

# DARKENING AMONG CHRISTIAN NATIONS

*Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."*

JOHN 18:37

The States of Europe still count as Christian nations. In the East [of Europe] there are also several million people who follow Islam; a Jewish diaspora is spread throughout all countries; among the Laplanders and Finns in northern Scandinavia we even find pagans. But taken together, they do not constitute as much as four percent of the European population, of which ninety-six percent register themselves as baptized. This applies to the Netherlands as well. According to the latest census figures, there are 104,000 Jews in our country, and another 80,000 claim no religion at all, but altogether they constitute not even 3 percent of the 5,5 million inhabitants of our land.<sup>1</sup>

§ 1

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1. Kuyper is presumably relying on the 1909 census (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. Uitkomsten der negende tienjaarlijksche volkstelling in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden gehouden op den een en dertigsten December 1909. The Hague, 1910–1911).

The name of Christ is no doubt applied to our country all over the world as well. Statistics indicate that the overwhelming majority of the Netherlands still belongs to him. These reports are not coming from the outside, but the heads of families themselves provide the figures in a census. People themselves officially reported that they have been baptized and belong to Christ. Admittedly, the family heads did not report anything personal about their faith or the faith of those they represent, but they did report belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Lutheran Churches, and so on. And by reporting this, they were showing that they wanted to be considered as officially belonging to them. Virtually without any exceptions, all of these churches statutorily acknowledge that they confess and honor Christ as King. Everyone knows that this is the case for the Reformed Churches. It is just as certain with respect to the Roman Catholic Church. And no matter how one wiggles and squirms, the large Dutch Reformed Church still recognizes no official confession other than the Confession of Guido de Brès, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, in which Christ's kingship is clearly recognized.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, if we do not go by personal relationship but by official numbers and use the official documents as our basis, the entire population of the Netherlands—with the exception of a tiny three percent—officially counted itself as belonging and wanting to belong to those Christian churches that fly the banner of Christ's kingship in their official confession.

But if you now contrast those numbers with the painful reality, where can you find officially in our country or in its leading circles even a small remnant of homage for Christ as our King?

§ 2 We do admittedly find a remnant in the recognition of Sunday as a special day and in the celebration of the commonly acknowledged Christian holidays. Not Friday, as with Islam, or Saturday, as among the Jews, but the first day of the week is considered the day of rest. Even those who have in fact broken entirely with Christianity insist—for the sake of the lower working class—on a weekly day of rest and are in favor of Sunday being that day. Sunday is the day of Christianity, hallowed by Christ's

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2. Guido de Brès was the principal author of the Belgic Confession (1561), one of the Three Forms of Unity along with the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) and Canons of Dort (1618–19), honored by churches in the continental Reformed tradition. It was so named because it originated in the Southern Netherlands, now known as Belgium.

resurrection from the dead. The same is true of the Christian holidays. The Puritans in Scotland wanted to do away with these holidays, not out of faithlessness to Christ but out of their excessive spiritual fervor. Quakers and other sectarians likewise drift away on that current of overly excited spiritualism. But in national life, the Christian holidays managed to hold their place, in spite of a certain amount of protest against maintaining the first and especially the second day following Pentecost as holidays. However, in the lives of most people as well as in an official sense, 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 are the days that, together with Good Friday as a day of commemoration, break up the normal course of daily life. They are recognized by the government in matters of law, policy, and administration. On the face of it, this fact is of little importance; nevertheless, the official character of these holidays lends it some weight. One could hardly say that Christ is, through this, really receiving the homage that is due to him. But this circumstance does prove that the Christian tradition is so deeply rooted in the country's life that, just as with the census figures, the Christian character of our nation comes to expression in at least a nominal way.

In the second place, something of that Christian tradition is officially embedded in our Education Law,<sup>3</sup> which calls for children to be raised in not only social but also Christian virtues—although already at this point the definition changes. It is a historical fact that the Law was intended to reduce Christianity to a purely ethical factor, consciously severed from the trunk of our faith in Christ as our King. Virtues were placed in the foreground, and it was at most acknowledged that the Christian standard for ethical life recommended itself highly. However, what *Christian* virtues might be in distinction from *social* virtues was not even indicated. Soon the "Christian" was absorbed entirely into the social, and in many schools a system of social virtues was established on a foundation that *contrasted* with Christianity far more than it was built on faith in Christ.

