

II. - Tribulation in the Christian land.

And Pilate said unto him, Art thou a king? Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose was I born, and for this purpose have I come into the world, that I may bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." JOH. 18:37.

The States of Europe are still considered Christian countries. There are also several million people in the East who follow Islam; there is a diaspora of Jews spread through all countries; among the Lapps and Finns in northern Scandinavia there are even some pagans; but all these together make up less than four hundred percent of the European population, and still the baptized portion of the population in Europe is reported to be ninety-six hundred. This also continues in the Netherlands.

According to the latest census, there are 104,000 Jews in our country, and some 80,000 people without confession, but out of more than 5 1/2 million inhabitants of our country, this is only about 3 percent.

No doubt, therefore, that in the world at large the name of Christ is still being proclaimed over our country. According to the statistical data, the Netherlands also still belongs to Him in its great massiveness. For, after all, these declarations are not made by anyone outside the country, but at the census by the heads of the families themselves. It is therefore the population itself that in these declarations, as officially as can be, has registered itself as baptized and as belonging to Christ. It is true that the heads of the families did not mention anything personal about their own faith, nor about the faith of their own families, but they nevertheless stated that they belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church, to the Roman Catholic Church, and to the Church of Jesus, to the Lutheran Churches, etc., and that they wished to be officially counted among them; and almost without exception, all these churches still statutorily profess and honor Christ as King. Of the Reformed Churches, everyone knows this. Of the Roman Catholic Church, it is equally certain. And, however one may look at it, the great Dutch Reformed Church still has no other official confession than the Confession of Guido de Brés, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Dortmund Doctrines, in which the recognition of the Kingship of Christ is clearly expressed. If, therefore, we do not step into the personal relationship, but look at the official figures, and take the official documents as a basis, the entire population of the Netherlands, except for a small percentage of three hundred, has still officially declared itself as belonging and as wanting to belong to those Christian churches that have proclaimed the banner of Christ's kingship in their official confession.

But now set the painful reality against these figures, and where can you say that in our official country and in the demonstrating circles you still find anything of the homage to Christ as our King?

The fact is that there is still a remnant in the recognition of Sunday and in the celebration of generally recognized Christian holidays. Not Friday as with Islam, not Saturday as with the Jews, but the first day of the week is still regarded as the day of rest, and even those who have in fact broken with Christianity entirely, but who nevertheless devote themselves to a weekly day of rest for the sake of the lower classes, have come out in favour of Sunday being the only day that can be set apart as such. Sunday is the day of Christianity, sanctified by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. And so, it is with the Christian holidays. The Puritans in Scotland had wanted to abolish those feast days, not out of unfaithfulness to Christ, but out of over-spirituality. The Quakers and other sects drifted along on that stream of overexcited spiritualism. But in popular life, these Christian holidays have managed to assert themselves, sometimes with a certain amount of protest against the second and especially the third feast day of Pentecost, but, taken as a whole and officially, it is still everywhere the feast of Jesus' birth, the feast of his resurrection from the dead, the feast of his ascension, and the feast of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which (with the addition of Good Friday as a day of commemoration) break with the ordinary course of popular life, and are also recognized by the government in laws, decrees, and administration. Superficially, a phenomenon without higher significance, but in its official character still a fact of importance. Not so much as if one could say that in this, tribute is paid to Christ, but as proof that the Christian tradition has taken such deep root in national life that in this, as in the population registers, the Christian character of our people is expressed, at least nominally.

In the second place, something of this Christian tradition is still officially expressed in our School Law, which demands education not only in social but also in Christian virtues; here, however, the meaning changes. For historically it is certain that what was meant was the reduction of Christianity to a bare moral factor, deliberately separated from the root of faith in Christ as our King. The virtues were pushed to the foreground. At the very most, it was still recognized that the Christian standard of moral life recommended itself as desirable. The only thing that was not indicated was what the Christian virtues were as distinguished from the social virtues; and the result was soon that the "Christian" was completely drowned in the social, and that the social virtue system in many schools was built

on a foundation which was more opposed to Christianity than it was paved on faith in Christ. The result was that those who still clung to the Kingship of Christ avoided these schools and that they, in turn, became the sought-after Dorado for that part of the population which had wandered away from Christ to seek refuge in the tent of skepticism and social democracy.

