

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.

That He, who as our High Priest brought His self-sacrifice for us, in order to reconcile us to God, was "extremely exalted for the very reason of this self-sacrifice", and that He was given "a name above all names", so that all knees would bow before Him, God's angels never forget this in their restless worship, in their never-ending praise, and in their skillful service to Him who, seated at the right hand of the Father, is clothed with honor and majesty. But on earth there is only a faint awareness of the majesty of the Lord's Kingship. Not that one even thinks of denying it. Far from it. That Majesty shines out from God's holy Word against us constantly. We confess it in our confessions. We teach them to our children from the Catechism. There are still songs in use among us in which it is honored. Also, in the sermon the preacher does not always leave it out. Yes, who is there among us who, if the Kingship of Christ were deliberately assaulted, would not stand up for it with seriousness and with a certain warmth?

But even if we gratefully acknowledge this, it still does not by far touch what we have in mind. Even a Madurean knows that our Queen rules over our Indies. The Javanese too recognize this and tell their children about it. And when the authority of our Queen is attacked and our troops march to restore that authority, the native also fights bravely and often sacrifices his life.

But now compare the history of the royal authority on Java with the enthusiasm and the enthusiasm with which all the people in Neêrlands capital greet our Queen on her joyful arrival in the spring, and you will feel, touch, see through, that this sunshine versus sallowness, jubilation versus coolness, a driving of the national spirit versus unwilling resignation.

And now, should not the holy enthusiasm for our God-anointed King up there, in inspiration and high-mindedness of tone and in glow ignited by the Holy Spirit, far exceed all national enthusiasm for the best of earthly kings? And if you measure the enthusiasm, even of the professed, for the Majesty of our heavenly King against such a natural requirement, can you defend yourself against the painful conviction that there lurks a shortcoming in our love?

There is zeal for the cause of Christ, oh, certainly. With some more, with others less, but zeal glows on all sides, to recruit for Jesus, to bless in the name of Jesus, and through His power to leave no one behind in deeds of devotion and of mercy.

But all of this is a seeking of the Savior, an exclaiming of the Redeemer, a praising and commending of the Redeemer, the Savior, the Savior, the Reconciler of

sinner. And is this the same as honoring His Kingship? Do you not feel the profound difference between the two? Are they not very far apart?

To want to be saved as soon as the painful realization of your lostness dawns in you. To take refuge in the Savior, as soon as you cast off the false appearance of imagined holiness, and saw that you needed salvation. To seek your reconciliation in the Lamb of God, who carries away the sin of the world, as soon as sin begins to weigh deadly upon your soul. Yes, to rejoice in the redemption obtained, as soon as you yourself may feel in the depths of your souls as a child of your God, sprinkled with the blood of reconciliation - where else does all this find its cause, its urge and its motive, than in a holy egotism? In all this it is the love of self that drives you. Not the wrong love for yourselves. On the contrary. Wrong was your love for yourself as long as you stayed away from your Savior, stood on your own, and looked for the satisfaction of your ideals in the world. But it is and remains the longing, the urge, now that you have learned to think of yourself as a drowning man, to be pulled up out of the stream of lostness. You were the sick one, you came to the only Master Physician. Thou feltest thyself sinking under the wrath of the Holy One and thou didst seize the slips of thy Savior's garment in order to be wrenched out of the depths of perdition. You face eternal death, and in deep faith you cling to Him who through life has conquered death. And, oh, that is glorious, and God's angels have cheered it. But however serious, however tenderly conceived, all this nevertheless only served to save you, to reconcile you, to bless you. It only moved for your sake, for your salvation, to open the entrance to eternal life for you. It was your Savior in all this for you and for you, but what it did not say is that you shall be, exist and live for and with your Jesus.

Even if you have gone further, and the love of Christ aroused in you a passionate love for Him who loved you so dearly; even if the thanks rose from your heart, and you sang it in a song of praise and worship; even if, for the sake of Jesus, you have persevered in the struggle against sin, and offered Him your money, your goods, your strength, your time, your effort and your devotion in the labor of Christian love; - Then all that still remains on a par with your thanks and your feeling of obligation towards a doctor who was able to bring you back from a deadly illness; with your thanks and feeling of obligation towards him who saved your life when you were shipwrecked; and it is and remains an expression of the soul, rising up in you because you have been saved, because you have been redeemed, because you have been done well. Taken strictly, it is and remains an offering of praise and

thanks and honor to Jesus as your only High Priest. But is your King not something else entirely, is he not much more than the Priest who reconciles you?

