

I. - The Idea of the King.

And he wrote on (his) robe and on his thigh this name: King of kings, and Lord of lords.

REV. 19:16.

Everything in the Christian land, especially in the baptized parts of Europe and America, should, it would be well, be constantly filled with honour for Christ as its King; the authority of His Majesty should dominate all spiritual relations of life; and no name could be more highly esteemed at its first sound in all walks of life, among all peoples and nations, than the name of Christ as our God-anointed King. In the centuries that lie behind us, there have been times when this was so. Now it is no longer so. In the wider field of national life, the glory of Jesus' crown has died out, and while in the much smaller circle of faithful believers no name rises above that of Jesus, in this narrow circle it is more the Savior and Redeemer who receives honor and thanks, than the King given to us by God, to whom all homage and loyalty is devoted.

The general cause of this lack of homage and holy enthusiasm appeared to be found in the general decline of the stream of religious life. Religion and all that is sacred to it used to be at the forefront of everyone's estimation and esteem, even that of the princes and peoples. Not as if even then unholiness did not creep in and poison life, but this unholiness was still generally felt to be sin, and in the public estimation the holy, and thus also the majesty of the Christ, retained its honor. Nowadays it is no longer so. The most that can be said is that in a few ceremonial acts religion is more nominally than actually recognized in its great significance; and what actually came to the fore in the public estimation was material interest, public welfare, and besides science and art, honor and philanthropy, but also the latter as arising solely from man and glorifying only man. This change in the public esteem appeared to us to be explained above all by the fact that man's power over Nature had increased in the 19th century in such a marvelous manner, and that, as a result of this acquired power over Nature, man felt liberated from the fear of the elementary powers, which had been the root of their "fear of God for the vast majority of people. The fact that the ever-increasing power over Nature fostered unconcern and destroyed the "freedom of God" in ever-widening circles, at first brought about a hostile relationship between faith, which held fast to the freedom of God, and science, which continued to celebrate its triumphs over the power of Nature. Thus, in religious circles the increasing power over Nature was attributed

to the working of a demonic power. More and more people in religious circles took an unfriendly stand against Nature-science. They looked upon its steady victories with dismay. And they refused to understand that this triumph over Nature was nothing more than the fulfillment of a holy prophecy, and that it could be explained by the reign of Christ's spirit over the lives of the nations. Thus, two distinct and separate circles began to form. The one that increasingly deviated from the faith and gloried in its scientific success, in order to organize its life according to the nature of that success. And on the other hand, the circle that stuck to its beliefs, and regretted this increasing power over Nature, wanted it gone, and could only think of it as a hostile power.

But however sharp the separation between these two circles, the influence of the unbelievers on the believers steadily increased. Even in the circle of believers one could not escape the benefits of life, which the science community was constantly bringing about. They themselves also sought the benefit and the enjoyment of it. And while one underwent the influence of scientific development unnoticed, one's own faith slackened, one felt the flow of religious life in one's own circle decrease, and one wondered, not without fear, where this time in public opinion, especially among the younger generation, would end up. All sorts of divisions arose; there were those who sought salvation in half admitting to scientific success and who believed they could best save their faith by also seeking a scientific basis for their faith; while others, with even more vehement hostility to all science, retreated into mystical isolation. For more than half a century people in the circle of believers thus laboured, weakened themselves and withdrew from public life, until finally, out of friction, the reaction was born which led to a new, resilient revival of the faith. It is only through this that the happy moment has come when people in the believing community have once again started to develop independently and have a clear idea of the position faith has to occupy vis-à-vis the all-conquering power of natural science. It is only through this that the Kingship of Christ has again come to the fore among us. The realization dawned on us that those who in Christ alone honored the Redeemer and Guardian for eternal salvation, were in fact pushing back the majesty of our King. Not only in the limited field of spiritual salvation, but in the whole wide field of human life, the honor of Christ's Kingship had to come into its own again. It had to be realized that in Christ we were actually dealing with a "King to whom all power in heaven and on earth was given'.

So far, we have proceeded in the first and second series of these Articles Pro Rege; now, in the third series, it will come down to building up this Kingship of Christ

