

THE RELATION OF THE CHRISTIAN STATE TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ACCORDING TO THE *PONTIFICALE ROMANUM*

In our own time, when questions have arisen about the necessity of the profession of the Catholic faith on the part of a state or civil society composed of Catholics, it is highly interesting and enlightening to turn to one of the Church's official liturgical books for information on this subject. The *Pontificale Romanum*, in its section *De benedictione et coronatione regis*, contains pertinent and important teaching on this matter. It shows, in the last analysis, that the Church expects the Catholic sovereign of a Catholic nation to profess and to protect the Catholic faith in his capacity as the head of the state.

The ceremony for the benediction and the coronation of a king is one of the sacramentals of the Church. Thus, although it does not confer sanctifying grace *ex opere operato*, nevertheless, by reason of the Church's prayers it is definitely an apt means for the obtaining of that gift and of the graces necessary for his state in life by the one who receives it. Furthermore, the instructions and the prayers incorporated into this ceremony offer us an unrivalled insight into the Church's high and accurate concept of civil authority, its prerogatives and its duties.

In the *Pontificale Romanum* the section on the benediction and the consecration of kings comes immediately after that which deals with the benediction and the consecration of nuns. The Church, properly enough, chooses to deal first with those whose lives are consecrated immediately and directly to spiritual ends. The ceremonies for rulers and for soldiers come at the end of the first part of the *Pontificale*, the one concerned with the benediction or consecration of persons.

The rite for the benediction and the coronation of a king begins in much the same way as do the ceremonies of Holy Orders. A prelate, in this case the first in rank among the bishops of the territory, addresses the Metropolitan with the announcement that Holy Mother Church asks that he (the Metropolitan) raise this noble soldier to the royal dignity. The Metropolitan then inquires *if* those who seek this elevation know that the king-elect is worthy

and useful for this dignity. The Bishop's reply is "Et novimus, et credimus eum esse dignum, et utilem Ecclesiae Dei; et ad regimen hujus regni."

The Catholic Church is God's kingdom on earth. It is the one society within which men are to find the fellowship of Christ. It is the one assembly ordered to and requisite for the attainment of that supernatural eternal life which Our Lord died to procure for the children of men. Thus it would be false to its own divine commission if it were to overlook the attitude and the influence of a temporal ruler of a Catholic state. A man would not be beneficial to the people of that state were he to be other than "useful" to the Church of God. The welfare (even the temporal well-being) of the people of that state is *de facto* inseparable from the welfare of the Church within it.

As in the administration of the sacrament of Holy Orders, the preliminary interrogations are followed in this ceremony of the coronation of a king by an instruction given to the candidate by the presiding prelate. In the course of this instruction the Metropolitan assures the prince that all the power by which kings rule and legislators judge righteously is from the Lord God, and that he himself must one day render an account to God of the people committed to his care. The prince is told that it is his duty to live a morally good life, to worship the Lord his God with his whole mind and with a pure heart, to retain the Christian faith and the Catholic religion inviolate to the end, and to defend it with all his strength against all of those opposed to it.

The instruction goes on to say that it is the king's business "to show reverence to the prelates of the Church and to the other priests," and in no way to infringe upon the liberty of the Church. Then it declares that the ruler is obliged in conscience to defend widows and orphans, and all the poor and the weak from oppression, and that he is bound to be kind, gentle, and affable to all of those who approach him. He is told that he must rule, not for his own profit, but for the good of the entire populace, and that he is to expect his reward, not in this world, but in the next.

Immediately after this instruction is finished, the ceremony calls for the candidate to profess "before God and His angels" that, to the best of his capacity and knowledge, he will keep and observe law, justice, and peace for the Church of God and the

people subject to him. He promises that he will show proper and legitimate honor to the prelates of God's Churches and that he will respect all that has been granted and conceded by other rulers to the Churches. He furthermore pledges himself to respect the abbots, the nobles, and the populace of his kingdom.

In the prayer which follows after the candidate's profession, the Metropolitan and the other Bishops present beg God that the new king "may happily win the triumph of desirable victory over the enemies of the cross of Christ and that he may put the terror of his power upon them." In the prayer at the anointing of the king's right arm, the Metropolitan prays that the newly anointed may be "strong, just, faithful, provident, an untiring ruler of this kingdom and of the Lord's people, and a defender of the Lord's holy Church and of the Christian faith."

When the royal sword is conferred upon the newly anointed, the Metropolitan begs God to make this ruler one who will fight for and defend the Church of God and its members, and one who will oppose the enemies of the Christian name. And, in the actual ceremony of coronation, the Pontiff prays that "as we are known to be the pastors and the rulers of souls *in interioribus*, you (the newly crowned ruler) may be *in exterioribus* a true worshipper of God and a vigorous defender of God's Church against all who attack it." When the king is led to his throne he is reminded that his position in the cathedral, between the place of the clerics and that assigned to the people, means that Our Lord, the mediator of God and of men, has made him a mediator of the clergy and the people.

In one of the prayers of the Mass, the celebrant asks God that the people subject to the newly crowned monarch may keep to the truth. In the postcommunion prayer of this Mass, the Church begs God that the new ruler may be protected against all evils, so that he may enjoy the tranquillity of ecclesiastical peace and, in the next life, obtain his eternal reward.

