

XII.- King of Israel.

Ye worship what ye know not; we worship what we know: for salvation is of the Jews. JOH. 4:22.

First there was in Israel the absolute government of God, the direct working Theocracy. God was King. He alone. Then the idea of a Davidic Kingdom comes in, which, although appearing in earthly form, at the same time shows an ideal line. As a result of Israel's infidelity, tribulation and exile, and as the fruit of the prophecy that broke through powerfully just in those years, earthly kingship will soon fall away. At last, there will no longer be a King from the House of David. But it is precisely now that the expectation of the Messiah is taking on a more spiritual character, and the national conception of the Davidic kingship is collapsing into the ideal conception of the Messiah as King of the Kingdom of God. In the meantime, however, a Jewish People's State is reviving in Canaan. The Maccabees amaze with their heroic achievements. And again, the national conception of the Messiah superseded the ideal of the King of the Godhead. Especially when, shortly afterwards, foreign domination again offended the Jews, the whole people again clung to the national idea of the Messiah. The national Messiah himself became the ideal for the Jews, and this gave rise to that high self-esteem that made the Jew feel that he was the heir to world domination in national pride. All peoples could find refuge in Israel's tent, provided the tent remained Jewish. And then began that mighty propaganda to win proselytes, of which Jesus spoke: "You travel about sea and land to win one fellow Jew, and if you win him, you will make him a child of hell worse than you are yourself." Your imagination of a Messiah who will satisfy your national pride erects a wall between you and the true Messiah and prevents you from entering his kingdom. And where that heathen man, whom you are circumcising, would otherwise have had an open ear and open heart for the true Messiah, you are closing him from me, and thus from his eternal salvation. Thus, when John the Baptist finally appears, all Israel is stuck in its national bitterness, so stuck that even just before the Ascension, Jesus still has to hear from his own youth: "Lord, when will you re-establish the Kingdom of Israel?" Paul in Antioch had to openly resist Peter, and even then, the Jewish ulterior motive, which had an effect on the newly converted Christians from the Jews, was still stirring in Peter. Especially the appearance of Herod, the Idumean, who was from Edom, drew the Jews' spirit from the humiliating present to a future of honor, in which the second David would be enthroned in Jerusalem, in order to subdue the nations from Zion, not metaphorically, but actually. The Jews were the holy

people; the Goim, i.e., the nations, were unclean. Only through proselyte baptism could those who were Gentiles pass into Israel. Through baptism he then broke away from his own people, yes, even his own family, in order to pass over and merge completely into Israel. Later, salvation would be established in that Israel. And from that Israel salvation would proceed over the earth, but it would proceed in no other sense than that all nations would be converted to Judaism, or would be subjected to it by the Jews. Those who resisted would suffer. And finally, this would be the kingdom of glory, when the King of David, and not the Emperor of Rome, would have the scepter over the world empire, and the service of Jehovah in His temple on Zion would supplant all idolatry. Thus, the stream of spiritual life sank under the prophetic expectation. Only the crust of ice left behind by the flowing stream recalled those metaphorical words in which the prophecy had sung of its high and holy ideal. The spirit of prophecy lost its power over the soul of the people, and Pharisaism, on the other hand, took possession of that proud soul. A Pharisaism, therefore, so feigned in marrow and bone, not because it deliberately lied, but because it presented itself as the bearer of the Messianic expectation, and yet in fact left all the high and holy ideal of Revelation petrified in a lawful form service and in the illusion of a national self-image.

