

XXVI. - Divine Power.

And He is before all things, and all things exist together through him.

And he is the head of the body, namely the church, he who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that he may be first in all.

For it is the Father's will that in him all the fullness should dwell.

COL. 1 :17,18,19.

Intentionally we tried to explain the exercise of the royal regiment of the Son of Man in the first place from the data of his human nature. It is not as if, in our King, we had to do with a human person who was linked to persons. The Son of God has taken on a human personality. In the deepest sense, the self in the Mediator always remains the Son of God. However, this does not alter the fact that the Son of God, as the Son of man, was bound for his revelation of power by the boundary of the finite, which our human nature never leaves out. It therefore seemed advisable, in order to gain a clearer insight into the way in which the Christ exercised his royal rule, to ascend from the lower to the higher, and thus first to consider and think about the knowledge, effect and revelation of power to which human nature could lend itself in him. At no time should the idea be allowed to gain ground that by and after the Ascension the human nature of the Mediator had lost its significance, and that only divine nature was at work. In view of this, we pointed out broadly that the human nature, as assumed by Christ, must not be measured in terms of what it is in the ordinary human child, especially in the state of his humiliation. Is human nature already richer among us in some people than in others; is our human nature already capable of much more in the 20th century after Christ's birth than it was in the 20th century? If we had remained unsaved, our human nature would be capable of even greater things; and it must finally be assumed that in the state of glory it will one day prove to be even more richly endowed; - it follows that it is difficult for us to form an overly impressive idea of the function of human nature in the unsaved, perfected and glorified King. The knowledge, the inner working and the revelation of power, which could fall into the human nature of the Mediator, far exceeds anything that is accomplished by human nature on earth, among men, even in the greatest heroes and geniuses. Jesus' human nature also remains finite in its functions, but it moves over much wider and richer ground than it can among us, also as far as distances are concerned, which have already shrunk so much for us than for our fathers, but of course still constitute much less of an obstacle for the Christ in his "extremely great exaltation".

However, we cannot and must not delve deeper. We lack the data to distinguish clearly and precisely what part of the Royal Regiment of Christ was created by the functions of his human nature and what other part must be traced directly to the Divine nature in the Medium. Already during his appearance on earth one gets easily lost in this distinction. If we think that the human nature in Jesus, in the performing of miracles, is just as strongly restricted as it is in us, then we are so easily tempted to deduce all the extraordinary things in the Christ exclusively from his divine nature, while it is clear that his human nature was also active and in function here; that the ability to do extraordinary things is also attributed to the believers; and that it is even predicted of the Antichrist that he will be able to increase his influence just as much by extraordinary signs. With human nature, too, a distinction must always be made between what it has innate ability to do and what it already possesses in its execution. And where it then continually appears that there is much more in our capacity than was previously apparent, it must always be understood that with the Mediator, in the state of his elevation, the function of his human nature fully and completely discharges all that, according to the original creative order, has been laid down as capacity in human nature. That which is contained in this capacity is called a potential and that which is worked out so far or in a certain person is called the active. According to this terminology, it must be confessed that all the potential of our human nature is fully actualized in our glorious King, whereas with us here on earth in the state of our humiliation this actual is always far, far below the potential. In the potential, God's image and likeness are complete, in the actual they are still only extremely deficient, both in their holy intentions and in their knowledge and exercise of power. This can also be expressed in such a way that the image and the likeness of God in man's being, in his knowledge and in his ability, are only present in the elevated King, according to the rule pronounced by Himself in these words: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. Only the Son of Man is the Image of the unseen God.

But no matter how high we place the function of his perfect human nature in the exercise of power by our King and his Royal Regiment, it is certain that this is by no means sufficient to fully explain his exercise of power. The Royal Regiment of Christ is by no means concerned exclusively with certain individual acts that he performs with regard to human beings, spirits and inanimate nature, but is equally concerned with the integration and incorporation of these particular acts into the general providential government that pertains to the whole of this earth, indeed to

