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The Speaking Christ in His Royal Office*

By LIC. THEOL. GOTTFRIED VOIGT

ONE might argue as to whether the doctrine of the threefold office of Christ is really usable for a comprehensive description of the work of Christ. There are expositions of Christian doctrine enough which do not follow this pattern at all. There are those who fear that this pattern may do violence to the content: the fullness of the Biblical proclamation concerning the office and the work of Christ may be lost if one seeks to reduce or confine the Biblical titles of honor applied to Christ and the Biblical designations of His office to the *triplex munus*. Among them is Werner Elert,¹ who is intent upon letting the Biblical proclamation speak in all its multiplicity. We follow Elert in his enumeration: Christ is, to be sure, called Prophet, but more often it is Master or Teacher; He is called Shepherd or Chief Shepherd, Lord, but also Apostle (Hebr. 3:1), Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1), Prince (Acts 5:31; Hebr. 2:10), Savior (John 4:42; 2 Tim. 1:10), and often Redeemer (Rom. 3:24), Liberator (Gal. 5:1), Peacemaker (Rom. 5:1); and He is the Second Adam (Rom. 5:12 ff.; 1 Cor. 15:20). Can we possibly distribute all these predicates among the three *munera*? If it is possible at all, Elert urges, it is possible only by a process of forcing and trimming—one may be reminded of the dancing shoes in the story of Cinderella—or by a process of

* This essay was presented at the Free Conference of American and European Theologians at Berlin-Spandau last summer. The general topic of the six-day conference was: "The Living Word of Christ and the Response of the Congregation." One day was devoted to the significance of Christ's threefold office in His relation to His Church. Cp. this journal, July, 1951, p. 515. Prof. Martin H. Franzmann has translated this essay for our journal.

reinterpretation which robs the passages of their individual color and flavor.

One point in Elert's criticism interests us particularly in connection with our topic; Elert contends that the doctrine of the *triplex munus* is a "classic example of unevangelical thinking" in that we approach the Person and the work of Christ from the Old Testament and understand Him in that light, instead of interpreting the prophecies by their fulfillment. It might, then, appear (we are pointing the thought specifically toward our topic) that there had been from of old a sharply defined, ready-made Royal Office, upon which Christ entered, so that a vacant office is "filled" by the Person of Christ. The very formulation of our topic should make clear that *that* can *not* be what we mean.

If we ignore Elert's warning, we run the risk of getting onto a wrong track. And yet we speak of the Royal Office of Christ. Not only because the topic assigned us demands it — one might justifiably do what Rousseau did in his prize essay, treat the topic by showing that the topic is wrongly formulated to begin with. We speak of the Royal Office of Christ because central utterances of Scripture force us to speak thus. "Christ" — that is in itself a royal title. The theologian's task consists in properly interpreting and defining what is said of Christ's kingship. I shall attempt to do that by taking a passage of Scripture for my motto, as it were; its content shall then be systematically developed (although we lay no claim to producing an exegesis after the manner of the schools).

Pilate therefore said unto Him: Art Thou a King, then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice.
John 18:37.

It seems to me that my task is (1) to make clear in what sense the Bible speaks of the Royal Office of Christ and then (2) to inquire, in view of the general topic of our meeting, how the kingship of Christ is actualized just in His words.

I

Pilate asks: "Art thou a King, *then?*"² Pilate cannot recognize the king in this accused man; there is in Him none of the qualities that Pilate has known or observed in kings. Everyone that sees

