

XXVII. - The Holy Spirit.

If any man love me, he shall keep my word; and my Father shall love him, and we will come to him and dwell with him. JOH. 14:23.

A special, peculiar, and entirely mystical character bears the Royal Regiment of the Christ over His spiritual, i.e., His actual subjects, the members of His mystical Body, the redeemed by His blood, the ransomed of the Lord. This special relationship came about through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit would be poured out, and that this outpouring would take place shortly after Jesus' departure from this earth, as well as that it would take place through our King, is clear from what Jesus himself said about this in the last conversations with his followers. He would pray to the Father that another Comforter might be given to His disciples, who would never leave them again, but would remain with them forever (John 14:16). That Comforter would be the Holy Spirit, whom they knew, who would remain with them and be in them (17). They would then no longer be orphans, for, so he said: "You shall be in me and I in you" (20). The Father Himself would love them and the Christ would come with the Father and dwell with them (23). All this speaks of a very special relationship in which our King would enter into contact with his own; a relationship that would be much more intimate, much more tender and much more important than the relationship in which the King would be in contact with the indifferent and with his enemies. A distinction that arises above all from the fact that his reign is conducted only among his spiritual subjects in their own inner existence; and this penetration of the inner life of his is expressed in all manner of ways, but in increasingly stronger terms. We hear of the vine with its tendrils; we hear of the members and of the head of the one body; we learn that Christ himself dwells with them, yes in them, as they are in him. And all this is brought to life in the apostles' letters in the image of the temple. The heart, the soul of the redeemed by Christ has become the temple of the Lord. Man's separation from his God has been done away with. God Himself lives in the believers. The house of God, the temple of God, the dwelling place of God are no longer in Zion, but in the hearts of those who belong to Jesus because they have been bought with His blood.

The turning point in history is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the tenth day after Jesus' ascension. At first there was nothing between God and man in Paradise. There was fellowship, there was communication, there was interaction, and everything was ready from the start for the most intimate life together. In the soul of man, the bud only had to open and the breath of the Spirit would have

penetrated his soul and realized the being of God in us and of us in God. But it did not come to this. The calyx did not open but bent with the whole twig on which it had sprouted, even to the side. Thus, not only did the intimate life together not take place, but even the external contact was broken off. God and man were separated, instead of man drawing nearer to God. Sin is separation from God, turning away from God, closing the heart to God. What we read in Isaiah (18:4), that the Lord says: "I will be quiet and see in My dwelling place," however referring to Moorish land, expresses so fully the relationship in which God and man stood to each other after the fall. Man goes his way and God sees him go, but follows him and lures him back. But the chord that connected man's heart to the heart of his God has become weaker, almost completely broken. There is no longer any intimate fellowship. It loosens everything up, and in the end, mankind closes himself in on himself, and it has become two completely separated inner lives, the full-blessed inner life in the Holy Trinity and mankind's soul subject to death and curse and sin. Man wants to perpetuate this state. He defies God. He does not want to go back. As through a Chinese wall man's life must and will remain separated from the life of his God. Therefore, he will have gods, but he will invent them himself, depict them himself, make them himself. In paradise it was: a world of God with mankind in it, but now in the wider world it would become: a world of mankind with gods in it. Until he had had enough of those gods as well, shattered his own idols, did without gods, and, having lapsed into utter atheism, would be content with himself. Thus, the sharp and direct contrast between God and man. First in paradise it was God on the throne and man as a subject kneeling on the footstool of His feet, but now it must be man on his own throne, and God Almighty high above in His dwelling place, locked away and doomed to silence. The separation, the closure between God and mankind pushed to the extreme. So, it was under the rule of lust for life and false philosophy in the pagan world of antiquity, and so it is now, to a great extent, under the same rule of the crudest materialism. And it is true that the idealists of our day are getting out from under it. But with them, too, it is again: A god formed in the image of man, instead of man created in the image of God.

The work of Christ cannot be completed until sin, the curse and death have been conquered at their root. It is not finished with the Cross, nor with the Resurrection. The Cross takes away the curse and brings the ransom for our sin debt, and in the Resurrection life conquered death. But all this has not yet put an end to separation, nor has it yet replaced the intimate fellowship of God's "life in us" and our "life in God". In Christ Himself, but not yet in us. And yet, it had to come to that. That was

the original intention and the original existence. And that original had to be restored, and, after being restored, raised to its highest development and perfect completion. Not only did the breakthrough have to be annulled, but unity had to be so completely restored that nothing more reminded us of the breakthrough, and that it was replaced by a close fellowship that was much higher than that which had begun in paradise, and which henceforth excluded new breakthroughs. And this could only come about if, through Christ, exalted at God's right hand, God the Holy Spirit were to enter into the circle of his own, never to leave that circle again, and thus to bring about a completely new situation, the hallmark of which would be this wonderful fact that the Christ would "come into the hearts of his own with the Father", and thus that the hearts of God's children would be a temple, a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. This is the most profound thing imaginable. When our hearts have become the habitation of God, and God Himself dwells in the hearts of His own, all separation and all estrangement are done away with, and replaced by the highest intimacy that can be imagined between the life of God and the life of man. It then becomes Immanuel, not only in the person of the Mediator, but through him in his whole mystical Body. No longer a God from afar, but a God from near, yes, a God indwelling our own heart.

