfolding in glory is complete. That is why it is not possible for us to form even a

slightly correct idea of the knowledge, the working and the revelation of power which the Christ as our King also has at his disposal according to his human nature. In Adam we see a power over the nature around him, which was lost in us. And even in that humiliated state in which we now find ourselves, our knowledge has gradually expanded to such an unprecedented extent, our power over nature has increased to such a marvelous degree, and what once separated mankind from one another has been rendered so utterly useless by telegraph, telephonics and wire-less telegraphy, that we cannot but envisage the glorified physical existence of our King triumphing over almost everything that still hinders us and restricts our vital functions. Already at his appearance on earth we read time and again that a power emanated from Jesus to triumph over nature, and his miracles show us how completely different he was from nature. If we now think of this in its completion, it already shows how we may not picture the Christ in any other way than in a human existence, which in knowledge, operation and revelation of power completely surpasses our own.

And here in the second place we come to the far-reaching difference between what is ours from our earthly sphere of life, and what is available to our King in the much higher sphere of life to which he has entered. Our lives are controlled much more than most people realize by our environment, the nature in which we live, the atmosphere in which we live, the influence that the earth that we live on has on us. Just compare the poor life of the Eskimo in the polar regions, the life of the Negro under the scorching heat of the tropics, with the life of the European in the temperate regions, to see how much the region we live in already affects us both physically and mentally. And that is still the case on this same earth, only different in region. How much more powerful must the difference be if you compare a human being on this earth with a human being living in completely different regions of the universe? In the heavens the situation is of an entirely different nature than here on earth. Both are almost incomparable. Even though there is a material nature in the blissful west, it cannot be otherwise than that this material nature must have an entirely different, a much more ethereal character. If there is air, then that air must be an entirely different, much finer nature. A completely different light must shine there. The institution of the body will not be nourished by it, for the belly, says the Apostle, will be destroyed. There is no marriage given, nor taken in marriage. The distances are completely eliminated. It is not the earthly, but it is a heavenly paradise, where everything shines in glow and glory, and the most beautiful things our earth produces sink into insignificance compared

to the majesty and splendor in which life shines in the blessed realms. Nevertheless, mankind in its basic type is also geared to that glory. Jesus did not change his body, but his one and whole physical existence passed from what this earth made of that existence to what could become of it in the higher spheres. Not partially, but completely. The transition from the caterpillar to the chapel may give us a faint outline of such a transition, yet it by no means fully explains the transition from this earthly existence to the heavenly one, for caterpillar and chapel both belong to our earthly conception. Everything earthly falls away in the realm of glory, and this with all the limitations, impediments and hindrances that result from it. One no longer dies there, but also, one has no need of rest and sleep. Life watches over it in full clarity and continues undisturbed throughout the ages. It is an eternal existence, which knows no reduction or weakening. There is no sorrow and no suffering. There is no tear, but an eternal angelic smile. And how can you even remotely form an idea, an idea of the everlasting knowledge, of the all-embracing effect and of the all-pervading revelation of power, which your King already has at his disposal according to his human nature at the right hand of God?

This should be emphasized, because nothing so much as thinking of Jesus in our earthly form stands in the way of recognizing his royal power. We are limited, we are earthly, we are bound in every way. And even if one imagines a child of man, shining at the highest level among his fellow men, it still remains a man in his earthly limitation. If you imagine your King in the same way, as ours, as subject, just like us, to all kinds of earthly limitations and imperfections, then it cannot be otherwise than that you get such a poor impression of Jesus' majesty that it is difficult to explain His sovereignty over all things. And then you have to do one of two things: either interpret His kingship purely spiritually, and thus destroy it as real power, or else derive His kingship exclusively from His divine nature, and thus entirely separate it from the Mediator, from the man Jesus. And this is precisely what is prevented, if you do not think of the human existence of your King according to the earthly model, but understand it to be that high, perfect existence of human nature, in which all the hidden faculties of our nature have been fully developed, and which has obtained from that completely different sphere of life of the heavens a power and majesty that far surpasses anything that a human existence, at its highest, can be on this earth, in the sphere of life that governs it.

Undoubtedly the human existence of our King is and remains of a creaturely nature, and therefore of a finite nature. After all, the power at his disposal as

Mediator and therefore also as our King, is not original, but was given to him by the Father. And it must be acknowledged just as surely that the background of his divine nature must never be lost sight of in the exercise of this power. But the human nature of the Christ is always in the foreground, and, as we saw, it is always emphasized in Scripture that he is our King as "Son of Man". If one loses sight of this, there is no question of exaltation. The "therefore God exalted him exceedingly" from Phil. 2:10, falls away then. And that is precisely why it is so important not to form an abstract idea of the human existence of our King in the state of glory and exaltation, but to think away from all earthly limitations and all earthly determinations, in order to perceive that human existence in its completion and in the full development of the powers that inhabit it. This applies not only to Jesus, but will also apply to ourselves, once "our humiliated bodies have also been made like His glorified body, by the action with which He can also subdue all things to Himself." How much more then must this not be kept in view where there is mention of the Christ. For although ours will one day be the glorified human existence in all its perfection, so that we will reign with Jesus on His throne as kings, the Son of Man still far exceeds us. Already among us we see how one person's gifts and talents far outweigh another. There is no equality among men. What is a quiet housewife compared to a philosopher like Augustine when it comes to knowledge? What is a farmer who drives the plow compared to men like Plato or Kant? The same is true of the difference in artistic sense and artistic power, of willpower and resilience, of courage and determination. No two people are alike, and among us there are lowly people, there are ordinary people, there are people of a higher order, and finally there are geniuses and heroes who stand out above all others. Now this difference cannot be eliminated in the state of heaven, for it is connected with what God put in oak man as a seed at creation. And even though this different disposition will appear completely different in the state of glory than it does here on earth, there will also be those in the state of glory who in knowledge, action and revelation of power will exceed others. And this naturally applies to a much greater extent to the Head of mankind, the Son of man, the one who was destined to become the King of all in the Kingdom of God. What Jesus received in his human existence far exceeds anything the noblest and best among us have ever received. He became one of us, but not one of us can be compared with the Son of Man in germ and in origin. Only in him does human existence possess its complete and highest perfection. He is not merely appointed our King, but he is by nature the superior of all. In him dwells the absolute highest thing for which our human existence, by virtue of God's order, is susceptible. He is the King

of all through his indwelling majority. He is the genius of all geniuses, the hero of all heroes, the wisdom of all wise men, the strength of all strong men, the nobility incarnate of all that among men could ever shine with nobility and ideals. Thus you must think of his human existence in the state of glory not only as completed, compared to the incompleteness of our development; and as not only glorified by the transition from the earthly to the heavenly paradise; but also as completed and fully developed in that wholly exceptional sense in which only the "Son of Man", who exceeds all mankind in talent, must reveal that highest glory. Only those who one day see the King as he is now will fully understand the depth of humiliation into which he has entered for our sake. And once he appears on the clouds of heaven at his return, then a glorious man will be seen, who will overshadow all other human existence by far and blind all human eyes by the human majesty that radiates from him.

In recent years there has been so much talk of a Superman. Well, the only Superman is our King.