Christ before him must feel as Pilate did. All appearance is against the charge; Jesus is not pretender to a throne; He is no revolutionary either who allows His followers to exalt Him to a throne (John 6:15). He does not allow His servants to fight for Him (John 18:36). To a Roman's eyes this "King" has no dangerous look. And if Christ nevertheless confesses to being a king, that can only mean that He is King after a manner wholly new. For it is not only Pilate, the representative of the Roman Imperium, who sees nothing royal in Christ. The Jews were offended at Christ just because he did not fit *their* conceptions of royal power and majesty. *In the Person and work of Christ the Old Testament predictions concerning the coming King are both fulfilled and shattered (zugleich erfüllt und zersprengt)*. When Wilhelm Vischer³ says that the Old Testament tells us *what* the Christ is, while the New Testament tells us *who* He is, he is emphasizing only one aspect of the matter; he is overlooking the fact that along with the continuity between prophecy and fulfillment there becomes apparent also a discontinuity, a discontinuity which, in view of the unique and incomparable character of what took place when Christ came, ought not surprise us. An illustration: one might think of the fulfillment of the Old Testament expectation of a king as taking place in the royal palace, at the "right hand" of God, on the Temple hill; it is characteristic and significant that Jesus is the awaited King and yet does *not* enter into this house that is, so to speak, ready for Him. An astronomer can calculate an eclipse of the moon far in advance and can in advance describe it in all its details, as if it were already before his eyes; the way and manner of Christ's kingship *cannot* be so predicted on the basis of Old Testament prophecy.

Ought we not, then, in order to avoid falling prey to false conceptions, ignore the prophecies entirely and look only at the fulfillment? Ought we not avoid the misleading concept of "kingship" at the outset? In that case we could not speak of Christ's work at all. What Christ was and did has no analogy in experience. All our descriptions of Him, however, can only take analogy as their point of departure (unless, of course, we confine ourselves to the *via negationis*). There is no formula, no concept, that perfectly fits the fact. We must therefore in any case say both: "fulfilled" and "shattered."

We shall attempt to make this clear by a discussion of a number of key concepts that are used to express the kingship of Christ. The Bible speaks of the Kingdom of God, of God's "royal reign." We are here dealing, no doubt, with one of the key concepts of the New Testament proclamation. Now, even Judaism was already living in expectation of the *malkuth Jabwe*. Two chief lines are traceable in this expectation of the Kingdom of God: one was the hope of a cosmic catastrophe in which God would take up His power and reign. Thus the Enthronement Psalms sing of it (Psalms 47; 93; 97; Is. 52:7). It is thus that the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah pictures it in that Prophet's first, eschatological period;⁴ God Himself will enter His holy city at the head of His people. — But there is also another conception of the Kingdom of God. Judaism spoke of the possibility and the necessity of "taking upon oneself" the Kingdom of God. This is done by subjecting oneself to the Law of God. According to Rabbinical teaching, this meant human performance, a "making good" on the part of man; all depended upon what man did: If a single Sabbath is perfectly kept, the Kingdom of God is come! But until that day comes, it is the business of each individual to take upon his shoulders the "yoke" of the Kingdom. — Jesus takes up both conceptions. He can use them. For in both cases the Kingdom of God is the domain in which God's will is done. God is once more acknowledged Lord, the King, God Himself! What is new in the proclamation of Jesus is this: In His own Person, in Jesus, the Kingdom of God is come. He is, as Origen has strikingly put it, the "Autobasileia." Where men believe on Him, there the prince of this world is stripped of his power. He is still there, but he can do nothing; the "handwriting . . . that was against us" has been nailed to the Cross, and our oppressors, the invisible powers, are made a show of openly in the triumphal procession of God (Col. 2:14 f.). Thus God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Let us not overlook this: by the Cross, Christ became our Lord. Strange, the way in which God's royal reign is realized!

A second line of royal expectation runs through the Bible, a line not immediately reconcilable with the first: the Messianic hope. We are speaking of the Messianic hope of the Old Testament, as