And yet with this everything has been said, and everything exhausted, that on the official level would still remind us of the Christian character of the State. While there are other countries where even Parliament is opened with a prayer in Jesus' name, in our States General there is no prayer at the opening of the session. God's blessing" is still mentioned in the speech from the throne, but in a vague formula, which does not seem to cause any problems even for declared atheist ministers. Laying one's hands on the Gospel when swearing the oath is no longer considered. And when the Christian foundations of our national life were occasionally mentioned in an official word, this always led to protest. Even the completely unadorned, bare historical reminder of the basic type of our national character sometimes caused offence. And wherever, in the official field, one may still find a certain weak recognition of the Christian element, it never rises above the formal and traditional, and not a single trace of an acknowledgement of Christ as God's anointed King can be detected.

And is it different now, is it better, if you leave the official terrain, to continue your research on the public terrain?

There are three groups in our popular life. A first group consists of those who take refuge in silence and obscurity; a second group is made up of those who are involved in the great popular movement, but who do not even lead it; and finally, there is a small, but nevertheless very influential group, which is in the foreground everywhere, speaks the highest word in everything, leads every field, and is said to represent the Dutch spirit abroad and at home.

The last, not very numerous, but highly intellectual circle sets the tone for public opinion; the second, broader layer speaks at the stock exchange and on the market, but interferes less in public life; while the third, the deepest, but by far the most numerous layer is almost entirely absorbed in domestic life and in the office and in small business.

This first, small but influential circle is formed by the professors at the universities of the State and of the municipality and at the Technical High School; by the teachers at the grammar schools and the higher civic schools; by the writers in the

large press; by the higher and lower civil servants; by the men of art and of artistic criticism; by the members of the States General; by statesmen in a wider circle; by the heads of large corporations; by the chief speakers at meetings; - in short by all together who in public life, either by their position or by their talent, are in the front rank.

Can it be said that, just as in Islam even the most deviant Muslim still shouts as one for Muhammad, so also in the tone-setting circle of the Dutch people the honor of Christ's Kingship prevails?

Christ's Kingship inspires word and deed? Does public life show you that in this influential circle the upholding of Christ's name is an urge and a need for the interpreter of our people's life? Do you perceive any general annoyance when the name of Christ as our King is disregarded? Do you feel that on the public domain in our Christian country the honor of Christ weighs on everyone's heart? Does it express the realization that our people's life, born of Christian action, and still finding its firmest root in Christ, whatever may come, must never be separated from Christ, but must always find in Him its power-replenishing concentration? Is there any loyalty which, in spite of all deviations and all differences, nevertheless faithfully and courageously clings to Christ and does not tolerate that His Holy Name, in its high significance for our national existence and for the entire life of our people, should ever sink?

Alas, nothing of the sort!

From the bosom of the Christian parties a mighty campaign for the honor of Christ may have sprung up, but the circle that so far still sets the tone in our public life no longer calls for the Kingship of God's anointed King in any area. Not only is loyalty gone, but even the notion that there is a cause for loyalty here has faded away. All Islamic countries still praise their Prophet, but in our Christian country honor and opposition to the God-anointed King is the public tone.

It is true that one still hears the acknowledgement, at least insofar as Jesus cannot be ignored for other reasons, that he was one of the various founders of a world religion who displayed a higher and finer religious awareness than Kungfutsé, Buddha and Mohamed. However, one is not yet unwilling to leave the high place of honor among religious geniuses to Jesus. The Rabbi of Nazareth as a human being is still spoken of with a certain reverence. We have not yet reached Voltaire and his "crush on the infamous". And it is still generally recognized that Christian morality has a certain preference. But public opinion no longer feels anything for

Jesus' Kingship; indeed, they know nothing about it. And however high one values Jesus' religious and ethical awareness, one does not hesitate for a moment to declare that there is still a higher religious and ethical awareness than that found in him, and one is already preparing to praise this higher awareness.

And this partial veneration of Christ as an ethicist is found mostly in the smaller groups that came under the care of modern preachers; i.e., men who still have to pronounce on Christ more or less *ex officio*. But in the more broadly representative circle you will not find this even as a rule anymore. There you come up against a harsh reality that is so far removed from all Christian tradition that one simply keeps silent about the Christ. Nothing comes from the heart for Him. In their self-satisfaction, they find no reason to mention the Christ anymore. The entire existence and virtually all thinking of this wider circle is devoid of the Christ. Jesus no longer occupies any place in such a life-consciousness. They have almost completely forsaken the Christ. In their knowledge, in their art, in their literature, in their press, you can see almost nothing of a holy inspiration to feel rich in the Christ, to look up to Him in admiration, and to strengthen themselves by paying homage to the Christ. What would people in this public sphere still feel for Christ as the God-fearing King? In fact, people often no longer understand what is meant by honoring Christ as our King.

Yes, it goes even further. The Christ has been set to fall and to rise. One can avoid and avoid Him and try to keep Him quiet, but in history, in the life of the people, in reality, one comes into contact with the Christ again and again.