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3. In 1857, the Dutch Parliament passed a law requiring state schools to educate students in both general Christian and social virtues. Some were convinced that this aided and abetted growing religious liberalism in the Netherlands, fueling an initiative, under the leadership of Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-76), that led to the eventual founding of Christian schools free of state influence. See Jan Bank et al., *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, vol. 3: 1900: *The Age of Bourgeois Culture* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2004), 328.

As a result, those schools were avoided precisely by those who continued to embrace the kingship of Christ. Instead they became the Lost City of Gold (El Dorado) for the part of the population that had wandered away from Christ in order finally to seek shelter in the tents of skepticism and Social Democracy.

This all but exhausts what still reminds us, at least on an official level, of the Christian character of the state. Although there are a number of countries where even Parliament is still opened with prayer in the name of Jesus, in our States General no prayer is held at the opening of a session. The [annual] throne speech still refers to “God’s blessing,” but in a vague formulation that even ministers who have declared themselves atheists do not find objectionable.<sup>4</sup> No thought is given to laying one’s hand on the Gospel when swearing oaths. If someone dares to refer to the Christian foundations of our nation’s life as much as a single time in an official address, it always arouses protest. Even a purely historical reference to groundwork of our national character has at times been found offensive. And where in an official context a certain weak recognition of the Christian element can still be found, it is never more than formal and traditional without any trace at all of the recognition of Christ as God’s anointed King.

§ 3 Are things any different or better when we leave the official terrain and continue our examination in the public square?

There are three groups in our society. The first is composed of those who find refuge in quiet and oblivion; the second consists of those who do participate in the broader national life, yet without setting the tone; finally, there is a small, yet highly influential group that is always in the foreground, speaks the supreme word in all matters, takes leadership in every field, and is said, both here and abroad, to represent the Dutch spirit.

Though few in number, this highly intellectual circle sets the tone for public opinion; the second, broader stratum has its say in the exchanges and markets, but involves itself less in public life; while the by far most

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4. Similar to the annual State of the Union address delivered by presidents to the United States Congress, the throne speech is delivered annually by the reigning monarch to a joint session of the Dutch Senate and House of Representatives gathered in The Hague. The speech is a statement of policy for the coming parliamentary session, and often contains references to God and the need for his blessing upon the nation.

populous lowest stratum devotes itself almost entirely to home life, the office, and small business.

The leading circle, though small, includes professors at state and local universities and at the technological college;<sup>5</sup> those who teach at the *gymnasium* and advanced high school level; writers in the public press; public servants; artists and art critics; members of the States General, as well as statesmen more broadly defined; CEOs of large corporations; keynote speakers at meetings—in short, it is made up of all those who on account of their position or talent stand in the foreground of public life.

Is this tone-setting group inspired in word and deed by the kingship of Christ in a way that compares even closely with the Muslim faith, where even the most aberrant continue to call out for Muhammad with one voice? Does public life show you that maintaining Christ's name is what pushes and drives each and every representative of our national life in this influential circle? Do you notice even a general indignation when the name of Christ as our King is disparaged? Do you feel that in the public square of our Christian nation the honor of Christ weighs upon each and every heart? Do you get the sense that, whatever comes our way, the life of our nation, which arose from Christian action and still finds its firmest root in Christ, may never be torn away from Christ, but must always find its power-renewing concentration in him? Is the loyalty there that still faithfully and courageously clings to Christ, despite deviation and differences, and will not ever allow the deep significance of his holy name for us as a nation and as a people to be diminished?

Regrettably, this is not the case at all!

§ 4

Even though Christian parties are undertaking powerful actions to defend Christ's honor, the circle that continues to this very day to set the tone for public life no longer calls out for the kingship of God's anointed King in any arena whatsoever. Not only has that ardor disappeared, but even the recognition that there is cause for such ardor has worn away. Every Islamic nation still takes pride in its prophet, but in our Christian country it is instead the silence about and resistance to the divinely anointed King that determines public opinion.