the Old Testament itself understands it. And here we must note: the expected King, the Anointed One, is in this case not God Himself but One who bears a mandate from God. The Messiah is a man! The Psalms of the King are to be so understood (2; 21; 45; 72; 110); the person dealt with in them is in the first instance always the ruling king of Jerusalem. He is by descent a Davidid, and He is from the moment that He ascends His throne the beloved Son of God (Ps. 2:7). We shall do well not to hide from ourselves the historical sense of these Messianic passages. For only so shall we be in a position to understand the significance of the fact that, as time goes on, it is no longer any particular king of the dynasty that is thought of; rather *the* king is the object of hope and expectation. We see how within the Old Testament itself the politically-colored Messianic hope is being shattered — not shattered by blows from without but broken from within, as a bud breaks open: what is promised to David is something that can be said of no regime that lives by political forces only, namely, the *eternal* continuance of his seed (2 Sam. 7:13, 16). But this Messianic analogy is even more radically transmuted when Christ comes. In Him there remains no vestige of the political. His opponents were still of the opinion that He would either have to conceive of His office as a political one and become a Messianic revolutionary or give up His Messianic claim altogether. (This alternative obviously is the background to the question of Matt. 22:17.) Jesus' answer constitutes His renunciation of political Messianism and is at the same time the proclamation of God's claim to that royal dominion which it is the office of Jesus to realize or actualize. And so there is justification for the question: "Art Thou He that should come?" (Matt. 11:3.) The Baptist in his question has used the esoteric name for the expected Messiah. Jesus' answer is veiled, but it is yes. How great the disparity between the expectation and the fulfillment! We shall do well not to conceal from ourselves the fact that the original conception of the Messiah was wholly political; only then do we understand how Christ is the *telos* — end and fulfillment! — of political Messianism.

Kyrios, another of the titles of honor of Christ, is less fruitful for our investigation. Here three lines converge. *Kyrios* is, first and foremost (following the usage of the LXX), simply the translation

of the name *Jahwe*; the Old Testament statements regarding God are simply transferred to Christ, for in the man Jesus the whole fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. Secondly, the title *kyrios* is derived from the many religions of the Hellenistic world: the gods of pagan cults were called *kyrios*. Christ belongs in the place which the pagans have given to their gods; He in all that He does fulfills and surpasses all pagan longing and all pagan hopes. And a third line of derivation can be traced: the imperial cult. What the emperor arrogates to Himself belongs to Christ as of right: He is the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings. In this last sense, then, in clear and conscious antithesis to the arrogated divinity of the emperor, Christ is confessed as God and King.

The title *Shepherd*, furthermore, points to the kingship of Jesus. Here again it is true: the Old Testament idea is both fulfilled and shattered. One must see that both are true. It would seem that Elert has seen only the latter aspect of the matter:⁵ "What gives us the right," he asks, "to understand the titles 'Chief Shepherd' (1 Peter 5:4) or 'the great Shepherd of the sheep' (Hebr. 13:20) as descriptive of His 'royal office'? . . . What He Himself intended has nothing to do with the functions of a King." We ought not to forget: the word *ra'ah* means, among other things, to *shepherd* the people (e. g., 2 Sam. 5:2; 7:7; Jer. 23:2 ff.; Ps. 78:71), and the word is applied to God in the same sense (Psalm 23). "The office of shepherd as a figure for royal dominion is widespread throughout the Near East and is applied, often in stereotyped forms, to both gods and kings."⁶ It seems to me that this designation of royalty is especially adapted to the *munus regium* of Christ, because it emphasized that aspect of royal dominion with which His office is most closely concerned. Even so it must needs be radically transformed, like the rest of the old conceptions. In so far Elert is right. What John 10:1 ff. says of Jesus' shepherd's office is just as new and unheard-of as what is said in John 13:1 ff. concerning a lordship which consists entirely in serving.

We shall discuss one more title of office; again our investigation leads us in the same direction and to a similar goal. Jesus calls Himself *Son of Man*. Here again royal dignity is thought of. In Daniel 7 the appearance of the Son of Man concludes and puts an end to the series of world empires. The Ancient of Days gives

Him "dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. 7:14.) — But at the same time this self-designation expresses all the lowliness and humility of Christ: He is only a son of man in the sense of Ps. 8:4. Until His return amid the clouds of heaven, His kingdom will be a kingdom concealed in weakness.