from the basis of life itself, by the light that Revelation lets shine for us. And then we will begin with the remark that the Christ is always presented to us as the King, and never as the Emperor. A seemingly insignificant remark and yet in which the essence of His Majesty lies expressed. The rulers of the earth have always been aware that in their high titles they have been. In Turkey, the Sovereign calls himself the Sultan, in Persia the Shach, in Japan the Mikado, Tenno or Tenshi. And when these Oriental Princes came into contact with Europe, none of them presented themselves as Kings but rather as Emperors. Sultan means commander of force, Shach means ruler, Mikado means high door, Tenshi means son of heaven, and precisely because of these high titles that they held in their own country, they did not want to be placed on a par with the kings of the small countries in international relations either, but they all grabbed what in Europe is the highest title, the honorary title of Emperor. A king was also a prince to them, but of a lower order. In Austria, Germany and Russia there is no such thing as a king, because even the title Czar is only a Slavic form for our word Emperor. The desire to gain influence through the high title of Emperor sometimes even turned into the ridiculous. We know the sad fate that befell the royal family in Korea, but even the monarch of that small, barely populous country called himself the proud and high Emperor of Korea. Brazil, too, had an Imperial crown before it became a republic, and when European influence tried to establish itself in Mexico, the Imperial crown was transferred to that republic as well. Thus, it may be said that once the title of Emperor had become established, it was in the nature of things that whoever would choose a high title for the Sovereign of a powerful empire, would automatically have to choose the Imperial title. In the days of Jesus, the high title of Emperor was also known and common in Palestine. The story of the birth of Christ begins by saying that a commandment emanated from Emperor Augustus, Jesus himself spoke the famous words: "Give the Emperor what is the Emperor's", and before Gabbatha's court it was said: "If you let go of this, you are not the Emperor's friend. It is also reported of Paul that, in the face of the fury of Jewish fanaticism, he appealed to the Emperor. And yet, despite the fact that the title of Emperor was already in use in Jesus' day as the highest title of rule and power, neither Jesus himself, nor his Apostles, nor the Evangelists ever applied the title of Emperor, but always and exclusively the honorary title of King to Jesus' Messianic Majesty. Even today it would be offensive to any of us to speak of the Emperor Jesus. We all automatically feel that it is only the title of King that Jesus honors in His Majesty.

This attracts all the more attention, because in itself the imperial title would express the nature and extent of Jesus' reign much more accurately than the title of King. King is the title exclusively reserved for the ruler of a single nation, whereas Emperor is the title of a ruler whose territory and dominion extend over many countries and nations, and thus also over many kings. In England, this was very recently felt when the title of Empress of India was conferred upon Victoria. In England, Scotland and Ireland Victoria remained the Queen, but in Asia she ruled over all kinds of peoples, nations and princes, and thus the title of Empress was adopted for India. Since Jesus' reign is by no means limited to a single nation or a single people, but extends over all peoples and nations, it would in itself have made sense to choose the title of Emperor for Jesus' reign as well; however, this has never happened. He is not only called King, but the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, and even the Chief of the Kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5), but he is never called Emperor.

Emperor is the same as Caesar, which was pronounced Kaisar in Greek, and thus passed into the form of Kaiser in German, and into the form of Emperor in Dutch. Gajus Julius Caesar was the first to bear this honorary title and the word Emperor is derived from his personal name. The Romans themselves usually called him Imperator or Augustus, whence the French form Empereur, and the English Emperor. But in whatever form, this expression always indicates that the bearer of this title is the head of an empire, not the ruler of a specific people. In their own bosom the Romans possessed a republic, and it was the head of this republic who, as ruler over peoples in Europe, Asia and Africa, i.e., over the entire known world at that time, made himself known by the imperial title as Commander or Lord of the whole world. There were still wild peoples wandering around outside the borders of the Roman Empire, but they did not count. Over all that counted as a sympathetic part of the world the chief of the Roman Republic was Lord and Bidder, and this expressed the title of Emperor. For this reason, divine honors were soon bestowed on the Emperor as well, and he was given the title of Dominus et Deus, i.e. Lord and God. The title of Emperor thus contained a completely different meaning than that of ruler over a particular country. It was world domination, which the bearer of this title claimed for himself, and for centuries, even in the Middle Ages, the general conviction held that for that reason only one Emperor was conceivable. There is only one world, therefore only one world government, and therefore only one Emperor. When the great Roman Empire split into an Eastern part with Constantinople and a Western part with Rome as its

capital, this was an anomaly. And when the Byzantine Empire sank more and more under the pressure of Islam, the Roman Empire was restored by Charles the Great, because he too took the title of Emperor in addition to that of Frankish King. As such he called himself Roman Emperor, a title which the old German emperors always kept. It was not until later that this significance of being the ruler of the entire known world weakened. Napoleon tried to revive it. But even now the title of Emperor, which was adopted in Russia, Austria and again in Germany, has become the honorary title of the sovereign over a very powerful empire, which stood out in strength and power far above the ordinary kingdoms. For such a powerful empire the title of King soon seemed too low, and the title of Emperor was demanded, and that is why the Eastern princes did not content themselves with the title of King, but, as often as they would speak in European forms, they honoured themselves with the title of Emperor. This has also resulted in the title of Emperor now sounding much higher to everyone's ears, and representing the expression of a much greater power.