When you entice and call others to the Savior, you discover the same thing. A mother who lures her child to Jesus early on and tries to instill unlimited devotion for his Jesus, is first and foremost concerned with guiding her child into the sphere of salvation and making him part of the inheritance in heaven. He who calls the disbelievers to Jesus in his surroundings, among his relatives and friends, and pleads with them to draw them to Jesus, aims first and foremost at their salvation. And likewise, he who goes out on the road to seek the lost, to light up their darkness, and to save them from destruction, aims at delivery, wants to be a means in the hand of God, to bring them over from the kingdom of the world into the kingdom of the Son of God. Everything that is based on seeking, enticing, and bringing the lost, points to Jesus as the instrument of salvation. Jesus is the means of salvation, of redemption, of the healing of diseases, of the anointing of wounds, of the salvation of souls, of the bringing of eternal life. It remains here always the love for the lost that urges and animates. It is knowing that the Master Physician is there; that the medicine that can save from death is ready. And now, seeing that so many do not know the Master Physician, and have never put his holy medicine to their lips, you bring that Physician in his eternal love and in the never-failing power of his sanctifying grace before them, yes, bring that medicine to their lips, if they will drink it in full and also thank their salvation to it. But what does this bringing under the High Priestly grace of your Jesus, in itself, have in common with the honoring of His Kingship.

And this we note, not as if there were in all this in itself something less than good, something less than noble, something too selfish or too altruistic. It is lowering yourself, and dishonoring your God as your Creator, if that holy selfishness, that high egotism does not work in you. And also, it is to forsake the bond with your fellow creatures, if you do not feel a thirst in you to lift them up out of their lostness. Oh, of course, the Christ is also anointed as our eternal High Priest, and whoever does not wish to be impressed with the highness of His Priesthood will never be able to give Him honor and worship as King. But even if the honor of Christ as our Supreme Priest is not forsaken at a moment, God's holy Word still distinguishes, and tells you so deliberately and emphatically, that he is anointed by God not only as High Priest, but also as our eternal King. And how can you ever give foot to the delusion that, as long as you honor the High Priest in Jesus, the honor of the King should remain indifferent to you?

This applies even more to those who stand by the Prophet; a group of believers whose number, unfortunately, is still growing. It is true that you could exclude all such, deeper seen, half-believers, from the circle of true believers. But we do not do this. Where thousands upon thousands also refuse to honor the highest Prophet and Teacher in Jesus and place their own knowledge above the Word of Him, who was given to us by God as the revelation of the highest wisdom, it rather suits us with joy to also approach those, who, vexed by this delusion of the world, at least still stand up for Jesus as our highest Prophet. Certainly, to remain there is a very sinful weakening of our confession, it is a prying loose of the Cross, a blindness to what in our holy confession must always remain the center and the pith. But they too then stand up for Jesus, albeit only for a third of the whole truth, and for them too it applies: "Do not destroy them. He who is not against him is for him". Especially in times of numbness of faith and numbness of feeling, it is fitting that we gratefully honor the testimony for Jesus, even if it is too faint on our lips, and even if people do not follow us.

And so, a place must also be reserved for those who, cold in the face of the deep mystery of divine vindication, refuse to warm their hearts to the heart of the High Priest and seek almost all their strength in the word that powerfully emanated from Jesus' lips; who take pride in his high-moral ideal and raise themselves up to that ideal, in order to approach communion with their God through their very religious self-awareness.

Provided - and this remains the never-to-be-let-off condition - that in this honoring of the Christ as our Highest Prophet, they do not derive the high character of his ethical-religious revelation from a spark of genius, not explaining himself by being high among men, but consciously and with all decisiveness confessing that he is God revealed in the flesh, and that therefore in him the complete, the highest, the absolute, the revelation of God, which can be surpassed by nothing, has been given to us. Thomas' "My Lord and my God" must not be silenced on the lips, or all confession will fall to the ground withered, all fellowship with the confessors will be broken, and the cry for the Highest Prophet will become a lie on the lips.