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5. Dutch, *Technische Hoogeschool*. Historically, a technical college in the Netherlands provided industrial vocational technical training for those entering the fields of engineering, electronics, mechanics, and technology.

One will still hear people acknowledge, at least when they for whatever reason cannot not mention Jesus, that he evidenced a higher and more refined religious consciousness than did such founders of world religions as Confucius, Buddha, and Muhammad. They are not disinclined to allow Jesus the highest place of honor among the religious geniuses. As a human being, the Rabbi of Nazareth is thus indeed spoken of with a certain amount of respect. We are not yet at Voltaire's *écrasez l'infâme*.<sup>6</sup> There is likewise a general recognition that Christian ethics are to be preferred. But in public life there is no regard whatsoever for Jesus' kingship, and people in fact no longer know anything about it. And however high the esteem may be for Jesus' religious and ethical consciousness, no one hesitates to declare that there exists a greater religious and ethical consciousness than was found in him. People are already recommending it to us.

This partial veneration of Christ as an ethical teacher is found especially in the limited circle of those under the care of modernist preachers—men, that is, who must more or less still speak *ex officio* about Christ. But as a rule you will no longer find even this in that leading circle. There you are more likely to come upon a harsh reality that is so independent of all Christian tradition that people are simply silent regarding Christ. Nothing in their heart inclines them to him. In their self-satisfaction, people no longer see any reason to broach the subject. Their entire being and most of their thinking goes on without him. Jesus no longer has a place in their lifeview. They are almost completely dead to Christ. In their scholarship, art, literature, and press, you find next to nothing left of a holy desire to feel rich in Christ, to look up to him in wonder, and to find strength in honoring Christ. What then would those in this public circle feel for Christ as the King anointed by God? They can, for the most part, no longer even conceive or understand what it means to honor Christ as our King.

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6. Voltaire was the assumed name of François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778). The phrase *écrasez l'infâme* means “crush the infamous.” For Voltaire, this phrase referred to the abuses of the people by the royalty and the clergy, but especially to the superstitions taught by the clergy. This was expressed in one of his most famous quotes: “Superstition sets the whole world in flames; philosophy quenches them.” See Geoffrey Parrinder, *The Routledge Dictionary of Religious and Spiritual Quotations* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 24. Voltaire's commitment to atheism and deism prompted his lifelong attacks against every institution and belief associated with religion. For a more detailed account, see Jim Herrick, *Against the Faith: Essays on Deists, Skeptics, and Atheists* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1985).

And indeed, there is still more. Christ was “appointed for the fall and rising of many” [Luke 2:34]. People can evade and avoid him and to attempt to silence him completely, but in history, in the life of the nation, and in reality, they nevertheless come into contact with Christ repeatedly.

There are still people who confess Christ. In history, one is time and again confronted with great events that revolved around the honor of Golgotha’s cross. Even in today’s literature, press, and politics one confronts thorny issues that are in some way tied up with Christ, with those who confess him, or with his importance in the past. There is the church-state relationship; the penetrating question of education; the issue of universities; the matter of elections and of government appointments. There are also great religious and ethical problems that no one can begin to address without confronting the one Name that has so decisively influenced these matters for eighteen centuries. Both in the Netherlands and elsewhere, one is confronted with these issues. They appear to be more and more thorny and difficult to resolve. For that reason, many in this circle are unwillingly forced in spite of themselves to disclose how they feel about Jesus.

What does this bring to light? What comes out? What is it that moves these leading minds? What else but a deep-seated aversion to God’s entire special revelation—revulsion for every part of the confession that has come to us as doctrine from that special revelation! There is no mention of the Trinity, of God revealed in the flesh, and of salvation through the blood of the cross. If God himself testifies in Psalm 2:[6], “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill,” a smile of unbelief forms on their lips. And if some still dare to defend the cause of Christ’s honor as our King, then no weapon of scorn, contempt, mockery, and derision is spared to try to break their influence, stifle their speech, and dampen the courage of their faith. An enmity is expressed that does not refrain or back down from anything. It never rests until the footstool of Christ as God’s anointed King has been overturned and crushed.

