



The Adoration of the Magi

## THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST

---

BRO. EUGENE KAVANAH, O. P.



HOPE and peace reign supreme and the long awaited day has arrived at last. Long before His advent couriers precede Him to prepare His way and to announce His coming. A brilliant pageant unfolds itself before the world and broadcasts to all peoples and nations that the promised One is come.

Abraham, father of many nations, in whose seed all peoples of the earth should be blessed, leads the procession. Jacob, from whom there is to spring a sceptre and a ruler, announces to Juda, "Thee shall thy brethren praise, . . . the sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda till He come, . . . and He shall be the expected of nations." Following these patriarchs comes the royal prophet, David, in brighter array, chanting in his psalms the dignity and authority of the King who is to come, "Who is appointed over Sion, His holy mountain, . . . He shall rule from sea to sea, and all kings of the earth shall adore Him: and all nations shall serve Him." He who is to be born ruler of the entire human race is heralded by its patriarchs, and royalty in the person of the prophet king, David, announces His universal empire.

But His office is higher than that of merely temporal ruler, He is the spiritual sovereign and in this colorful pageant slowly unfolding to our astonished gaze, royalty gives place to men who in penance and spiritual vigor, joyfully proclaim: "Government is upon His shoulder and His name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God the mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace."\* And Jeremias prophesies, "Behold the day shall come, saith the Lord, and I will raise up to David a just branch: and a King shall reign, and shall be wise, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." And so the advance guard of His royalty moves on and in the days of Israel's captivity, Daniel tells the chosen People that seventy weeks of years will bring to them the Anointed of God. Aggeus proclaims that

---

\* Isaias 9. 6 and 7.

during the glory of the second temple, "the desired of nations shall come," and Micheas warns the city of Bethlehem, David's city, to be prepared to receive its King for, "Thou Bethlehem art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel."

Thus the heralds pass in brilliant array forming the regal procession of patriarchs, royalty and prophets announcing the time and place of the sovereign's advent as well as his lineage. He the king of the universe, ruler of heaven and earth, is immediately preceded by an angel as foretold by Malachias "Behold I send My angel, and he shall prepare the way before My face." And it came to pass that the angel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary who was of David's royal line and whose lineage could be traced to Juda, "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shall bring forth a Son . . . and He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High: and the Lord shall give unto Him the throne of David his father and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." The arrival of the long awaited one is at hand, the Angel has prepared the way before His face and in the calm of the oriental night when quiet reigned over the Judean hillside, in Bethlehem it came to pass that her days were accomplished that she should be delivered. The calm of that night is broken, the stillness is rent by the bursting of heaven, angelic voices announce the birth of the divine king, heavenly choirs proclaim the presence of the universal Lord and Ruler, "This day is born to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." Jesus Christ, supreme emperor of all creatures is born to us. The one promised to our first parents when they were expelled from the garden of paradise, He whom the patriarchs looked for and of whom David sang in his psalms of praise; the one whom Isaias called Wonderful and whom Jeremias proclaimed as the just branch of David, the King who should reign and execute justice and judgment; at last announced by the angel, has come upon earth to take up His sceptre and rule His empire to which there shall be no end.

He is our king. In the Gospel narrative, His own words tell of His supreme power, "All power is given to me, in heaven and on earth." All power, legislative, judicial and executive, a three-fold power without which one cannot be a true king. The gospels

tell the laws that He established and of the perfection of these laws. The new testament was promulgated by Him, "Go teach all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." He gave His commands to fulfill the law, that was the purpose for which He came, "I am come . . . To fulfill." What was imperfect He made perfect, and the new living way spoken of by St. Paul was given us by Him. The law He enacted will endure for all time and "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall not pass of the law." The legislation of the divine ruler is the highest law possible and supercedes all others. It is directive to the greatest good because it leads man to God Himself Who is uncreated goodness. It teaches man to overcome himself and seek the things that are above and everlasting.

His legislation is for all time and it is an article of Catholic Faith that Christ has been given to all men as a Redeemer whom they must obey. All must obey His laws and if they neglect to do so they must submit to the unescapable punishments that He has prepared for the violators. He has given a sanction to His laws, has placed His Church as their guardian and has commissioned her to carry on His work upon earth, "Go teach all nations." The Church in performing the duty imposed upon her by Him who is her head and ruler, acts in His name and exercises vicariously His executive authority upon earth. He is the chief executor in the empire that He has established.

In the Apostles' Creed we say each day "Sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead." It is also an article of our Faith that Christ is our judge. In speaking of Christ sitting at the right hand of God, St. Thomas explains that this means nothing other than to share in the glory of the divinity of the Godhead and to possess beatitude and judicial power unchangeably and royally.\* But it is not only as Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in His divinity that Christ sits at the right hand of God, as man He is there because of the grace of unity of the two natures in the one person and consequently He is king in His human nature and He has judicial power. In the human Christ by reason of the intimate union of the human and divine nature with the Word of God there is so much more abundant habitual grace that His

---

\* St. Thomas Aquinas. "Summa Theologica," IIIa, Q. 58 and 59.

human nature is more blessed than all other human natures and possesses over all other creatures royal and judiciary power.