the whole of the universe. But if one separates the two completely, so that the general Providential government over peoples and nations, over mankind and over the whole of nature, has its own course, completely apart from Christ; and if one then places next to that what the Christ does in particular to carry out His royal regiment, then one loses the unity and the connection and the history of the world, at least after the Ascension, becomes completely inexplicable. The Church of Christ has therefore always confessed that, in the Royal Regiment of Christ, we have to distinguish between His general Kingdom, which is concerned with all things, and the special Kingdom which concerns His Church and His faithful, and our Catechism also confesses in the 50th answer: "That is why Christ ascended into heaven, that there He may prove Himself to be the Head of His Christian Church, through whom the Father rules all things. Only in this way, then, do the statements of Jesus come into their own, "that all things have been given to Him by the Father", and that "all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth." From the very first reading one feels that this does not refer to the functions of His human nature, but rather to the background of His divine nature. In the broad measurement we give of the function of his human nature, it was in no way our intention to deny the knowledge, working and power exercise of the Son of God in our King. As we said, whoever sees clearly that the Son of God has not taken on a human person, not Jesus, but only our human nature, cannot be in doubt for one moment whether the Son of God is and remains in the Son of Man what is called the subject, the object, the self. Now this is not the place, either to discuss the mystery of the Holy Trinity or the mystery of the unification of the two natures in the Christ in the broadest sense, but it is certain that our King, also as the Son of Man, is and always will be the Son of God, the second Person in the Holy Trinity. And although the glory that is His as such was already hidden from us in the state of His humiliation on earth, Scripture teaches emphatically that this hiding, this humiliation, this self-destruction came to an end with His Ascension. That he, then exalted, was even extremely exalted, so that the full radiance of his Sonship of God shone through again.

Now, what is most prominent in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, as far as the exercise of power is concerned, is this: that all things are of the Father and through the Son. It was so in Creation, and it remained so in Providence. That is why the Apostles, in order to give us the right insight into the Royal Regiment of Christ, constantly refer back to the creation of all things, in order to make it clear how first through the Son all things received their being, their form, their mode of existence

and their effect. The Apostle John even prefaces his entire Gospel with the statement that in the beginning the Word was with God, how that Word was God Himself, and how through that Word, i. e. through the Son of God, all things were created. And the apostle Paul also goes to great lengths to make us understand how the fullness of God dwells in the Son of God, how he alone is the pure image of our God, how all things in heaven and on earth, whether seen or unseen, were created through him and for him, and how all things exist together through him. It is true that all wisdom, all decision, all strength and power, all government and administration emanate from the Father, because in the Father is the fountain of life, the source of power, the starting point of all that will be, but it is always confessed that nothing emanating from the Father comes about except through the Son. In the Father, all things are one; it is only through the Son that things are developed in their separate existence and in their multiplicity. Thus, nothing is excluded from the action of the Son of God. He puts His signature on all created things. And everything that goes on in this world and in the whole universe, goes on through him. Things are not only created by him, but they also exist in their present form and shape only through the Son of God.

Before the time of his humiliation, this may present us with an unsolvable riddle, because we cannot understand how the Christ, at the very moment that he succumbed to his deathly grief in Gethsemane, nevertheless carried all things through the Word of his power, but in the state of exaltation this insubstantiality falls away for us. In that state of exaltation our King is the Son of Man and our Mediator, but at the same time he is magnificent in his majesty as God, all-knowing and all-powerful! Of course, our King possesses his spiritual subjects only in the brought elect, but in a broader sense all mankind and all spirit is subject to him. There is not one human being, or one angel, over whom his scepter does not rule as over his subject. Of course, only the angels and the faithful recognize that they are his subjects, but in fact all creatures have been placed under his power as subjects. And as it is with the animated and conscious creature, so it is with the inanimate creation; it is subject to Christ on this earth and beyond, and he has complete power and authority over it. With the functions of his human nature we pointed out that his knowledge and understanding as such already extends much further than is the case with us; yet the knowledge and understanding that he possesses as the Son of Man always remains limited. With the Son of God, on the other hand, all limitations and boundaries are gone. Nothing is hidden from him. He sees and surveys everything, and also in your personal life nothing remains a

secret to him. It is only through this that the rule over His Church and over His faithful is clarified. Divine omniscience ensures that every person here on earth is known to Him by name. Known in his past and present. Known in his inner existence and outer destiny. And it is only through this that the intimate relationship that exists between him as our King and each of his spiritual subjects becomes possible. He lives to pray for us, not only in the general sense that he prays for the Church as a whole, or for the faithful as a group, but so that he knows the needs of each heart and dedicates these needs to each of his own. In his Church his servants are appointed by him, although through the intervention of men, but nevertheless in such a way that each one of them is elevated by him to the ministry, destined for this ministry, and placed in this ministry. And this also would be utterly unthinkable, if each person was not known to him personally and by name. There is no trace in the Gospels of any personal contact between Paul and Jesus before his appointment, while Jesus was still on earth. Yet what happened on the road to Damascus shows that Jesus knew Saul of Tarsen, understood him, knew what was in him, knew that he was beating his ankles against the prickly pear, and also knew that at that moment he was on the road to Damascus. And that is how determined and how literally we must take it in the appointment of a Servant of Oaks.