In this circle there may well be noble people who disapprove of such unholy action and who judge that the freedom they desire for themselves should be given also to those who confess Christ. However, what these more philosophical and calmer opponents have in common with their wild and harsh counterparts is that they look down with a certain pity on the backwardness of believers. They see Christianity as an outdated point of view that they themselves have outgrown. They see those who continue to hold

to such an outdated Christianity as lagging in their development and expect that, as long as the process continues consistently, all that is now called orthodox or swears by orthodoxy will ascend to a higher view and forever abandon that illusion of the Christ in which they once dwelled. In America and England, the situation is still different. In Germany, the population has not come this far, either. In Roman Catholic countries such as Belgium, Italy, and Spain, one still finds a somewhat different state of affairs. In our country, however, by far the greatest majority of leaders in the public square have no respect even for historic Christianity anymore. Just as in France, an unsparing spirit more and more thrashes about as it tries to convert Christianity into modernism, simply hushes it up, or else sets itself tooth and nail against all that is still called Christian by virtue of the history of the past centuries.

It is thus no exaggeration, but an incontrovertible naked truth, that no voice raises itself in the circle of our leaders on behalf of Christ as our divinely anointed King. Just look at the mainstream press and literature. See what scholarship produces. Come to lectures, attend meetings, and listen to conversation—you will hear almost nothing about Jesus, and where his name is mentioned, no call is sounded on behalf of Christ as the King given to us by God.

This may have struck and bothered you in your own country, and yet you will never be as painfully impressed by it as when you spend some time in Islamic countries.

There you will find calls for Muhammad as prophet in all social ranks and classes. Indeed, even here a weakening in the orthodoxy of Islam may be detected. Also there you will notice a drop-off in religious life. Especially in Europeanized circles you will observe an indifference to Islamic rituals and ceremonial regulations, at least when people are on their own. But in the public sphere and in private conversation with Christians, there is an unflagging zeal to stand up for Muhammad's honor and to exalt him as the prophet given by God.

By contrast, you encounter in our Christian nations a lukewarm indifference, a relaxing of the spirits, and indeed an aversion to what has been revealed in Christ, so that in our public life no spark of enthusiasm can so much as flicker on behalf of Christ as our God-given King. Are you not confronted then with a raw reality that cuts and wounds you in your very soul?



# DARKENING IN THE CHURCH

*Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!*

PSALM 149:2

Even if almost none in those leading groups whose spirit is governed by the spirit of the age call out for Christ as our King anymore, you would think that at least among those who confess Christ a call would resound day and night for the majesty of our Lord.

§ 1

Yet disappointment awaits us here, too, and you find a deafening silence where you first expected to find joyful exultation from the lips of all.

There is, let it be understood, no lack of reverence for Jesus as our Messiah among those who confess his holy name. Such praise more than anything else will overwhelm you; all the same, it is not this subject with which we now intend to deal. At this point, we want to speak about Christ's *kingship*, the throne from which he rules, and the crown of purest gold that has been placed upon his head. We thus raise an insuperable complaint because not only outside of the forecourt, but even in the very holy place, the recollection of Christ's kingship has waned and the inspiration for it has nearly died out.

In their unceasing worship, in their never-ending praise, and in their readiness to stand in service for him who is clothed with glory and majesty at God's right hand, the angels of God understand that he who, as our High

Priest, gave himself as a sacrifice to reconcile us to God is “most highly exalted” exactly for this self-sacrifice; nor do they ever forget that he has been given “a name that is above every name” so that every knee should bow before him and every tongue sing to honor him [see Phil 2:9–11]. But here on earth there is only a vague awareness of the majesty of the Lord’s kingship—not that anyone even thinks of denying it, of course. Far from it! That majesty continually comes to us from God’s Holy Word. We confess it in our confession of faith. We teach it to our children from the Catechism. A number of songs popular in our midst also render it due homage. In their sermons, our preachers likewise do not fail (at times) to speak of it. Who of us would not earnestly and even heatedly defend the kingship of Christ when it is intentionally attacked?

