

PER BESKOW

REX GLORIAE

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*The Kingship of Christ
in the Early Church*

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Translated by

ERIC J. SHARPE

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OF JUNIUS BASSUS, ROME**

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FOREWORD

The object of this book is more limited than its title may at first sight seem to indicate. It is intended to be an account of the way in which the New Testament representation of Christ in royal categories lived on during the pre-Constantinian period; how it became enriched by its confrontation with Hellenistic culture; and how this development, in the course of the doctrinal disputes of the 4th century, gave rise to that conception of Christ as King which dominated the theology of the Byzantine period and the Middle Ages in the West. It would have been impossible, in a work of this kind, to have given an exhaustive account of every aspect of the problem, and I have therefore imposed considerable restrictions, particularly upon the religio-historical background. The sacral kingship, for example, is such a huge subject that to trace its connexions with early Christology would require a large number of specialist studies. I hope, however, that this book will suggest areas of wider study, and provide the requisite points of departure for further research. I have also been compelled to leave the Gnostic material virtually untouched, largely because Gnosticism does not seem to have contributed to the Christology of the Byzantine Church.

Since most of the Old Testament quotations in this book are taken from the LXX, I have followed its system of numbering. The numbering of the Hebrew text is as a rule given in parentheses.

Per Beskow

Uppsala, March 22nd, 1962

PART I

The Problem

1. THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST IN THE FOURTH CENTURY

In recent years scholars have demonstrated the primary importance of the concept of Christ as King during the period subsequent to the victory of Christianity in the Roman Empire; it has also been shown how it reached its zenith under the rule of Theodosius and Honorius (ca. A.D. 380–420). The concept as such recurs frequently in sermons, iconography and the liturgies, and it has often been pointed out that the Church drew freely upon the imperial ideology of post-Constantinian Rome for its imagery.¹ Art historians have paid particular attention to this complex of ideas; the influence of imperial art on Christian iconography during and after the 4th century has proved to be a most fruitful field of research.²

¹ For the outward form of the imperial ideology in the late Roman Empire the following works are of primary importance: R. DELBRÜCK, *Die Consulardiptychen*, SSK 2 (1929). IDEM, *Das spätantike Kaiserornat*, *Die Antike* 8 (1932), pp. 1–21. IDEM, *Spätantike Kaiserportraits*, SSK 8 (1933). A. ALFÖLDI, *Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells am römischen Kaiserhofe*, RM 49 (1934), pp. 1–118. IDEM, *Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser*, RM 50 (1935), pp. 1–171. O. TREITINGER, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im höfischen Zeremoniell* (1939). Further, we may refer to two invaluable works on the Emperor cult which have appeared during recent years, viz. L. CERFAUX & J. TONDRIAU, *Un concurrent du christianisme*, *Bibl. de théol.* 3.5 (1957), and F. TAEGER, *Charisma* 1–2 (1957–60).

² Of the comprehensive literature on this subject, the following works are especially worth mentioning: W. J. A. VISSER, *Die Entwicklung des Christusbildes in Literatur und Kunst in der frühchristlichen und frühbyzantinischen Zeit* (1934). A. GRABAR, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin*, PFLS 75 (1936). J. KOLLWITZ, *Christus als Lehrer und die Gesetzesübergabe an Petrus in der konstantinischen Kunst Roms*,

Christ is seldom or never portrayed as King in pre-Constantinian Christian art: on Roman sarcophagi or in the catacomb paintings; what we find instead is Christ the Good Shepherd, Christ the Miracle-worker, or Christ the Philosopher in conversation with his disciples. But by the middle of the 4th century—or a little earlier—attempts were being made to stress the majestic aspect of the figure of Christ. In exactly the same way as the Roman Emperor had been represented as *cosmocrator*, Christ is now represented as the cosmic ruler, enthroned on the vault of heaven.¹ His hand is raised in the same gesture of power as Sol Invictus—already adopted as an attribute of Caesar²—and he is portrayed in conformity with imperial iconography in the act of bestowing his law on St. Peter (or St. Paul), or of granting the crown of victory to the martyrs.³ The Heavenly King is surrounded by a court of apostles and martyrs, who face him, their hands raised in a gesture of acclamation, or offering him their crowns.⁴

From the point of view of the history of art, the *Majestas* figure has developed out of the 3rd century representation of Christ the Philosopher. The low chair is raised, and placed on a platform, *suggestus*; it is ornamented in a manner not unlike that of the imperial throne; the fingers, formerly fixed in a rhetorical gesture, are now held in Sol Invictus' gesture of power; the philosopher's scroll has become the

RQ 44 (1936), pp. 45–66. IDEM, *Oströmische Plastik der theodosianischen Zeit*, SSK 12 (1941). IDEM, *Das Bild von Christus dem König in Kunst und Liturgie der christlichen Frühzeit*, ThGl 1 (1947), pp. 95–117. IDEM, art. *Christus Basileus*, RAC 2 (1951–54), col. 1257–1262. F. VAN DER MEER, *Maiestas Domini*, StAntCr 13 (1938). H. P. L'ORANGE, *Kejseren på himmeltronen* (1949). IDEM, *Studies in the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World*, Inst. f. sammenl. kulturforsk. A. 23 (1953). C. IHM, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei*, FKCA 4 (1960).

¹ On the Galerius arch in Saloniki the two *augusti* are represented as enthroned upon the *Coelus*; Constantine is also said to have been depicted in the same way after his death, Eusebius, *Vita Const.* 4.69. See KOLLWITZ, *Christus als Lehrer*, p. 56. The motif appears in its Christianized form on Roman sarcophagi shortly after the middle of the 4th century (the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus and Lat. 174).