Breaking off the discussion of Jesus' titles of royal dignity, we hear the clear testimony of the New Testament: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33). *Ephesians* gives the kingship of Jesus universal dimensions (1:20 ff.): God has set Christ "at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet." We now understand Jesus' answer before Pilate: "Thou sayest that I am a king." We do not forget that "King" has acquired a new content through Christ, that His work dare not be interpreted according to current conceptions of what constitutes a king; rather the inverse is true: "King" is to be interpreted by, its sense is determined by, what happened when Christ came. Is not this an unallowable procedure, to take the ancient prophecies, hopes, and ideas and thus invert and transform them? Is it right to speak of kingship when one knows very well that one is using the word in a sense completely different from that intended by all previous users of the word? I do not so view the matter. Rather, the case of "King" is exactly like that of "Father." Is it merely the language of comparison (and therefore limping language) when we call God "Father"? Ought we not constantly remind ourselves that we can call God "Father" only in a transferred sense? Exactly the reverse is true. "All the dignity of the idea of fatherhood derives from God" (Eph. 3:15). In the full sense God is the Father, and all human fathers are "fathers" only in a derived sense; they have a borrowed fatherhood. Not the reverse! It can hardly be accidental that we must argue along exactly the same lines in regard to royal dignity; here again we have to do

with the dignity of government in the sense of the Fourth Commandment. "King" in the full sense can be said only of God, and every earthly king is king only in so far as God's peculiar dignity is bestowed upon him. This is, at any rate, the view that the Bible takes. In Israel no one but God was originally king. When the people want to wrest a king from Him, God expresses the thought in unmistakable terms: "They have . . . rejected Me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:7). The fact that the king of Israel nevertheless is the "anointed" of the Lord (1 Sam. 10:1) does not cancel out the first fact. *Human kingship is, then, only the image of God's kingship.* When we say we are speaking of kingship in a transferred sense, that does not hold for the kingship of Christ, but only for whatever else is called or claims to be kingship. But when Christ becomes King, He is restoring the kingship of God.

At this point we ought not to pass over in silence the question: Wherein does the kingship of Christ differ from that of all earthly-human lords? All worldly government rules by law and by compulsion; Christ's kingship consists in His devoting Himself in love to service and to sacrifice. Law and Gospel — here again they are the key to an understanding of the facts. In the kingdom of Christ things are not as they are in the domain of earthly princes and overlords (Matt. 20:25 ff.). The Law is not God's first word; it "entered" (Rom. 5:20);⁷ it does not, therefore, have the last word either. This is in substantiation of the previous assertion, when we maintained that Christ's being the end of the Law is the exact and direct application of the Law.

In employing the formula "fulfilled and at the same time shattered" we have not yet said everything. There is yet another reason why the Lord, in fulfilling Old Testament prophecies, at the same time transforms them and gives them another sense: He is taking up different, originally unconnected features or strands of Old Testament expectation and is combining them into a higher unity. The best-known example is the way in which He claims Isaiah 53 for Himself and His work, how He combines this thread and intertwines it with other threads of the prophetic proclamation. *In Jesus Christ the various lines of Messianic expectation converge.* Whoever is too quick about systematizing the utterances of the Old Testa-

ment, whoever does not give the "manifold and multiform" of Heb. 1:1 its due weight and instead puts all the utterances of Scripture on one plane, as it were, is obstructing his own way to an understanding and appreciation of the fact that in Christ, and only in Christ, *all* lines converge, that Christ is the Fulfiller of *all* hopes and longings, the Deliverer from *all* evil.

II

We have said that Christ in His work has shattered all previous conceptions of the office of a king and the office of the Messiah. We have in the main confined ourselves to showing how Christ's kingship is *not* to be understood. We must now emphasize the positive side more strongly. Our topic suggests that we approach and seek to understand the kingship of Christ by way of the theology of the Word. What says Christ? "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice." (John 18:37.) A *speaking* king! Perhaps that does not strike as so very strange in our century, when statesmen speak so much and make use of the word in all manner of forms in their activities. A superficial observer might opine that in our time the center of gravity in all political action is coming to lie more and more in the power of the word that moves the masses. But the speaking Christ is no propagandist. And, conversely, the growing importance of propaganda ought not blind us to the fact that propaganda cannot replace the exercise of power in a state; that propaganda is in itself a way of exercising power. But Jesus the King makes no use of power in that sense. *In establishing His kingdom He uses the Word exclusively.* Luther is right in his assertion: "*Tota vita et substantia ecclesiae est in verbo Dei.*"⁸ For it is thus that Christ works on us. His lordship, His kingship, is actualized in the Word and in no other way. Christ saw Himself confronted by the question whether He might not wish, after all, to make good His kingship in some other way. But that was Satan's threefold proposal: Make bread of stones! A very promising way certainly. And perhaps a not inconsiderable contribution to the solution of social problems, too. *Panem!* was the cry of the Roman people. *Circenses!* — Satan tempts Him to that also. Use God's miraculous power for a mad spectacle: the breakneck plunge from the pin-