§ 2 While we gratefully recognize this, it is not at all what we really mean. Even the people on Madura know that our queen rules the Dutch Indies.<sup>1</sup> On Java they acknowledge it, too, and tell it to their children. When the queen’s authority is assailed and our troops are mustered in order to restore it, the Madurese and Javanese courageously fight alongside us and not infrequently give up their lives.

But if you now compare the respect for royal authority on Java with the spiritedness and enthusiasm with which the entire nation welcomes the queen in springtime at her entry into the capital of the Netherlands, you will feel, taste, and perceive that this is like day and night, like joyful cheering and detachment, like a driven national spirit and resigned compliance.

Should not holy enthusiasm for our King on high, anointed by God, far surpass any national ardor for even the best of all earthly kings in spirit and in exalted tone and in fire set ablaze by the Holy Spirit? And if by this natural demand you measure the zeal for the majesty of our heavenly King even among believers, do you not come to the painful realization that we have fallen short in our love?

Indeed, there is zeal for the cause of Christ. Zeal burns everywhere, albeit with different levels of intensity, to recruit for Christ, to extend blessing in the name of Jesus, and through his power to be surpassed by none in dedication and acts of mercy.

All the same, this is to seek the Messiah, to proclaim the Savior, to praise and commend the Redeemer, the Surety, the Atoner of sinners. Is this the

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1. Madura is an Indonesian island off the northeastern coast of Java. In 1743, sovereignty over this island was given by treaty to the Dutch.

same thing as honoring his *kingship*? Do you not feel the deep difference that runs between the two? Do they not widely diverge?

To seek salvation as soon as that painful sense of being lost is awakened in you. To take refuge in the Messiah as soon as you abandon the false appearance of imagined holiness and see your need for salvation. To seek atonement in the Lamb of God who carries the sins of the world as soon as sin begins to oppress your soul with its deadly weight. Yes, to rejoice and exult in the salvation you have received as soon as you feel deep in your soul that you are a child of your God, sprinkled with the blood of atonement—where else can you locate the cause, desire, and motivation for all of this than in a holy egotism? In all these things it is a love for yourself that drives you.

This is not a mistaken self-love. On the contrary, your self-love was mistaken as long as you kept your distance from your Messiah, stood on your own, and sought to satisfy your ideals in the world. All the same, that self-love is and remains a desire and drive to be snatched from the waters of perdition now that you recognize that it is as though you are drowning. You were sick, and you came to the only Physician. You felt yourself sinking away under the wrath of the Holy One, and you clung to the hem of your Messiah's garment in order to be saved from the depths of destruction. You saw everlasting death before your eyes, and in faith you bound yourself onto the one who overcame death through life. O, how wonderful that is, and the angels of God rejoiced over you! Yet, however earnestly and piously this may be understood, it is still all a matter of your own salvation, atonement, and bliss. Everything revolved around you, your salvation, your entrance into eternal life. Your Messiah in all of this was *about you and for you*. But that you need to be, exist, and live *about and for Jesus* was not yet part of the picture.

Even if things progressed and Christ's love aroused in you a burning love for him who loved you so deeply; even if thanksgiving welled up in your heart and you broke out in a song of praise and worship; indeed, even if for Jesus' sake you continued to fight against sin and sacrificed your money, possessions, strength, time, energy, and devotion in the work of Christian love—even then, all of these things stand on the same line with the feeling of thanks and obligation you have toward a doctor who raised you up from a deadly illness, with the thanks and obligation you feel toward someone who saved you from drowning. It is and remains a feeling that flows from your soul because *you* have been saved, *you* have

§ 3

been freed, and good has been done to *you*. In a strict sense, it remains the sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving, and honor to Jesus as your only *High Priest*. But is your *King* not entirely different, and is he not much more than the Priest who atones for you?

The same applies when you draw and call others to the Messiah. A mother who draws her child to Jesus from an early age and tries to instill in him or her a boundless devotion for Jesus is concerned first of all to lead that child to enjoy salvation and to partake of the heavenly inheritance. Those who call the unrepentant in their neighborhood and from among their circle of relatives and friends to Jesus, and plead with them to turn to Christ, are concerned first and foremost with their salvation. Similarly, those who go out to seek the lost, to bring light into their darkness, and to save them from perdition, aim at adding them and at being themselves a means in God's hand to bring them from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of the Son of God.