And with this proviso, it is undoubtedly of great significance in the wrestling of the minds that was involved, if there is still a wide circle in which at least the divinity of Christ is still honored, the absoluteness of His revelation is still generously and wholeheartedly professed, and in the face of the errors of our time the fullness of the Gospel in the ethical and religious fields is still zealously advocated. He who

still swears by the Word of the Savior, may still be far away, but he is nevertheless not very far from the Kingdom of God. The highest prophet, if only known better and understood more intimately in his Word, leads by itself to the only High Priest.

But however grateful we may be, as often as a word of warm pleading for the highness of the Gospel emanates from these circles as well; and however much we value these voices, yes, we do not hesitate to acknowledge that among those who have found the Highest Priest, there is too often a lack in honoring the Highest Prophet; yet all this has nothing to do with honoring the Christ as the God-anointed King. The real, warm jubilation for Jesus as our King is, unfortunately, almost never heard from the more contemplative circle.

Even recognizing and honoring Him as the Head of the Body is something else, although it can come close. The Head of the Body is a mystical-organic concept. It refers to the organic community of those who are one in faith, hope and love. Every community can be compared with a body, and the image of the body automatically evokes the image of the head.

Hence it is not uncommon for those who have an eye and a sense for the mystical life, who seek fellowship with God's saints, and in that fellowship experience the sustaining and inspiring influence of Christ, to particularly enjoy honoring Christ as the Head of the Church, and to feel and perceive that, thanks to that fellowship, there is a leading influence of Christ upon them as well. It is just a pity that this conviction is all too often desecrated by comparison with philosophical theories, and thus loses the dusty gold of the wings. But even where this is not the case, and the honor of Christ as the Head of the congregation is conducted in purely mystical channels, it is still something quite different from His Kingship. A prince on earth, like William the Silent, may temporarily be the Head of his people by thinking for them, by inspiring them with courage and courage and by leading them to victory, but that does not make him a King in his own right.

This recognition of Jesus as the head of the church is even weaker if it is limited to his church, as it often emerges from the old opposition to the Papacy. Because one does not recognize the vicar of Christ on earth, one is inclined to withdraw into Christ Himself, without even mentioning Him, and to cover oneself with Jesus' name in all ecclesiastical acts. But however much this actually approaches the concept of the King, it nevertheless, precisely because of its limitations, closes the eye to the majesty of the One who, as our King, is seated at God's right hand. It determines the idea to the church regiment, and precisely because that church

regiment appears among us in such an extremely simple form, it is completely incapable of lifting the soul even slightly to the height of the majesty of Jesus' Kingship. Certainly, the ecclesiastical regiment is also enclosed in the Kingship, but it reveals itself here in such an imperfectly human form, in such a small area, with such intangible power, that it does not even evoke an inkling of the Majesty that shines forth in the full Kingship of Christ.

Thus, it will be understood what we meant with our complaint that the Kingship of Jesus is not only misunderstood, denied and disputed in the world outside us, but that the glory of that Kingship is also waning in all circles of the professed.

One honors the Christ as God revealed in the flesh; one kneels down in adoration before him; one swears by him as our most High Prophet; one approaches him as our only High Priest; one allows oneself to be animated by him as the Head of the Body; On the ecclesiastical plane, all action is derived from him, and him alone; and the Kingship of Christ, in his eternal Majesty and glory, is well confessed, well recognized in writings, and would even be defended with insistence and earnestness against anyone who would deny it. But to profess it, not to deny it, even to acknowledge and advocate it, is quite another thing than to have taken it into one's soul and to live from it oneself.

And this latter is now lacking. We do not say in everyone. We do not pass judgment on anyone's personal standing before his Savior. For that you would have to know everyone's more intimate life, and who knows this more than a single bosom friend; how many know it of their own children, indeed of themselves? Our judgment may be based on the expression, revelation and outward appearance of the Christian life alone. And then we may not hold back from saying that in the world of Islam there is a more powerful, more sustained cry for Mohammed as the Prophet than there is among us for Christ as our God-anointed King.

This weakens us, it undermines our strength, and above all it is a failure to pay to Jesus that all-transcending homage which we as his subjects owe him as our King.