nacle of the Temple would not have hurt Him. And people would have flocked round Him in a trice. May we use the word *imperium* to designate the third temptation? All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them at the price of an obeisance! Christ could have established an imperialistic kingship. But He did not let His servants fight for Him (John 18:36). And He eschewed the help of the twelve legions of angels (Matt. 26:53). Instead He goes the way of renunciation: He calls men into His kingdom by word. He actualizes His kingship by testifying to the truth.

He works by the Word. Here again we are at the crossroads. One might think that He rules by a word that *demand*s, by *Law*. Does not kingship mean that the demanding will of the ruler is done? Can one conceive of His government as anything but the activity of a legislator, a new Moses? But we must say no to this. *The Word of Jesus is essentially not Law, but Gospel*. Certainly Jesus proclaimed the Law, too, with an inexorableness and a consistency equaled by no other preacher of the Law. He confronts us with God's demanding will as with a steep that takes our breath away. He must do so. For His work is not to relativize or to annul the will of God, as if God were renouncing His right to lordship over man or were giving up His claim to obedience. What God demands is recognized. What the Law demands remains in force (Matt. 5:17 ff.). But at the same time Christ proclaims the Law in order to reduce it to an absurdity as a way of salvation. For that is the inevitable experience that comes to everyone in the domain of the Law: the Law's demands do not produce obedience, and so God's kingship is not actualized thereby. At best, man with his natural powers fulfills the will of God only "etlichermaszen," "utcunque."⁹ For the rest the Law only intensifies the impulse to rebellion. It is clear even from here that all human governance is but a weak and insufficient image of the kingship of God, which, when it "comes," is actualized, as we may now add, in a totally new way. In what way? We say Gospel, Good News. Which means, to formulate it in the light of our topic, that the will of the King is realized by the fact that the King Himself performs that will, that this will of the King is done *upon* us or to us and therefore finally is done *in* and *through* us.

Let us look at it from another point of view. *The kingship of*

Christ does not, as long as history continues, annul earthly kingship. Hence the existence of the two realms, side by side and interlocked. Christ's kingdom is not a kingdom of this world; Christ the King rules by *speaking* to His people. If this King were to use political means and political power, then His kingdom would conflict with the kingdoms of this world. But that He does not, and therefore His kingdom and the external order of this world are sundered from one another as the heaven is sundered from the earth. That does not by any means signify that He has abandoned this world or surrendered it, so that it becomes a domain in which God's will has nothing to say. There is no domain wherein God is not! Both domains, that at the left hand and that at the right hand of God, are *God's* domains. We recognize also the element of truth in Barth's doctrine of orders,¹⁰ when Barth says that the order of this world "does not lie outside the circle of Jesus Christ's dominion." Since the Triune God is Lord in both realms, the *regnum potentiae*, too, belongs to Christ. All power in heaven and in earth is given unto Him, and nothing can exempt itself from this power; the only question is: In how far does He make use of it? Karl Heim¹¹ employs a figure from the physical world to interpret these facts. The power of Christ is potential energy: the mass of snow still clings firmly to the steep slope and has not yet become an avalanche; the power latent in it has not yet been actualized. In any case we are here dealing with the *Deus absconditus*; the *regnum potentiae* is not accessible to our knowing. The fact remains: Christ is at work in the domain at the left hand of God, too. But with that we have not yet touched on what Luther is intent upon in his doctrine of the two realms. The distinction here made is not between a realm subject to God and a realm that is independent of Him; we are here dealing with a twofold relationship on the part of the one God to the world. The realms are divided accordingly as they are ruled by the Law or by the Gospel. At this point we cannot follow Barth in his *Christengemeinde und Buergergemeinde*: the distinction between Law and Gospel, upon which, on our understanding of the case, everything depends here, does not even occur in that writing, at least not *expressis verbis*. The *regnum Christi*, since it is actualized in the Word, is *sub cruce tectum*. Which means that it exists in secret. It does not come by observation, so that