If one takes this development of the name of Emperor into account, then everyone feels how, in itself, there was a strong case for also expressing Jesus' Majesty with the title of Emperor. His was also the reign, not over a single country, but over all the countries of the world. The Emperor of Rome was honored as Dominus et Deus, i.e., as Lord and God, Jesus was Lord and God. If the Emperor of Rome was the ruler of many kings, Jesus was King of kings and Lord of lords. This supremacy, which the Emperor of Rome had only pretended to have, actually came to Him. His was not a national, but a worldly dominion. And if anyone could be said to be Emperor in a full and literal sense, then this applied to Jesus, and to no one else. What the apostles claimed for Jesus was precisely what the ruler of Rome thought he could claim for himself. And so, in itself, nothing was more obvious than that the apostles, in the homage they paid to Jesus, had taken the stand that Jesus could not be compared to any of the kings subordinate to the Emperor, but only to the Emperor himself. If one asks oneself what princely power on earth could be the right image and the right representation of the power and majesty of the Christ, then the image of this in itself could not be found among the Kings of the Gauls or Greeks, Persians or Dacians, but only and exclusively in Rome in the Imperial Palace.

The fact that, in spite of this, the title of King was never applied to Jesus, can be explained by the very different meaning of the terms Emperor and King. The Emperor is the embodiment of rule by force and domination. From Rome the

legions had come out, who had subjugated one people in front of the other by force of arms to the rulers in Rome. Between the conquered peoples and the Emperor in Rome there was no other relationship than that of supremacy resting on the majority of the Imperial army. All these peoples spoke a language foreign to them; they had a religion foreign to them; they lived according to customs and habits that were completely at odds with the way of life in Rome. And it was not the happiness of these peoples, but only the glitter of imperial power, that was the aim of the administration. Undoubtedly Rome brought better order, more equitable administration of justice, and sometimes more prosperity and improved culture to these countries, but the main objective was and remained that the treasures from these countries should flow to Rome, and that they, kept in check by force of arms, should enhance the glory of the imperial crown. It was a dominion over the world, but also, as Jesus put it before Pilate, a dominion of this world, that is to say, created out of this world, and for which they fought by force of arms. And in contrast He set His rule as if it were of the world, but not of the world, and therefore His servants could not, like the servants of Rome's Emperor, fight for their Lord with the sword. It was the very nature of Jesus' reign that was diametrically opposed to the nature of the imperial reign. The Imperial rule was not the image, but the mockery of the rule over the world that had been given to Jesus. The nature of the world dominion of Rome's Emperor and the nature of the world dominion of Jesus were directly mutually exclusive. At Rome there was only a semblance of the true nature of that world dominion, which was about to be realized in Jesus. There the violence of arms, here the power of the Spirit. There the sacrifice of all things to one's own honor and greatness, here in Christ the giving, the devotion, the self-sacrifice, the self-humiliation, and the self-destruction, in order to save a people for eternal life and to enrich them with treasures of grace. This was the reason why not the idea of an emperor but only the idea of a king is applied to Jesus in Scripture, even though it goes without saying that no earthly title, not even that of king, can adequately express the actual and special nature of his majesty and power. Everything, including the idea of the King, has become counterfeit and unnatural on earth. Hence the contrast in Samuel's days between the true King of Israel, that is Jehovah himself, and "the kings like other nations had'. The Messianic idea of kingship is therefore sharply distinguished from the kings of other peoples, and not Saul, but first David became the type of the Messianic King. It does not matter whether one goes back to the derivation of the words with which the King is mentioned in the original text of the Old or New Testament to explain Jesus' Kingship. Old dogmatists have tried to

explain the Greek word Basileus by a false derivation, in such a way that it would mean: he is the basis, the foundation, the support of the people, but better derivation has already shown that such an explanation is out of the question, and that Basileus only means: one who goes out on behalf of the people, about the same as duke. Nor does the Hebrew Mélek, from Melchi-Zedek, the King of Righteousness, also known to the resident Bible reader, get any further. Even if we assumed that this word means counsellor because of its origin, we would not have made any progress with this either. The word Mélek is the word the ancient Canaanites already used, without any evidence that it is of holy origin. The Holy Scriptures use the words they find in the languages of the nations, and do not take the meaning they wish to express from them, but put it into them. Not linguistically, but factually, the right track of interpretation must be found here. And even though it can be said that our word King, which is associated with knowledge, seems to refer to unity of lineage and thus to obedience to the people, even more than the Greek or Hebrew word, approaches the deeper meaning of kingship, here too the word as such cannot be used any further. This word 'King' also originated outside of Revelation, it lacks the holy stamp, and it is entirely coincidental that it approaches the essence of Kingship more correctly than the Greek or Hebrew words.