It was then that John the Baptist first made an irreparable break in this national haughtiness, precisely through his baptism. John's baptism was nothing less than a testimony to Israel that Israel itself was unclean, and that therefore the unclean Gentiles should not enter Israel, but that both Jew and Gentile were unclean and both had to enter the true Kingdom that was to come in Jesus through the baptism of the remission of sin. In this baptism in itself lay the program of things to come. That seemingly so simple baptism at the Jordan was the most radical condemnation of Israel's national expectations and national pride that could be imagined. The Jews cried out to the Gentiles: "I am holier than thou, come over to me," and John, just before the Jews, even called them out, saying: "You yourselves are unclean, then be baptized to enter into the holy kingdom of Him who is coming, and to whom I am not worthy to unbind the cobwebs of His feet." Thus, baptism seemed to be opposed to baptism, as if both baptisms were equal. The baptism of John, to call the Jews to the Kingdom of Messiah, as opposed to the baptism of the proselytes, which brought the Gentiles into Judaism. But this was no more than appearance. The baptism of the proselytes was a purely external baptism. The Pharisee was really formalistic in his adherence to the external bath of water and to the ceremonies that accompanied it. But the baptism of John was something else

entirely. A sign, and no other sign, of conversion and the washing away of sin, referring to the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. In this way the baptism of John broke through the formalism of the Pharisees and led them from the fossilized forms of religion to the spiritual core of the true religion. And John summarized the latter in the one solemn announcement that not the restoration of the Jewish Kingdom, but the Kingdom of heaven had come near.

Jesus' coming to the Baptism of John thus had this high significance, that Jesus Himself, who was born as a Jew and therefore a member of the Jewish nation-state, in the Baptism at the Jordan solemnly broke with the false national expectations of the Jews of that time; laid a ban on all that false national expectation; and now took position as the pretender-King, if we may so express it, of the true Messianic Kingdom. In the baptism at the Jordan lay in principle the complete condemnation of, and the direct break with, Pharisaism, and the opening up of that spiritual Kingdom in which he would act as the King anointed by God. Yet you can tell by everything that Jesus, in this way, by no means cut the tie that bound him to Israel's past. Salvation is of the Jews", he said to the Samaritan woman. He sent out his disciples to all the spots and cities of Israel. He himself brought his testimony no other way than to Israel. He sent the harsh word to the heathen woman around Sidon: "It is not lawful to take the bread of children, and to throw it to the dogs." Always he invoked the Revelation, in the Patriarchs, and also in Moses, the psalmists and prophets given to Israel. Rather than flee Palestine, he himself sought his exit in Jerusalem. And when Pilate nailed the sign above his cross, which read: the King of the Jews, this expressed the false national view of the Jews, but it also had a profoundly real meaning. The Kingdom of Heaven arose from Israel.

In all that we know of Jesus' short life on this earth, it is clear in every way that he could only act in Israel. On the one hand, his origin was Israel, and on the other hand, only in Israel did he find the young people to whose spirit his testimony could be connected; the environment, as we say, in which he could work. And this origin and this environment are equally important here. There was nothing in itself to prevent the Incarnation of the eternal Word from taking place in Rome, with a Roman woman as the mother. God's omnipotence was not bound in itself. And according to ordinary human calculations, one could even say that an appearance of Jesus at the center of the then world power would have made a much more powerful impression than his appearance in remote Galilee and in the forgotten spots of Palestine. But such was not the divine order. In this order everything is

prepared, everything is organically connected to the past, everything is historically determined. It is not a sudden intrusion of the highest Revelation into the world society of the time, but a connection to the course of Revelation from the earliest centuries. It is one work of God, which had begun in the entire course of Revelation and now reached its climax in the appearance of the Promised One to the fathers. The lineage of the Messiah goes out from Abraham. It passes into the tribe of Judah. It establishes itself in the House of David. And through a history of centuries, she runs out into Mary, the blessed one among women. Mary was the product of this holy history of many centuries. Compared to the women of other nations, and even compared to the other women of Israel, Mary stood so very high, not because of what she herself was or had accomplished, but because God had chosen her for this. In her, the female nobility shone at its most brilliant.