one would need only to look toward it in order to determine that it is here or there (Luke 17:21). It has no boundaries that one could record on a map. It takes on no mundane form. No earthly constitution of things is *the* Christian one in an absolute sense. Therefore there are also no human possibilities, measures, or means for the establishment or organization of this kingdom. An evangelical law — that would be a *contradictio in adjecto*. Luther's insight holds true: one cannot govern the world with the Gospel. That does *not* mean: the will of God no longer holds in the mundane realm. The Church must proclaim that will *as Law*. That reason has its proper scope in the realm of mundane things holds true only because one can trust reason to recognize the will of God in matters of external order. But let us not overlook the fact that we are here remaining within the domain of Law! When we inquire into the kingship of Christ, however, we are inquiring into *salvation*; and salvation is found not where the Law is, but where the Gospel is. In matters mundane *man* acts, under God's mandate, to be sure, since there is no government that is not of God (Rom. 13:1), but still in such a way that his "free will," his natural capacity for *iustitia civilis* or *humana*, suffices.¹² But in the kingdom of Christ it is the Lord Himself who acts, and He alone. This kingdom is established without the works of the Law. For that very reason it is not a palpable reality, but remains hidden under the contradictory appearance of the cross; it is hidden under its opposite, its "Widerspiel," as Luther likes to call it. The "King" who stands before Pilate will be executed that very day, and yet — of His kingdom there shall be no end.

The significance of the Cross of Christ for the mode and manner of His kingship is seen not only in the fact that this royal rule of Christ's is concealed and therefore an object of faith — "*nondum revelatum est regnum Christi*" — ;¹³ its substance, too, is determined by the Cross. What does Jesus' Cross tell us? It tells us that His lordship does not consist in *κατακυριεύειν* (Matt. 20:25), but in ministry, in the devotion, the sacrifice, the surrender of His life. He champions us to the last drop of His blood — that is *His* royal right. And what happens today is not different from what happened in the days of His flesh. His decision to take the harder way (Man lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of

God!) was at the same time the beginning of the Via Dolorosa; it is no accident that Matt. 4:1-11 is the Gospel for Invocavit. Word and Cross belong together. The fact that He even today humbles Himself and condescends to deal with us in the proclaimed Word, that is His ministry, His service, His surrender of Himself to us. What happens in every church service is validly described by the words of Matt. 20:28: "For us!" — We must put it even more pointedly: We cannot live under Him in His kingdom as long as the "prince of this world" still has a claim upon us. We are sinners, that is, we have gone over to his side and are therefore forfeit to him. We shall have to belong to him as long as our guilt, our being guilty, establishes his claim upon us. Whoever has said *A*, must also say *B*, and spell through the entire alphabet. But — and here the priestly office and the royal office of Christ not only touch each other but intersect — Jesus' suffering and death cancels the debt and the guilt. Sin thereby loses its claim to dominion over us. The Word of forgiveness sets us free for God. The sinner, by the fact that he is accepted by God as he is, of His grace, is delivered from the power of darkness and is translated into the kingdom of Christ. *The justification of the sinner "sola fide" is the establishment of the royal reign of Christ.* Let us note how the Small Catechism establishes our right to a place in the kingdom of Christ: "that I might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom" is based simply on the "redeemed, purchased, and won . . . with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death" and at the same time on the resurrection of the Lord. Perhaps that is not enough for us. The history of the confessions and sects, from Rome to Muenster, has shown that men have again and again been of the opinion that there must be more to Christ's kingship than that sins are forgiven for His sake and that justification by grace alone is proclaimed to us. But so it is: Christ exercises His royal office just by telling us: Thy sins are forgiven thee. In His speaking, in His Word that sets men free, in His promise to us, in a word, in the Gospel, His lordship is actualized. Thus God's will is done. Thus it is, then — when men in faith submit to living by God's grace alone, and let God be wholly and in every respect the Creator God, from whom we receive everything, absolutely everything — thus it is that God again becomes King and Lord.