Everything directed at finding, drawing, and adding those who are lost points to Jesus as the instrument of salvation—to Jesus as the means to redemption, salvation, the healing of diseases, the anointing of wounds, the sanctification of souls, and the obtaining of eternal life. What drives and animates is consistently a love for those who are lost. It is a matter of knowing that the Physician is there and that the medicine that can save from death stands ready. And now, because you see that there are so many who do not know the Physician and who have never put the holy medicine to their lips, you set that Physician with his eternal love and the unfailing power of his saving grace before their eyes and bring that medicine to their lips so that they may drink deeply from it and be saved by it. Yet what does bringing people under Jesus' high priestly grace have to do with honoring his kingship?

We must point out that we do not make this observation as if there lies hidden in all these things something that is less good and noble, too egotistical, or too altruistic. If that holy selfishness and noble egoism are not at work in you, you debase yourself and bring dishonor to your God as your Creator. If you feel no thirst in yourself to raise up those who are lost, you likewise neglect how you are connected to your fellow creatures. Of course, Christ was also anointed as our eternal High Priest, and those who have no desire to be impressed by the exaltedness of his priesthood will never be able to honor and worship him as King. But even if the honor of Christ as our High Priest cannot be neglected for even an instant,

God's Holy Word does make a distinction here and tells you deliberately and emphatically that God anointed him not only as High Priest, but also as our eternal King. How then can you continue to harbor the illusion that, as long as you honor Jesus as High Priest, the honor of the King may leave you indifferent?

What has been said above applies all the more to those who go no further than Jesus as Prophet. Their number is unfortunately constantly increasing. Such (in essence) half-believers could be excluded from the circle of true believers, but we will not do this. Since thousands upon thousands refuse to honor the greatest Prophet and Teacher in Jesus and place their own learning above the Word of him who was given to us by God as the revelation of the greatest wisdom, it is much more fitting that we joyfully take into account those who, in their exasperation with the false wisdom the world offers, at least still defend Jesus as our greatest Prophet. To go no further is indeed to weaken our confession most sinfully, to dislodge the cross, to be blind to what must always be the center and core of our holy confession. However, the people in this group still take up Jesus' cause—even if for no more than one third of the whole truth—and of them, too, the following words hold true: "Do not despise them. Whoever is not against him is for him" [see Luke 9:50]. Especially in times when faith is numb and emotions are paralyzed, we should be thankful to recognize this witness for Jesus, even if we feel that witness to be too faint and even if those who make it refuse to follow us all the way.

§ 4

For that reason, we must also make room in our present discussion for those who, in their coldness to the deep mystery of divine justification, refuse to warm their hearts by the High Priest's heart, expecting all the strength they need from the Word that went out with power from Jesus' lips. [We must make room] for those who delight in his high ethical ideal and raise themselves up by this ideal in order to enter into communion with their God through Jesus' unique religious consciousness. This group of people is to be included as long as they—and this condition cannot be discarded!—in honoring Christ as our High Priest do not trace the elevated character of his ethical-religious revelation back to a spark of genius in him, explaining it on the basis of his elevated status among other human beings. They must consciously and resolutely confess that he is God revealed in the flesh, and [they must confess] that for that reason the full, greatest, absolute, and unsurpassable revelation of God has been given to us in him. If Thomas' confession ("My Lord and my God!" [John 20:28])

falls silent, every confession will drop lifeless to the ground, all communion with believers will be undone, and every call for the Greatest Prophet will turn into a ready lie.

§ 5 Given this proviso and the ensuing spiritual struggle, it is undoubtedly very important that there still is a broad circle in which at least the divinity of Christ is honored, the comprehensive reach of his revelation is still resolutely confessed with sincerity, and, countering the errors of our times, the ethical and religious relevancy of the gospel is defended with conviction. Those who swear by the Word of the Messiah may still be at quite a distance, but they are no longer that far from the Kingdom of God. If the greatest Prophet is only known better and understood more intimately in his Word, he automatically leads to the only High Priest.