This could only come about through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ. In the wonderful mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit is always that person of the Divine Being who enters into the creature. All things are of the Father, are through the Son, but one's own life only arises from what the Holy Spirit works. This applies not only to man, but to all creation. It is true of plants and animals, it is true of all talent and gift, it is true of everything that moves among the creatures on earth, and the same is true of the world of angels. But in all these things the effects of the Holy Spirit remain. These are forces that emanate from Him, effects that move from the Holy Spirit toward the creature and sustain the energy of its life. It is not the penetration of the Holy Spirit into man himself, to plant the life of God in him and to make his life blossom in his God. Wherever people live or have lived on this earth, the Holy Spirit has always been active in them, for their natural life, for their talents and gifts. Even now, the activity of the Holy Spirit is by no means limited to the circle of the faithful, but extends to all children of man, even to atheists and crude sinners. Never could a man fall so far or wander so far, but always he owed to the Holy Spirit every spark of light that shone in him, even in his sin. No human life is conceivable without the Holy Spirit. But this in itself brings us no further than an external influence of the Holy Spirit,

which has nothing in common with man's inner existence, is completely beyond his awareness and consciousness, and in no way annuls his separation from God. The entrance of the Holy Spirit into mankind, the dwelling of the Holy Spirit with mankind, and the establishment of holy communion between his heart and the heart of his God are of an entirely different and distinct character. For this purpose, a temple to his God first had to be prepared and opened in the heart of man. And this was given in Christ according to his human nature. At no time during His life on earth was the Christ separated from the Holy Spirit. He was given the Holy Spirit without measure. In him was the temple. In that temple lived the Holy Spirit. And thus, for the first time in the person of Jesus, the separation also according to his human nature was annulled and the full, intimate communion with God, also according to his human nature, was completed. Not gradually, but immediately. From the moment the Virgin Mary received him in her womb.

Yet the approach of God to man, who had removed and separated himself from Him, did not end at the manger of Bethlehem. Rather, the entire history of the Old Testament is one continuous attempt by the Holy One to approach His humanity again. To come closer in His Word, which He revealed, in the visions with which He enriched His messengers, in the wonderful deeds He accomplished, in the calling of the patriarchs, in the sending of Moses and the other prophets, in the foundation of His people Israel, in the election of Jerusalem, in His holy service on Mount Zion. But all this could only be preparatory. On the one hand, however, all this remained a work of art, directed at a few individuals, and left the crowd untouched. On the other hand, everything remained suspended in the external and the imaginary. In particular, the dwelling of God in Zion was the clear expression that He had not yet again made His home in the hearts. A service like the one in Zion would have been unthinkable in paradise, and of the New Jerusalem we read that there was no temple in that city. This speaks for itself. A temple of stone, built high on Zion, and hiding the Holy of Holies behind the veil, was the clear indication that the inner and intimate fellowship between God and the child of man was not there, and that therefore in a temple of stone the union of God and man could only be visualized. That is why Jesus deliberately said that his body replaced the temple on Zion. That could not be otherwise. From the very moment that the unity between God and man had been established in the human heart of Jesus, even if only in a single human heart, the temple in Zion had served its purpose. And when, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the disciples on Pentecost, God Himself had taken up residence in the hearts of the faithful, that temple itself no

longer had a reason to exist. The tent is abandoned when the permanent dwelling is ready and prepared.

This was also the reason why, in the days of the Patriarchs and Israel, there were special outpourings of the Holy Spirit, but it always remained only light that radiated, only power that emanated; and even though it often came to a hidden contact, it did not yet enter into the heart. God does not leave Israel alone, but continually presses in with His near approach into Israel's life; yet the temple of God is not yet prepared in Israel's heart. Rather, you see the people of Israel steadily drifting towards the idolatries of the heathen peoples. Isaiah the prophet even sees himself forced to cut himself off from the people, to withdraw into a small circle of believers, and to "tie up the testimony", as Scripture expresses it. Only the fearful exile brings improvement in this. For when at last the hour of redemption arrives in that exile, the eradicated part of Israel remains behind in Babylon, and only those who fear the name of the Lord return. But also in the new Jewish state, which was founded by Ezra and Nehemiah, and later elevated to great splendor by the Maccabean princes, the separation from God continues. Even the prophecy gradually ceased. The special effects of the Holy Spirit are diminishing. And when, at last, prophecy is revived in John the Baptist, it still turns out to be the old contrast: a large mass of people who are deaf and dead to spiritual things, and only small groups here and there who hunger for righteousness. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is therefore something entirely separate. All the workings of the Holy Spirit that preceded it in the days of the fathers were of a completely different nature. And even where there is mention of a baptism of the Holy Spirit after the great feast of Pentecost, this never results in a repetition of the entirely unique Pentecostal miracle, but only in the consecration of a few to salvation, or in a deepening of their spiritual life in those who have already been consecrated. Previously, the workings and powers of the Holy Spirit, revelations, visions, dreams, the giving of gifts and talents, the raising of heroes and courageous witnesses, and the leading of the few into the path of righteousness; but on the Day of Pentecost, something quite different. Now the descent of the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the entry of God the Holy Spirit into the circle of the redeemed, in order to remain in that circle henceforth, to make it his dwelling place, to mold his heart into a dwelling place, and to bring about in reality the union between God and man. And this in such a way that "God in us and we in God" now became the motto of all higher life.

