

II. - The Lordship.

Thou art thyself my King, O God; command the deliverances of Jacobs.

PSALM 44:5.

In the appearance of the King embodies the idea of dominion. Not of a reign which, as in the Emperor idea, is exerted by force of arms, but of a supreme power. This concept of power is even the defining feature of the King idea, that which distinguishes the King from the Prophet and the Priest. Among us this idea of rule is often expressed by speaking of sovereignty, also of supremacy; but apart from the manner of expression, with the King it is always in the first place about power, about high power, about the highest power. It is the possession of this power that first makes him King. It is not as if there were not all kinds of other things in the King idea, but that other thing must never push aside the main issue, and so wherever Jesus is mentioned as our King, the celebration of that power must always be in the foreground.

It is not the Christ who exists for us, but we exist for and with the Christ. It is most certainly true of earthly government that the government is there for the people, and not the people for the government. And at least as long as we take this earthly government for its own sake, and do not take it to be the bearer of the Lord's authority, this statement is valid everywhere else. But in the case of Christ as our King, this statement does not apply, precisely because of His divine dignity. We are his property. We do not belong to ourselves, but to Christ. We are his servants and handmaidens. And it is precisely in this relationship that the royal honor of Christ first comes into its own.

But it must not be denied that in the circle of the faithful, the opposite idea all too often comes to the fore, through a one-sided emphasis on Christ's love, which speaks to us from the work of Redemption. In the work of Redemption, however, power is hidden behind the voluntary humiliation and self-surrender of Christ in death. Here the Christ gives Himself for us, and so for a moment it may give the impression that our salvation was the only goal envisaged in the work of Redemption. Of course, this is not so. The main thing was the restoration of the right and honor of God, and only insofar as we are creatures of that God, the power and dominion over this world also had to be withheld from Satan and given back to God. Even when it is written that God so loved this world that He gave us His one-born Son to save it, this must never be interpreted as if our excellence made God's compassion on us, and therein lies nothing else than that God could tolerate the

disruption of His work, the profanation of His world, temporarily, but not permanently, and therefore seized the highest means to restore His power and right over this world, and precisely by this to save this world from eternal destruction. It is for this reason that the apostle solemnly declares: "We beseech you for the sake of Christ, let yourselves be reconciled to God" Not: Accept the salvation offered. Do not let the opportunity that is being offered to you, to assure you a blessed future, pass you by. For all this may well be said, but it does not penetrate to the bottom, to the basis of the work of Redemption, and precisely this does the Apostolic Word: Be reconciled to God!

In the beginning, however, the preaching of the Gospel lingers more on the surface, and places man's salvation in the foreground. And this is natural. The Gospel is preached to those who are estranged from God and who live on most thoughtlessly in their sins. With such people, a call to the glory of God would have no effect. They do not understand what the honor of God demands, and they do not yet have a heart for it. Often these people do not feel unhappy at all in their worldly life, and they are often overcome with a certain fear that they will have to renounce the joy that the world offers them by going over to the service of Jesus. Especially in its lower forms, therefore, the Gospel is addressed almost exclusively to those who live a less than happy life in this world and suffer from the corruption that emanates from their inner sins. There are few Evangelizations so resolute in character as that which emanates from the Salvation Army, but it, too, addresses itself first and foremost to the lost in the lower classes of society. In America, and to some extent also in England, Evangelicalism sometimes still dares to call men and women of the middle and upper classes to conversion, but on the continent of Europe, and so also among us, after the partial disappointment of Revelation, Evangelicalism among the more highly educated, finely civilized and more scientifically trained has almost come to a standstill. It does occur, thank God, that even from these circles a young man or an elderly person is converted to Christ, but this is a great exception, and almost never the fruit of ordinary evangelization. It can be said of almost all evangelization that it is directed almost exclusively to the poorer and least fortunate class of society, and especially to such as these, whose sinful life is evident, and who can be spoken to about the life of their souls without encountering any imagined pride. We also know from the Apostolic Writings how this was actually the case at the time of the emergence of the Christian Church. Not many nobles, not many prominent men, not many wise men, but that which is nothing. It naturally follows that evangelization tends to

emphasize the terrible fate that awaits the sinner after death. There is not much to offer for this life, at least not to people who do not yet understand the enjoyment of a higher spiritual life and almost exclusively ask what can improve and enrich their earthly existence. The question: "What must I do to be saved?" is therefore automatically on everyone's lips, and it is neither reprehensible nor unnatural that those who go out among the lost in order to save souls should seek their strength first of all in the answer to this question. "Life in this world already gives you so little: see to it that you do not also forfeit your eternal life. Come to Jesus, and through faith in Him at least find your entrance into eternal salvation."

