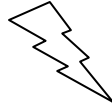


Lightning Apologetics

By Phillip Bellini, DRE.



CHRIST THE KING!

We've all heard of the great kings in history, and we've all heard the phrase, "Long live the King." Yet, how long does a king live? Seventy, eighty years? But even the longest royal life is a mere spark that flies up from the roaring fire of time and vanishes into nowhere. The king is dead and the parade marches on.

Where are the great kings of history? Alexander the great is said to have wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. Julius Caesar, whose armies once ruled the world, is not only a faint image on an old coin, or a paragraph in a textbook that a student memorizes for class. Napoleon Bonaparte, who wanted to cut up Europe like a wedding cake with his victorious sword, and who actually thought that a kingdom did make a satisfactory wedding present – what does *he* mean in the practical life of any of us today? Every splendid king of the past is now but a skeleton in a tomb, or a mummy in a museum or six feet under where he has become part of his kingdom. He has less impact on the life of contemporary people than the cardboard king in a pack of cards. Great kings? They are only remote corpses. Their lives may be in print, but they themselves are as dead as door nails. They no longer command nor terrify nor influence. In every sense they are dead.

Only One King there is, out of all the past, who still lives on; whose influence, like the like the light of a long gone star, still pours down; whose deeds still reach out a warm hand to touch and affect the daily lives of men! His name is Jesus Christ. For Him, young women still walk through the doors of a cloistered convent to spend their days in prayer and penance for a sensual, sinful world. For Him, other young women wear the habit of a hospital nun as they nurse the sick, or help young children in an orphanage, or support the unstable steps of trembling age as it shuffles its lonely way toward the sunset. Does any other king inspire such sacrifices?

There were two great monarchs in the past, like Charlemagne for example, whose young soldiers thought it an honor when they fell in battle, if only the eyes of the Emperor had seen them go down. But who today would endure a scratch no bigger than a band-aid for the sake of Charlemagne, or Richard the Lion Hearted, or Ferdinand and Isabella, or any king out of the past? Yet at this moment in still Communist countries men are languishing in concentration camps, their bodies scarred with torture endured for the love and fidelity to a King who died almost twenty-one centuries ago, Jesus Christ! Two great Cardinals of the past come to mind, Cardinal Josef Mindszenty of Hungary and Cardinal Ignatius Kung of China. Many in the underground Church in China (still faithful to Rome) suffer persecution and imprisonment and death. This same loyalty goes for ordinary Catholic men and women of our day! But these very people roll out of a warm bed on a cold Sunday morning in memory of the day when Christ Rose from the dead, and resolutely push away meat on Friday in memory of the day He hung on the cross. The King is not dead. This King lives in the hearts of His people.

We call Christ a King. Do you wonder what His right may be to claim that title? Some men become kings by revolution, some by birth, some by acclamation. The truth is that once you admit Christ is God, then according Him the title of King is like adding a drop to an ocean. Because if He is God, He is already everything we mean by king: His lord, ruler, chief, lawmaker, sovereign. More than that. As God He is not only the first and the greatest, but the *only*.

In our poor human way of phrasing, we may say that Jesus Christ reigns over us from the triple throne of Creation and Crib and Cross. As Creator (with the Father and the Holy Spirit) He has as much authority over us as the Painter over his pictures, or the Baker over his pastries. Without Him we would not even exist! So, since He gave us a free will, before we rebel, we ought to remember that God has all eternity to punish rebellion. The thoughtful person realizes his place before Christ, the Creator, and that place is on his knees. This King we adore!

But there came a time when that King chose for a throne a stable in the side of a cave. He chose straw for His scepter. He became a baby to become one of us; the time when He humbled Himself to gain our hearts! This King we love!

And later on, up there on Calvary, that hill of blood, where His throne was a cross, He poured out His Blood to the last drop to redeem us. He opened the gates of Heaven to save us, He endured even death to make atonement for our sins. This King we thank and honor and serve!

My Christ is King! Hopefully many Catholics would say this, But to what avail if my daily life contradicts my words? Am I not then making Christ a mock king, as the soldiers did during the Passion? Have I become lukewarm to Him? Do I skip Mass and prayers more and more often? Do I easily cave in to temptation when I should run from it? Do I confess my sins when I do fall? It comes down to this: if we want to serve Christ the King by keeping His laws, we have to love Him or we will fall away. We have to remember that Christ the King loved us enough to die for us! It is not hard to love Him. Not when you remember what He did for us! The King was dead. Long live the King! But this time it was the same King, rising from the tomb, glorious, victorious, eternal! One day, when we are dead, and all shall stand together, an archangel will draw back the curtain of the Beatific Vision and announce in trumpet tones: "His Majesty the King!" Let us so live now that when we look up then, He will look down with mercy and love !