But even the bond that linked Him to David, Judah and Abraham through Mary was not enough for Jesus. To be the Son of Man his historical connection had to continue all the way to Adam, the dethroned head of fallen mankind. The genealogy in Matthew I points back to Abraham, that in Luke III goes back to Adam. Already with Seth the separation began in this second genealogy. This line continues over Noah and ends up, over Shem, at Abraham. Jesus must not be inserted as a foreign element in the middle of historical mankind. He must have his genealogical root in the first Adam, from whom the entire human race arose. Only in this way was he essentially our one. And so first He could become the Head not only of a few converts from Israel, but the Head of mankind reborn, and the effect of His sacrifice on the Cross could be traced back to the beginning of original sin. Legend has it that under the hill of Golgotha rests the mortal remains of Adam, and that through a crack in that hill a few drops of blood from the Man of Sorrows were drained to Adam's mortal remains. Without wishing to emphasize this point, the legend expresses the profound idea that the atoning power of the blood of the Christ, because he was of Adam, went back to Adam. He did not die as the atonement for our, that is, the Jews', sin alone, but as the atonement for the sin of the whole world, for our entire generation, for the reborn from all mankind.

If our King thus found in Adam his historical connection to humanity, in Abraham to Israel, in Judah and David to the King's type, and in Mary to the blessed one among the women of Israel's ennobled humanity, it can never be inferred from this that salvation arose from human holiness. The inclusion of Tamar and Bathsheba in the genealogical register already implacably rejects any such notion. On the contrary, because of its historical origin, all honor was taken away from mankind,

and all honor of salvation was assigned solely and exclusively to God, because what distinguished Israel from the nations was not the existence of Israel as a holy nation, but rather what God had worked on and in Israel. And this work of God, and not of man, in preparing for the coming of our King was by no means limited to his origins, but manifested itself even more strongly in the creation of what we called the environment that was indispensable if Jesus' appearance was to be effective. Everyone lives in a milieu, in an environment, in a circle of life, whose life he shares and in which his life can only fully express itself. Thus, there is a religious world, a moral world, a world of thoughts and propositions, and a world of persons in the midst of which we act and live our lives. If there is no sympathy, no agreement, no connection between our lives and the world around us, then what happens to the plant that you transplant into foreign soil happens to us: we thrive, we do not grow, we have no influence. No one experiences this more bitterly than the man who is sent out to preach the Christ to pagans or Mohammedans. At first, he imagines that this will happen of its own accord, because in every man's heart there is a certain need for salvation. But he soon realizes that this is not working out, precisely because he can have almost no contact with the religious and spiritual life of the pagans and Mohammedans. They are different, they exist differently, they feel differently, they think differently. The same would have happened to our King if no human environment had been prepared in Israel to which he could relate. He would not have found it in Athens or Rome. It could not have arisen anywhere on earth from ordinary human development. It could not have come unless God Himself had to provide it, and now our God has actually done so through Abraham's separation and through the founding of the people of Israel. What Jesus brought was the kingdom of heaven. Something from heaven had to enter this earthly life in order to make the necessary preparations for Jesus' coming. And this is exactly what happened through the whole of the Revelation that God gave to Abraham and Israel, and through the special course of life that God, under the effect of His miracle power, extended to Israel.

What was needed in the first place was a circle, a people, a milieu in which the one true God was known and recognized, and in which all idolatry had been broken off. Monotheism had to prevail in this environment. Well, this result was in fact achieved in Israel when our King appeared. Not before the exile. Until the exile, Baal worship prevailed among ten of the twelve tribes, and also in Judah's kingdom the most banal idolatry reappeared, often encouraged and promoted by the Kings of Judah. But in the end this evil was defeated. Under Ezra and

Nehemiah, and under the Maccabees, the rejuvenated Jewish people made a final break with idolatry, and adhered in principle to monotheism in their entire existence and outlook on life. Even now, among the wandering Jews, the profession of this monotheism, insofar as they remained religious, is their highest and most desired honor, the glory of their strength. The apostles, acting among the Gentiles, again cry out: Keep yourselves from idols! But Jesus did not fight idolatry. Idolatry had been conquered in Israel, and Jesus entered the midst of a people who generally professed the one true God.