The consequence of this way of evangelizing is that the salvation of the soul comes to the fore, and that one is inclined to do with Jesus as one does with a physician who saves us from mortal illness. One is grateful to such a physician; at first one submits to what he prescribes; one willingly takes the bitter medicine he administers; but once the mortal danger has passed, we gain in strength and begin to move more freely again, then one leaves the physician for what he is, pays him back, and leaves him alone. Hence the infertility of more than one evangelization if, after having led to conversion, it loses sight of the converted and leaves them to themselves. The Evangelization then sets itself too high, because it looks down upon the Church with a certain contempt, and does not understand that it is precisely the admission to the Church that must be the rule, so that the converted and admitted, taken up into the bosom of the Church, may now be initiated from the superficial idea of being saved to that deeper life which leads the saved to their right standing before Christ. If not, Jesus is honored as the Savior, as the Reconciler, as the Redeemer, but there is no question of His dominion over us and of our being taken in among His own people, and it is precisely because of this that the idea arises that the Christ is there for our sake, and the much richer idea that we are there for Christ's sake does not arise. The man sunk in sin is lost; now he wants to enter into eternal life; and it is Jesus who opens the way for him. This goal has now been reached. The Master Physician has fulfilled his task for the sick person. The thanks that the saved person gives him for this remain highly valued. But if such a person, after his death, is actually allowed to enter God's paradise, then Christ's work for him is finished, his task is complete, and he ceases to be the controlling element in life.

It is precisely this that the Church must combat. As the Church, it may not be content with spreading the Gospel to the lost, but first and foremost it has the calling to introduce the Lord's called people more deeply into the divine reasons

from which the whole work of Redemption arose, and to establish that firm bond between Jesus and His redeemed, which is not finished but only begins with conversion. And this depends almost exclusively on a preaching that, after having demonstrated the Prophet and the High Priest to our hearts, now also makes the glory of the King shine in our soul's eye, and causes the entirely new relationship that must arise between the saved, as incorporated in the people of God, and the King whom God has placed in charge of them, to permeate the mysticism of the heart. In this the Church has fallen far short. It made the mistake of remaining in its lower form when it came to evangelization, and this is the main reason why the awareness of the high significance of the Kingship of Christ has been as good as lost among a substantial part of the congregation. That Jesus is our highest Prophet, in so far as he has revealed the truth of eternal things to us completely, and that he is our eternal High Priest, who offered the sacrifice of reconciliation for us, everyone knows, confesses and understands; but that in the confession of the Kingship of Christ the highest thing still has to come first, most people understand as good as nothing of that. They still honor in Jesus a patron who prays for them and offers them a certain guarantee that the salvation they have acquired will not escape them. They see in Jesus' sitting at God's right hand the reward after the struggle, the honour of elevation given to him by his Father. They also confess that in the end of days the Christ will come in judgment. Yes, and those who live a little deeper, also feel that Jesus curbs demonic activity. But of a royal power with which Jesus is clothed, of a royal majesty in which he is enthroned, and of a royal rule exercised by him on earth and in heaven, little more than the sound of the name remained, and the full reality of it is no longer felt, enjoyed or experienced. Something that is now said not of each and every one, head by head, but as a rule of the great multitude, and so as the soul existence of that broad multitude is expressed in song and word. This is not to say that Jesus is not held in high regard by all, very high indeed, and that Jesus is not always thought of and spoken of with the greatest reverence; nor that a warm, tender, heartfelt love for Jesus does not live in most hearts, a love that is expressed through sacrifice and thanks and thus in devotion; But what is meant is that the very special enthusiasm that takes hold of a faithful people when they are allowed to applaud their King - an enthusiasm that, when applauding the King of kings, far exceeds all earthly enthusiasm - is no longer what it was among us in earlier centuries, and that it certainly falls short of the standard set by the Scriptures. The feeling, the realization that we are there for Christ and for Christ, and not He for us, no longer permeates the ranks. There is no longer a marching band behind the one and only Lord Commander, no longer a

feeling of being enclosed within the people who are devoted to him in life and in death.