The confessors of Christ are still there. In history, time and again, one encounters powerful events that have taken place around the honour of Golgotha's Cross. Even now, in literature, the press, and politics, one repeatedly finds oneself confronted with thorny issues, which are now and then engaged in this way with the Christ, with his confessors, and with his significance in the world. There is the relationship between Church and State; there is the deeply-rooted question of schools; there is the question of universities; there is the question of the ballot box; there is the problem of appointments, and also there are the great religious and ethical problems, with which no one can concern himself, or time and again he encounters the one Name, which for eighteen centuries has had such a decisive influence on and in all this. Those questions and problems are faced in our country and abroad. They appear to be more and more difficult to solve. Therefore, like it or not, many from this circle are forced to make known the feelings they have for Jesus.

And what comes to light then? What comes out of it? What is it that inspires the leading spirits? What else but deep-seated aversion to all God's special Revelation? Dislike of every piece of confession, which came to us as dogma from that special revelation. No Trinity, no God revealed in the flesh, no Redemption through the blood of the Cross may be mentioned any more. When, in Psalm 2, God Himself declares: "I have anointed My King over Zion, the mountain of My holiness", then the smile of unbelief folds over the lips. And if there are still those who dare to stand up for the honor of Christ as our King, then no weapon of scorn and contempt, of mockery and ridicule, is ever sharpened enough to try and break their influence, to stifle their word, to dampen their faith. Then an enmity arises that spares nothing, spares nothing, and never rests as long as the pedestal of the Christ as God's anointed King is not overturned and pulverized.

And although there are still noble men in this circle who disapprove of such unholy enterprise and who feel that the freedom which they desire for themselves must also be granted to the professed Christ, these more prudent and calmer characters also have in common with the more savage and rude opponents that they too look down with pity on the backwardness of the professed Christ. For them, too, Christianity is an outmoded viewpoint, and they themselves have outgrown it. Whoever still clings to that outmoded Christianity is a backward man in his development, and if the process continues at a steady pace, they expect nothing else than that nearly everything that is still called orthodox and swears by orthodoxy will climb to their higher position and that the delusion in which they have been under about the Christ will be abandoned forever. In America and England it is different. In Germany, too, one has not yet advanced that far. In Roman countries, such as Belgium, Italy and Spain, one can still find a somewhat different position, but in our country by far the majority of those who set the tone in the public arena no longer have any respect for historic Christianity at all, and a sparing spirit is rising up, as it is in France, which either tries to turn Christianity into modernism, or simply shuts up all Christianity, or finally fights tooth and nail against everything that is still called Christian according to the history of the centuries.

It is therefore no exaggeration, it is the naked truth, which cannot be contradicted, that in our leading circles no voice is raised anymore for Christ as our God-anointed King. Just look at our great press, read our literature; consult what science has to say. Attend lectures, visit meetings, listen to conversations, and after all,

either you hear nothing of Jesus at all, or, wherever His name is still mentioned, no one cries out for the Christ, as the Discount given to us by God.

And this may have bothered you in your own country, but you never get such a painful impression of it, than when you go for a while to Islamic countries.

There the calling for Mohamed as prophet in all ranks and classes of society. Weakening of the orthodoxy of Islam. There too, religious life collapsed. Especially in Europeanized circles, one no longer bothered by Islamic ritual and ceremonial rules, at least within one's own circle. But in the public domain, and in private conversations with Christians, the enthusiasm to stand up for Muhammad and his honor and to hold him up as a God-given Prophet is still undiminished.

And if, in contrast, you find in our Christian countries a lukewarmness and indifference, a disengagement of the spirits, yes, a resistance to what is revealed in Christ, which makes it impossible for even a small spark of enthusiasm to arise in our public life for the Christ as the God-given King, are you not facing a raw reality that cuts and wounds you in the soul?

III. - Tribulation in the Church.

Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion rejoice over their King. PSALM 149:2.

So almost no one stands up for Christ anymore, as our King, in those advanced groups, whose minds are governed by the spirit of the age; least of all among the professors of Christ, so you may think, will the cry for the Majesty of our Lord prevent the day and enter the night with it.

But, alas, here also disappointment awaits you and you find dull silence, where you thought to catch the cheers of praise from all lips.

Understand this, there is no lack of reverence for Jesus as our Savior among the confessors of His holy Name. In that sense the praise is rather abundant. But that is not what we are dealing with now. This time it is about the Kingship of Christ, about the throne from which He rules us, and about the crown of the purest gold, which has been placed on His head. And from this we now complain, with a complaint that cannot be stifled, that not only outside the court, but also in the Holy Place, the memory of His Kingship is fading more and more, and the inspiration for it is almost dying away.