St. John, the Evangelist, narrates in his gospel that "Neither doth the Father judge any man but hath given all judgment to the Son." In commenting upon this text, the Angelic Doctor explains that to judge properly, wisdom and truth are absolutely essential if correct judgment is to be rendered. Jesus Christ by reason of His Personality in the Blessed Trinity as Second Person, is uncreated Wisdom and Truth proceeding from the Father and accordingly judicial power is to be attributed to Him. However, even as man, Christ is judge. He, in His human nature, is head of the Church and the Father has subjected all things to Him. God in His benign providence, makes use of intermediary causes because they are closer and more akin to the effects He wishes to produce. In like manner, God judges men through Christ, He gave all judgment to the God-Man because of His likeness and kinship with men, that His judgment might be sweeter to them. St. Augustine, in his treatment of the Gospel according to St. John, says "In the last judgment there will be a resurrection of dead bodies which God will raise up through the Son of Man, just as by the same Christ He raises souls inasmuch as He is the Son of God. And again as St. Augustine observes in his sermon on the Word of God, "It was but right that they who were to be judged should see their judge. But those who were to be judged were good and wicked. It follows then, that the form of a servant should be shown in the judgment to both the good and the bad, while the form of God should be kept for the good alone."

This judicial power is unlimited in its extent, it is Christ's to exercise over men and angels. By the prerogatives of His divine nature all judgments of the Father are shared by the Son, for as the Father does all things through His Word, so also He judges things through His Word. Judgment has truth as its standard and is safe in the hands of the man imbued with truth. Christ's soul was more closely united with truth than all other creatures and He was more full of truth for St. John says, "We saw Him . . . Full of grace and truth." The reason for this fullness of grace and truth is found in the intimate union of Christ's human nature with the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Moreover, St. Paul says in his epistle to the Romans, "For to this end Christ died and rose again that He might be

Lord both of the living and the dead, . . . for we all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ." In speaking of Christ's judicial power over human affairs, St. Thomas\* remarks that to whomsoever is entrusted the principal affairs, to him also should be given power over accessory affairs. Salvation, the principal affair of man's existence, since it is the purpose of his existence to attain beatitude which may be had only through salvation, is entrusted to Christ because it is by His judgment that men are admitted to, or excluded from eternal beatitude. All human affairs are merely accessory to the one great and all important business of salvation and consequently it is manifest that all human affairs are included in Christ's judicial power.

Angelic beings are subject to Him! His soul is more replete with the truth of the Word of God than any angel's. By His humility in the Passion the humanity of Christ merited to be exalted over all angels, and for this among other reasons, St. Paul says, "For which cause God hath exalted Him, . . . That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth." Besides, Christ by His Incarnation and Redemption, raised men to glory and thus repaired the ruin caused by Lucifer and his angels when they rebelled against the most High God.

Jesus Christ, the God-Man, whose coming was heralded throughout the ages and at whose birth the angelic hosts burst forth in chants of praise, is king with a fullness of power over all beings. St. Thomas says that because of the universal judicial power of Jesus Christ, He is king since such power is the concomitant of royal dignity. Christ's own words in answer to the question put to Him by Pilate, "Art Thou the king of the Jews," were so full of dignity and authority that Pilate caused His supremacy to be proclaimed in the language of the Jews the chosen people, in the Greek, the tongue of the masters of the arts and the leaders in culture, in the language of the Romans who were the conquerors and political rulers of the earth. He is king, universal ruler because He is coequal with the Father, Creator of world.

The power exercised by Christ, was and is spiritual. Not that He did not have temporal power, but merely that He did not wish to wield such sovereignty. Pope Pius XI says that it would

---

\* Loc. cit.

be a shameful error to deny Christ, as man, empire over any civic thing. It was not His desire to be a temporal ruler. On more than one occasion He showed the Jews, and even the Apostles, the fallacy of the opinion and the vanity of the hope that He would restore the political supremacy of Israel. He fed the multitudes; they wished to proclaim Him king; He fled into the mountains. St. Thomas,\* the greatest of all theologians, declares that, though Christ was established king by God, He did not wish while living upon earth, to govern temporarily an earthly kingdom, and consequently He said in His answer to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." In this passage the Angelic Doctor says that while Christ was truly king He never exercised temporal power because He did not wish to do so. St. Ambrose remarks that, "It is well that He who came down with a divine purpose should hold Himself aloof from all temporal concerns." His kingdom is spiritual and we learn from the Gospels that entrance into His empire is to be by Faith and Baptism. His rule is to bring destruction to the powers of darkness, casting off its bonds by interior regeneration.

His spiritual kingdom is universal because He brought salvation to the whole human race. He merited glory for all. Even sinners are subject to Him because through Him they have Faith and Hope, and those who sit in darkness without the true fold may find light and inspiration in the Church that He has established. Communities as well as individuals, states as well as citizens of the state, are subject to Him for in the words of St. Augustine, "Not by one cause is a state blessed and men by another, for the state is nothing else but a multitude of men dwelling in harmony." David in his psalms sang, "Blessed is the people whose Lord is their God."

Christ is born to us, come let us adore. In homage to the new-born king, angelic choirs fill the Judean hills with praise. At His birth-place a brilliant array representing all nature adores. Celestial spirits hover about bursting forth into joyful chants, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." The Prince of Peace is born and His presence is announced to the poor shepherds watching their flocks in the stillness of the night, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, . . . for this day is born to you a Saviour Who is Christ

---

\* Loc. cit.

the Lord." These shepherds, startled by the voice of the messenger breaking the accustomed midnight calm, hasten to the city of David, the head of Israel's royal family, and there they worship the Infant King. Royalty, however, in the persons of Mary and Joseph, is there before them. Mary, His mother, and St. Joseph, his foster-father, both of whom trace their ancestry to Abraham, the father of many nations, in whose seed all nations of the earth are blessed, adore the just branch of Jacob. Jesus is born in Bethlehem as foretold by Micheas and the glory of the second temple awaits His entrance as Aggeus prophesied. A star outshining all celestial orbs led the three wise men from the East that they might do homage and offer costly gifts to the universal king of whom the royal prophet sang, "The kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts": And all the kings of the earth shall adore Him. It is into this throng of worshippers at the crib that the children of His empire, the Church, are summoned. Christ is born to us, come let us adore.