But as thankful as we may be that, also in these circles, a warm plea is often made for the excellency of the gospel, as highly as we value these voices and do not hesitate to admit that many of those who have found the High Priest come up short in showing honor to Jesus as the Highest Prophet, still none of these things has anything to do with the honor due to Christ as the King anointed by God. The fact remains that, in this more reflective group of people, the real and warm-hearted jubilation for Jesus as our King unfortunately hardly ever arises.

§ 6 It is also something else to recognize and honor Jesus as the Head of the body, even though this can come close to the recognition of him as King. The Head of the body is a mystical-organic concept, and it points to the organic communion of those who are one in faith, hope, and love. Every communion can be compared with a body, and the image of the body right away makes us think of the image of the head.

For this reason, many of those who have an eye for the mystical life, who seek communion with God's saints, and who experience in that communion the unifying and inspiring work of Christ are especially glad to honor Christ as the Head of the church. They feel and notice through this communion that Christ exercises a guiding influence. Regrettably, this conviction is all too often desecrated by comparing it with philosophical theories. It thereby loses the gold dust from its wings. Yet, even where this has not happened and Christ's honor as Head of the church continues to be understood in a purely mystical fashion, it is something entirely

different from his kingship. An earthly prince like William the Silent<sup>2</sup> can be the head of his nation temporarily in that he thinks on its behalf, injects the nation with ardor and courage, and leads it to victory, but these things still do not as such make him a king.

The recognition of Jesus as Head of the church is expressed in an even weaker way when that headship is limited to his church, as was often done in the ancient opposition against the papacy. Not wanting to recognize anyone as Christ's governor on earth, many are inclined to retreat straightaway to Christ himself, to point to him alone, and to cover everything the church does with Jesus' name. But however much this does indeed come close to his kingship, limiting Christ to the churchly domain<sup>3</sup>—which in our circles has such a simple form—keeps one from seeing the majesty of him who as our King is seated at God's right hand. That limitation fails in every way to raise the soul up to the greatness of the majesty of Jesus' kingship. Indeed, the domain of the church is also included in his kingship, but the former reveals itself in such a deficient human form, in so small a field, with such elusive power, that it does not give rise to even the faintest hint of the majesty that shines in Christ's full kingship.

By now it should be clear why we complained that Jesus' kingship is not only being ignored, denied, and attacked in the outside world, but that the glory of his kingship is also waning inside all believing circles.

§ 7

People honor Christ as God revealed in the flesh; they kneel before him in worship; they swear by him as the Greatest Prophet; they approach him as the only High Priest; they let themselves be animated by him as the Head of the body; in church affairs [the legitimacy of] every act is deduced from him, and him alone; and the kingship of Christ in his eternal majesty and glory, too, is indeed confessed, recognized in the confessions, and even emphatically and earnestly defended over against anyone who tries to deny it. But confessing, not-denying, and even recognizing and

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2. William the Silent was one of the names given to William I, Prince of Orange (24 April 1533–10 July 1584; he is also known as William of Orange). William was the main leader of the Dutch revolt against the Spanish Habsburgs, marking the start of the Eighty Years' War, which resulted in the political independence of the United Provinces in 1648. William became Prince of Orange in 1544, founding the House of Orange-Nassau and becoming the ancestor of the monarchy in the Netherlands.

3. The Dutch word used for "domain" in this and the following sentence is "regiment," referring to an ordered and governed arena.

pleading for something, is altogether different from taking it up into the very existence of your soul and living out of it.

Precisely this last element is missing. We do not mean to say that this is the case for everyone. We make no judgment about anyone's personal position before his Messiah. To do this, you would have to know someone's innermost life—and who knows this for more than a number of one's closest friends? How many of you know this even of your own children or of yourselves? Our judgment can be based only on the expression, manifestation, and external activity of the Christian life. In making this judgment, we cannot keep silent about the fact that, in the Islamic world, a more powerful and persistent appeal is made on behalf of Muhammad the prophet than there is among us on behalf of Christ as our King whom God has anointed.

This weakens us and undermines our power, and above all it represents a failure to give to Jesus the all-surpassing honor that we owe our King as his subjects.