A very shallow, unspiritual conception of the Kingship of Christ has of itself led to this weakening of enthusiasm. The highest power is embodied in the King, but that highest power must, in our view, also show and assert itself. If, therefore, there is a King among the earthly monarchs who remains hidden, and in whose realm order and peace are continually disturbed by invading enemies; whose people cannot defend themselves; whose army is retreating; and whose country is being burned to the ground, - then all authority and respect for such a King is gradually lost, and as people in France in earlier centuries spoke of a *roi fainéant*, i.e. of a King who does not show himself to be a king, so that the country is not subject to the temptations of the people. i. a King who does not stir, so throughout the ages and in all countries the majesty of the kingship has faded, as soon as the King was not able to maintain himself by a triumphant display of power, internally and externally. And where earthly kings were concerned, this could not be otherwise. The power on which earthly authority is based and through which earthly kingship is displayed cannot be wielded without the strong arm and is inconceivable without coercion. A Sovereign without a police force to deal with the evils at home, and without an army to deal with the enemy that comes from abroad, is unthinkable among the Kings of this earth. But if we now apply the same or similar ideas to the Kingship of Jesus, if we demand that it, if it exists, should also manifest itself in display and demonstration of a power that rests in the strong arm, then it needs no further indication how, measured by this standard, the high Kingship of Christ is steadily losing its honor. Christ's Church lies divided and split, sect after sect, heresy after heresy. Sin and transgression rage on. Even the priests of the sanctuary fall short in loyalty and holy earnestness. And where, for that reason, order is continually being disturbed in the spiritual realm, without Christ revealing His power to restore spiritual order, there is so often no sign of a beating back by the enemy who is threatening the holy place from without, and it seems rather as if the flock of the Lord has been delivered into the hands of the unbelievers and the scoffers, yea, as if it were not Christ who was victorious over the world, but the world that was victorious over the cause of the Lord. Habituated as it is to the notion that a kingship can only maintain itself in its splendor if it throws down all opposition at once and is able to inspire awe in everyone for its own law and rule, the impression has increasingly been created that the kingship of Christ was more a

nominal title of honor with which the Savior was adorned than a really existing power with which we must reckon in our entire lives.

But it is precisely this standard that is wrong and must not be applied. All earthly kingship is mechanically instituted, Jesus' kingship is organic, and it is the difference arising from this that must govern our entire consideration of Jesus' kingship. Properly understood, there is only one who has power, and that one is the Triune God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and what the psalmist sang in the 44th song: Thou art my King O God! expresses this principle in a tone of jubilant adoration. The power is God's, because God is all creature. His is a supreme power, founded in the very existence of things. He who gives birth to anything or person is, of course, master of that thing or person in the fullest sense. This is never fully true when we humans are supposed to give birth to something. Even the singer who sings a song spontaneously from his heart is never a creator in the full sense of the word. He uses thoughts and images, which he derives from what exists outside him; he sings in tones that are related to the poetry of all ages; and he expresses himself in a language, which he did not create, but which he found in his people. When, therefore, we speak of mankind's creative thoughts or products which they have brought into being, this is always meant to be transitive and relative, and there is never any question of an absolute creative power; in God, on the other hand, and in God alone, this creative power is absolute. There is nothing among the existing which He did not bring into being, without being bound to anything but Himself, and without there ever being a factor used by Him which does not owe its creation equally and equally to Him, and to Him alone. In us, too, God created not only the being, but also our nature, and likewise all the powers, gifts, talents and skills that distinguish one man from another. Therefore, there is nothing in the creature, whether star or sun, whether substance or spirit, whether plant or animal, man or angel, which, when it came forth from His hand, did not wholly and uniquely owe its being and its being so to God the Lord. And on this now rests the Divine Sovereignty. God could not create the creature in bondage to a law existing outside Him, for that law did not exist. Nor could God create the creature with a view to anything else but Himself, for apart from the Triune God there was nothing. All creation is therefore itself in a state of complete and utter dependence, and can exist for no other purpose than to glorify God and to serve as a means or a factor in the execution of His counsel. Something from which it also follows that there can be no other power besides God to which the creature would be subject in a similar sense. There is but one dominion, and that is the dominion

of God Triune, and likewise there is but one Power and Majesty, and that is the Power and Majesty of Godhead. And this power cannot be mechanical, it must by its very nature be organic, since it finds its basis in the very creation and existence of the creature.

It is therefore that the Scriptures always glorify God Triune as the LORD. The name Jehovah was preferably not pronounced in Israel as being too holy, and in its place, they chose the name of LORD, a name which our translators have also substituted for the name Jehovah throughout the ages. HEERE was then not taken as a form of entitlement, but meant as a title of Majesty, to express the absolute and full sovereignty due to God over all creation. The title "King" or "King of kings" was also substituted for this, but in such a way that LORD always remained the more comprehensive expression, in order to express the full inclusion of the power to rule, the sovereignty and the high authority of God over all things and over all persons. There may be a derived, a commissioned, an imposed authority on earth, and this derived authority may be maintained by force and violence, but all this never becomes anything else than a shadow of that one and supreme Kingship, which belonged to God by virtue of His omnipotence and by virtue of His creation, and rested in Him alone. And it is to this Kingship of God itself, and not to earthly Kingship, that the Kingship of the Son of God must be compared. Not the earthly standard of the princes or rulers of the world, but the standard of the Kingship of the Triune God must be applied here. And only from the fact that this was done the other way around, can it be explained that people saw themselves disappointed in the Kingship of Jesus, missed the overwhelming revelation of the power they had been waiting for, and thus proceeded to conceive of this Kingship as more nominal than real. Yet the apostles have given us ample warning. The name and title of Lord is immediately transferred by them to the exalted Savior, and in the presentation of Christ as the Head of the Body they set forth as clearly as possible the

Body, they emphasize as clearly as possible the organic character of His Kingship.