But is not sanctification necessary also? Is not my obedience necessary in order that Christ may really be King? Yes, say we; not only saying, "Lord, Lord," but doing the will of His Father in heaven, that is what counts. But we decidedly reject the "also." *Sanctification is not something besides justification, it is not an 'also'; sanctification takes place when the Lord addresses us and we hear and believe.* If anyone is of the opinion that the Lutheran Church relies too exclusively on justification and thereby puts too low a value on sanctification, the answer must be: If we are deficient in sanctification, then that is due, not to the fact that we have set too high a value on justification, but inversely: it is due to the fact that justification has not been rightly preached and rightly believed. For God does not speak His Word in such a way that it fades and dies away, but He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast (Ps. 33:9). The fact that Christ's kingship, as our topic indicates, consists in His speaking does not mean that we are dealing merely with an "as if." Creative Word! The Word of God is something different from our many words and syllables. It is therefore no contradiction to our conception of the *regnum Christi* as the kingdom that has its being in the Word of Christ when St. Paul says that the Kingdom is not in word, but in power (1 Cor. 4:20). For the Word of Jesus Christ *is* power! We persist in it: the *speaking* Christ exercises His royal office among us, and we belong to His kingdom as men that hear and believe. Luther says that the affairs of this world demand striving and pushing . . . to become rich, a man needs eyes and fists; only the kingdom of Christ has no need of plows nor of hands; it consists only in hearing—Luther goes even farther and calls it the hearing of a single word out of the mouth of the least of men, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.¹⁴

Where men listen to Christ's word, there is His kingdom. The sheep that hear their Shepherd's voice, they are the Church, whose holiness is in the Word of God and in true faith.¹⁵ "*Ecclesia est regnum Christi,*" as the Apology puts it.¹⁶ In confessing that, we do not desire to take from the kingdom of Christ its *eschatological* significance. Rather we would understand the Church eschatologically: the Church is the people of God in these last days. The Last Day is not yet. The Church is in virtue of that fact the bridge-

head, as someone has called it, of the Kingdom of God in this world. We spoke before of the fact that the Kingdom of God is as yet present among us in concealment, *sub cruce tectum*. All that will change when Christ will come again. But one thing will not change: Christ will still be King and will rule over us *in His Word*. The powers of resistance that still oppose His Word shall then be no more. But He whose name is "the Word of God" (Rev.19:13; 1 John 1:1 ff.), He who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8), shall not cease to rule His kingdom in merciful love; He shall not rule by force and compulsion. Then more than ever it will be Gospel and not Law. There, in contrast to all other kingdoms, perfect freedom reigns. We shall serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives, and rules to all eternity. There He is really the Lord, joyously and gladly acknowledged; in that kingdom the will of God is really done. The Man whose kingship Pilate doubted, apparently for the best of reasons, shall achieve without weapons what the Roman Imperium, with all its power, and all the kingdoms of this world, never succeeded in attaining. He shall in truth be βασιλεὺς βασιλέων.

REFERENCES

1. Werner Elert, *Der Christliche Glaube*, 1940, p. 405 ff.
2. Translator's note: The essayist is using Luther's rendering, "So bist du dennoch ein Koenig?" in which the "dennoch" is interpretative comment rather than translation of the Greek.
3. Wilhelm Vischer, *Das Christuszeugnis des Alten Testaments*, Vol. 1, 1934, p. 7.
4. Joachim Begrich, *Studien zu Deuterocesaja*, 1938, p. 92 ff.
5. *Op. cit.*, p. 406.
6. Walther Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Part I, 1948, p. 112.
7. Translator's note: The essayist uses Luther's "neben eingekommen," which reflects the Greek more accurately in expressing the adventitious character of the Law.
8. WA 7, 727, 12.
9. Apology, IV, 8.
10. *Christengemeinde und Buergergemeinde*, Part 6.
11. Karl Heim, *Jesus der Weltvollender*, 1937, p. 166.
12. Apol., XVIII.
13. Apol., VII, 17.
14. Cf. Heinrich Bornkamm, *Das Wort Gottes bei Luther*, 1933, p. 31. The quotation from Luther is to be found WA 51, 11, 31 ff.
15. Smalcald Articles, III, xii.
16. Apol., VII, *passim*.