The same was true of the moral world that Jesus found in Israel. In earlier times the Jews had also suffered from the deep moral decay brought about by the Asian idolatry of Astarte and Baal. In the Pagan world there was no sense of a divine order of purity in the moral sphere, to which every human being was automatically subject. Hence the terrible immorality which prevailed everywhere in the Pagan world and which had led the service of the senses into opulence and bread-drunkness, even into the most unnatural sin. Just read in Romans 1 how the apostle, who lived among this pagan world, found it in Corinth, Athens and Rome. Only in Israel was this different. This is not to say that all sorts of sins did not break out in Israel as well, and that Herod in particular did not compete with the Emperor of Rome in sinful opulence in his court at Tiberias. But Israel did have one thing, that it recognized a law of God and a higher order of life, and that this law and order had cultivated a moral seriousness that was sought in vain elsewhere. In the Pagan world there was moral seriousness among the few, but not in popular opinion. And even though Pharisaism in Israel had petrified the seriousness of God's law in its formalism and had removed the life-giving vein from it, the fact remained that the conviction had become ingrained in Israel of all ranks and positions that we cannot mould the law to our own will, but are subject to the law laid down for us by God. Only in this way was it possible to conceive of sin and to feel guilt, and therefore Jesus could only act as the Lamb of God who carries away the sin of the world in such an environment.

The same applied to the world of thought. Israel was entrusted with the Holy Scriptures. In that Scripture a complete worldview was given to Israel. A right view of the present, and a right view of the ideal that had to be pursued. The psalms in particular show us the state of mind of the pious people of Israel thanks to this Revelation, and the prophets open up the most glorious prospects for the ideal of the future, which, in contrast to the inadequate present, was one day to be realized by God's action. This can be summarized in the ideal of the Messiah, as

the psalmist and the prophet have drawn it to us in ever clearer lines and colors. And even though in the Israel that Jesus found this high ideal was skewed by one-sided patriotism and by national narrow-mindedness, the expectation of the second David still only held good in Israel, and from the Law, from the Psalms and from the Prophets, Israel knew the thoughts, the terms, the words, the expressions, that would later be necessary to make the Kingdom of Heaven understood. Only in this way was there an exchange of ideas, was it possible to express thoughts, and could Jesus present himself, not as a stranger, but as the promised one of the Fathers, as the Messiah in whom Israel's entire history was centered. In his first appearance, he begins by reading the promises from Isaiah's prophecy and then declares: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your ears. That is the connection to Israel's world of thought.

Finally, there is the personal environment. Had Jesus died, had he suffered, had he risen and ascended again into heaven, without leaving behind persons who could be his witnesses, then, after his death, everything would have reverted back to the way it was. Only by shooting out the tendrils could this vine continue to flourish and bear fruit. For this, persons were needed who formed a fixed circle around him, and who, after his passing, would carry his testimony into the world. Well, Jesus found those persons in Israel; and Paul included, all his apostles are of Jewish origin. Yet Jesus did not find these persons in Jerusalem, nor in Judea, but specifically in Galilee. This was the northern region, where Pharisaism with its fossilized nomism had exercised much less influence. The inhabitants of this region were regarded as "the people who do not know the law," that is to say, as a group in which the spirit of Israel lived on, but without having undergone the transformation that Pharisaism brought about in Judea. In many, therefore, the true confession had been diluted, but there were some among whom the spirit of Israel still retained some of its prophetic brilliance, and it was these men and women who joined Jesus unhesitatingly and undividedly, thus offering him the circle he needed. Not as if in that narrow circle there were not also much of the national sourdough. That restless urging of the Apostles for the establishment of the Kingdom in Israel, and that asking of that mother, what high dignity her sons would hold in that new Kingdom, remained until the very end a dividing wall between Jesus and His own. This had to be resisted, therefore, and all manner of misunderstanding had to be eradicated from that small circle before the full, clear awareness of the Kingdom of Heaven could break through. But the data for affiliation were there after all. However difficult it may have been, that circle finally came to a right

understanding of Jesus' appearance, and through that circle, after his Ascension, his cause was not only promoted, but carried into the whole world. And so our King appears as the Son of Man, by virtue of his descent from Adam, Abraham and David, and at his appearance in Israel he finds monotheism ready, ready also the recognition of God's law, ready the world of thought to which he could connect, and no less ready the circle of persons who take in his Spirit and can understand and propagate his Word.