But that knowledge of his own and that knowledge of those whom he will call is not enough. All kinds of external influences affect his Church and his faithful. Influences of a national character, influences of a historical character, influences of a social character, influences of public opinion, influences of science and art, influences of the spirit of the age. His believers do not float on the waters like a drop of oil, but live in the world, and through all kinds of ties of birth, family, office, business, etc. they are involved in the life of the world and are connected to it in all kinds of ways. If you think that your King does not know about all this, is unaware of all this, how can he bring about for his Church and for his faithful what they need in view of these many influences? It is therefore only fair to assume that our King also sees through all this, sees the dangers, knows where it will all lead, and sees, with divine certainty, how all these dangers can be counteracted, and how all this must be turned around, guided and adapted in order to reap the benefits for his own people. If our fate, as believers, depends much on the history of our people as a nation, and on what is going on in the world among the peoples, in connection also with our own national life, then how would the regiment of our King be conceivable, without the "bubbling up of the nations, like the rivers bubbling up"

being clearly open before him? The regiment in the spiritual sense cannot be practiced without omniscient knowledge disclosing every secret to our King, and it suffers from inner contradiction whenever it is asserted that our King's regiment is spiritual, but goes beyond the regiment of the world. The one cannot be separated from the other in our personal lives, and therefore not to be separated either from the high government of Christ's Church on earth.

But even this comprehensive knowledge of things would not suffice if our King could not at the same time influence and direct all this. If the providential government were entirely outside of him, he could try again and again to avert the danger that threatens us, but he would continually be powerless in the face of it, and would have to let it come to pass. That is why our Catechism points out so emphatically that "the Father rules all things through Him. This providential government is also not something separate that belongs only to the first Person in the Holy Trinity, but something that, although it emanates from the Father, nevertheless works through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Our King thus has his own hand in that providential government, and it does not work except through him. When, in our struggle with Spain, the fate of his Church in these countries depended on the outcome of a single battle or a single naval engagement, he did not simply wait to see how it would all turn out, but took part in it himself, managed it himself and ensured the outcome himself. It is the same with your personal life. Your spiritual growth is always controlled by what happens to you in life. If this fate of your life were to happen completely without your King, so that he knew about it but could not lead or change anything in it, your spiritual guidance would also completely slip out of his hands, and he would again be powerless to do anything about it. And for this reason alone, he is in the full sense your spiritual Shepherd and Guide and your Mediator who leads you to salvation, because as the Son of God he also cooperates in the administration of Providence for your personal life, and is not in the least passive towards it. Here, too, omniscience is not enough; here, too, omnipotence must be united with omniscience in order for the purpose of its spiritual guidance to be achieved. The same applies with regard to the spirit world. From this spirit world, too, all manner of influences steadily act upon the spirit of the times, upon your people, upon your own circle of life and upon your heart. If your king only had the knowledge and understanding of all these things, but lacked the power and strength to act upon them and to react against them, that spirit world might corrupt and destroy everything that it has worked to bring about in our spiritual education. That is why

the Scriptures so emphatically point out to us that all power that is called, not only in this present but also in the world to come, is subject to its feet with all things.

Now it seems to contradict this, that in this world, in the Church, and in the spirit world, there is so much to 'lament', that not all opposition is immediately broken, that so much infidelity is to be lamented even in His servants; and that it constantly seems as if our King were incapable of averting all this calamity and danger, - so here too it must be pointed out that the Royal Regiment of Christ does indeed have our salvation as its objective, but that its primary objective is the glorification of the Triune God. And since, as we have explained extensively, it is God's honour not to destroy any opposition by brute force and force majeure at once, but to overcome any opponent and any enemy in a principled struggle, it is also explained here why our King always disposes of it in such a way that this opposition arises, yes, lets it become opposition, precisely in order to win the principled enmity more gloriously. He is doing the same in your personal life. He will also have you continually opposed by all kinds of spirits, he will first exhaust your strength, he will also lead you through oppressive distress, precisely in order to ripen you better and more holier for the harvest of his Kingdom of God. Thus, everything hangs together in his royal regiment. The fate of the world with your personal fate. The fate of your people with your own spiritual existence. The alternating rise and fall of the destiny of His Church on earth. Now days of thriving and of glory, and then again days of infidelity, waste and collapse. And the threads of all this are not in the hands of the children of man, but in the firm hand with which our King rules all things. And this all-pervading and all-embracing regimen he carries out, now as our Mediator, in order that, once the last enemy has been subdued at his feet, he himself will remain the Head of salvation, but that he will cause the royal regiment to return to the divine all-embracing.