The important thing about this ceremony is that the king is represented as an actual ruler, rather than as a mere figurehead. He is actually charged with the duty of governing his people. And, it is precisely in his capacity as a ruler, exercising all the various functions which constitute sovereign jurisdiction, that the Church expects him to profess the Catholic faith and the Catholic

religion, to defend the Church, and to assist in preserving good relations between the clergy and the people.

It is to be noted that the king is considered precisely as a ruler of a Catholic community. In the preliminary instruction, the Metropolitan informs the new ruler that he is to assume "*regendi fideles populos tibi commissos curam.*" It is obvious that a government could not be expected to function in the manner envisaged in the ceremony if the civil society over which it presided were other than one composed of members of the true Church of God.

The essential point is, however, that under the circumstances to which the ceremony of the *Pontificale Romanum* looks, when the people and the rulers are members of the Catholic Church, the Church considers it the duty and the privilege of the government to act precisely as the government of a Catholic state, to protect and to foster the true faith, and to be of assistance in the work of the Church itself. The official prayer of the Church certainly gives no indication that a state composed of Catholics would be doing its duty merely in giving the Church the same liberties it would accord to some spurious religion.

Furthermore, we must realize that the *Pontificale Romanum*, in describing this sacramental, has in mind what authors dealing with the question of Church and state call the *thesis* rather than the *hypothesis*. This, in the absolute sense, is what a state should be with reference to the Church itself. Obviously the Church does not mean to imply that hereditary monarchy, or, for that matter, any other form of monarchy, is inseparable from the concept of a truly Catholic state. It does, however, imply that a vigorous defence and support of the Church on the part of the government (whatever form that government may take) is involved in the idea of a good civil society among Catholics.

Certainly there can be no doubt that, in any case, all men are meant by God to profess the Catholic faith and to live within the fellowship of the Catholic Church. To deny this paramount fact would be to deny the universal applicability of the merits of Jesus Christ Our Lord, or to question the universality of God's salvific will. The fact that some men are not favored with membership in the Church is objectively an evil. The responsibility for making this membership available to all men rests squarely upon the Catholics themselves.

Since, then, Our Lord's invitation to fellowship with Himself within the Catholic Church is extended to all men, and since the ceremony described in the *Pontificale Romanum* looks to a situation in which the citizenry of a given state is completely Catholic, we may say that this ceremony and the teachings implied in it have to do with the *thesis* itself. Apart from special considerations which spring from ignorance of the true faith or a lack of missionary spirit on the part of Catholics within a given realm, the good ruler of a properly organized state is looked upon as one who governs justly, who seeks the benefit of the citizens rather than his own profit from his conduct of the state, and, in the final analysis, one who is realistic enough to foster and defend the true faith and the true Church against the forces which would seek to hinder or to destroy them.

It is interesting to note that the teaching of the *Pontificale Romanum* on the relation of the Christian state to the Catholic Church is exactly the same as that contained in the great papal encyclicals which have dealt with this problem. Thus it must manifestly be counted among those truths to which the Holy Father refers in his magnificent encyclical *Humani generis*, when he declares that "generally what is expounded and inculcated in Encyclical letters already for other reasons appertains to Catholic doctrine." It is a teaching clearly and conclusively presented by the Church in its ordinary and universal *magisterium*. Consequently, despite the fact that the Church has issued no solemn definition on this point, Catholic writers and teachers can definitely not consider themselves free to state explicitly or even to suggest that a civil society composed of members of the true Church can act as God wills that it should by withholding an explicit and specific profession of the Catholic faith and by refusing an explicit and specific recognition of the Catholic Church. The truth that the state, like every other human society, is objectively obligated to worship God according to the one religion He has established and commanded is so obviously a part of Catholic doctrine that no theologian has any excuse to call it into question.

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Answers to Questions

THE SUPPLEMENTARY CONFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS WOMEN

Question: In speaking of the supplementary confessors of religious women the Code states that they are appointed by the Ordinary so that the nuns can easily go to them in particular cases without the need of approaching the Ordinary each time. (Can. 521, § 2). Now, does this mean that the initial step in going to confession to these priests must come from the nuns themselves? For example, would it be permissible for the regular confessor, if he is unable to fulfill his weekly appointment for confession at a convent, to ask one of these supplementary confessors to take his place?

Answer: Undoubtedly, the Code supposes that the nun herself requests the services of a supplementary confessor rather than that he comes to hear her confession on his own initiative or at the request of the ordinary confessor. Indeed, there is some doubt whether the "particular case" mentioned in the Code has reference to individual religious only or to the whole community; but Schaefer asserts that by a broad interpretation of the Canon an entire community can ask for the services of a supplementary confessor in the event of the absence or sickness of the ordinary confessor (Schaefer, *De Religiosis* [Rome, 1940], 374). He suggests this as the best method when the ordinary confessor is absent, although he adds that sometimes the matter is arranged by the Ordinary in such wise that when the regular confessor is impeded, the extraordinary confessor shall take his place. (*Ibid.*, 372).

When the supplementary confessor comes for confessions on his own initiative or at the request of the regular confessor, without any expression of a request on the part of the nuns, his action would seem to be venially illicit, but there would be no difficulty about the validity of the confessions. In the words of Cappello: "If the ordinary confessor, without the knowledge of the Bishop, should go away for a week or two, and should substitute one of the supplementary confessors in his place, the confessions would be valid, because this latter's jurisdiction is not limited, but *per se*