Let us note Jesus' supreme prayer, sent to the Father at the fearful hour when he was about to leave for Gethsemane: "Father, I pray for them, that they may all be one, as we are, Thou, Father, in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us. I in them, and Thou in me." Add to this the promise given to his disciples in that same hour: "that he would come with the Father to make his home with them." Combine this with the promise that it was to their advantage that he went from them, because only by going from them could he send them the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and that this would take everything from him to bring it to them. And everything tells you how the Christ was fully aware that only as King seated on the throne of glory could he do away with the separation between God and mankind and restore the intimate fellowship between God and his people. For that full fellowship between God and man could not be restored unless first all sin, all that was unholy, was driven out of man's heart. The holy God could not dwell where sin dwells. Hence the first communion between God and man could only be established in the Christ Himself, in the One who had assumed our human nature, but without sin. In itself, therefore, this fellowship could only have taken place after our death, when we had died to all our sins. This means that, until the return of the Lord, no intimate fellowship with God, no indwelling of God in the temple of our hearts would have been conceivable. The disciples, however intimately united with Jesus through faith, and however clothed with the gifts of the Spirit, would not have had a dwelling place in their hearts if this had not been the case, and if the great and mighty miracle of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had not taken place shortly after Jesus' ascension.

How was this outpouring possible and conceivable in the circle of the faithful, who, however much they revered Christ, still "had sin in their hearts? To this question John, the apostle, gives the following answer: "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin, because his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"; such people "have the anointing of the Holy One". And the apostle Paul explains it to us from his own soul experience thus: "If I now do that which I do not want, I no longer do it, but sin that dwells in me." Words, shrouded in mystery to you, if you do not know and understand the mystical union of the faithful with Christ. But it is precisely this mystical union that matters, and it is this mystical union that Christ established as our King, and which He maintains among us, royally. First as our King, he is the Head of the Body. As Head of the Body, He makes His life flow out into all the limbs of that Body. In all of that Body there is only one life, the life of Christ, which the Apostle therefore testifies is hidden in

Christ with God. Since the Holy Spirit is the spirit of the Mediator, this Holy Spirit dwells not only in the Head, but in the whole Body and in each one who is incorporated into this mystical Body as a living member. Insofar as the Christ reigns as the Head of the Body in that believing congregation, there is no sin in that congregation, it is a holy congregation, they are "saints", as they are always called, and the temple is prepared, which God can choose as a dwelling place. The data for that mystical Body were prepared before Jesus' ascension, but only when he ascended and received the Holy Spirit from the Father for his own, was that Temple ready. Only then could he, as Head, pour out the Holy Spirit in that temple, i.e., in that Body, and thus on Pentecost, once and for all, the approach of God to us became complete, after all separation and estrangement had been annulled. And this not only for the then living, but for all who would one day become members of that body.

Or did not the Christ in the supreme prayers express his supplication, not only for his disciples, but also for those "who would believe in him through their word"? Election determines the mystical Body, and the Covenant of Grace makes it grow throughout the ages in the afflicted humanity. Thus, it is the Royal Regiment of Christ, now understood in a spiritual sense, through which the mystical Body is established; through which the living members of that Body, hidden in Christ, possess a holy life, separated from all sin; through which they have prepared in their hearts the dwelling-place, the temple, for the Holy One, and now also in that temple they receive the presence and indwelling of God in their inner soul existence. In the struggles that must then necessarily arise in the believers between this their holy existence and the sin that still remains in them; in the struggles that the very progress of grace creates in them; and in all the struggles they have to engage in with the world, - their King is close to them, leading and supporting, comforting and sanctifying them. So also, it is his royal regiment, through which is brought about that no one, even if he falls, can fall from grace. And likewise, that the Body of Christ grows again and again; that His congregation, however oppressed, saddened and persecuted, yet endures, and that the word is sealed, that no one, neither His own nor His congregation as a whole, can ever snatch it out of the hand of the Father.