² H. P. L'ORANGE, *Sol invictus imperator*, SO 14 (1935), pp. 86–114. IDEM, *Studies*, pp. 139 ff.

³ There is here no reason to go into the wide and continuing discussion about the origin and meaning of the *traditio legis*. A good survey of the problems is given by W. N. SCHUMACHER, “*Dominus legem dat*”, RQ 54 (1959), pp. 1–39. On the victor's wreath, see below, p. 16, n. 6.

⁴ GRABAR, *L'Empereur*, pp. 202 and 205. IHM, *Programme*, pp. 19 f.

Divine law given to Peter.¹ Where the rhetorical gesture has been retained it is reinterpreted as a blessing, *benedictio latina*. However, during the 4th century neither Christ the Philosopher nor Christ the King are portrayed so clearly as to be unmistakably the one or the other, and it is often difficult, when considering certain representations, to decide which of the two aspects is the more prominent.

The influence of imperial iconography is not limited to the actual figure of Christ. A large number of attributes drawn from imperial art came into general use during the 4th century as independent Christian symbols: the Constantinian *labarum*; the "empty" throne, *etimasia*, decorated with symbols of Christ; the victor's wreath; the trophy—all these symbols recur frequently during the period.² Similarly the Christian church, *basilica*, incorporates elements derived from the imperial audience halls: the altar, like the imperial throne, is placed under a canopy, *ciborium*, and is surrounded by curtains, *vela*, emphasizing its sacred and separate character.³

The origin of the Christian basilica has been the subject of a particularly extensive discussion, in which an important role has been played by the question of the Kingship of Christ.⁴ Four of the suggested theories have been considerably influenced by this motif in connexion with the growth of the Christian basilica:

1) The basilica can be traced back to the palace architecture of Imperial Rome.⁵ This theory is accepted in certain circles, but con-

¹ F. GERKE, *Die christlichen Sarkophage der vorkonstantinischen Zeit*, SSK 11 (1940), pp. 226 ff. L'ORANGE, *Studies*, pp. 139 ff.

² For the throne in early Christian art, see C. O. NORDSTRÖM, *Ravennastudien*, Figura 4 (1953), pp. 46 ff. For the wreath and the trophy, see below, p. 16, n. 6.

³ On the problem of the canopy-altar, see ALFÖLDI, *Insignien*, pp. 130 f. G. EGGER, *Der Altarbaldachin*, Christl. Kunstbl. 1953, pp. 77 ff. (unavailable to the author). On the altar veils, see KOLLWITZ, *Das Bild*, pp. 105 f. TREITINGER, *Reichsidee*, pp. 40 ff. C. SCHNEIDER, *Studien zum Ursprung liturgischer Einzelheiten östlicher Liturgien* 1 (καταπέτασμα), Kyrios 1 (1936), pp. 57–73.

⁴ The best survey of the present state of this discussion (with an extensive bibliography) is given by C. DELVOYE, *Recherches récentes sur les origines de la basilique paléochrétienne*, AIPh 14 (1954–57), pp. 205–228.

⁵ DELVOYE, *op. cit.*, pp. 216 ff. J. KOLLWITZ in BZ 42 (1942), pp. 273–276, cf. below, p. 21, n. 4. E. DYGGVE, *Dødekult, Kejserkult og Basilika*, SSO 192 (1943). IDEM, *Fra evangeliekirke til magtkirke*, KÅ 58 (1958), pp. 11–52. E. LANGLOTZ, art. *Basilika*, RAC 1 (1941–50), col. 1225–1249. IDEM, *Der architektonische Ursprung der christlichen Basilika*, Festschr. f. H. Jantzen (1951), pp. 30–36. W. SESTON, *Le culte impérial et les origines de la basilique chrétienne*, Bull. Soc. Nat. des Antiqu. de

tains no special theological implications. It does however form the foundation of the three following theories.

2) The basilica developed in response to the demands of the Christian liturgy, which was in turn influenced by imperial ceremonial.¹ This theory is without doubt correct when applied to some of the later stages in the history of the development of the basilica, but gives rise to distinct problems if we attempt to explain the basilica's *origins* in this way. This applies e.g. to Egger's hypothesis that the transept of the basilica developed from imperial ceremonial. Recent excavations under the Lateran basilica have shown a transept to have been part of the original construction from 313. At this early date we can hardly assume there to have been imperial influence on Christian liturgy.

These two theories are based on the history of architecture, and thus have to do with the Kingship of Christ only indirectly; the two other theories connect the basilica direct with Christ the *basileus*. They have furthermore given rise to much wider discussion than the first pair.

3) During the 4th century the basilica was thought to be an image of the heavenly Jerusalem, or the throne-room of God or Christ.²

4) The term basilica has to do with the idea of Christ as *basileus*.³

France (1948-49), pp. 200-201. IDEM, *Le culte impérial, le culte des morts et les origines de la basilique latine chrétienne*, REL 27 (1949), pp. 82-83. A. STANGE, *Das frühchristliche Kirchengebäude als Bild des Himmels* (1950). W. SAS-ZALOZIECKY, *Westrom oder Ostrom*, JÖBG 2 (1952), pp. 150-152. J. B. WARD PERKINS, *Constantine and the Origin of the Christian Basilica*, PBSR 22 (1954), pp. 69-90.

¹ ALFÖLDI, *Ausgestaltung*, passim. IDEM, *Insignien*, passim. SAS-ZALOZIECKY, *op. cit.* DELVOYE, *op. cit.*, p. 217. G. EGGER, *Römischer Kaiserkult und konstantinischer Kirchenbau*, JAIW 43 (1958), pp. 20-132. Cf. the critical review by O. NUSSBAUM, JbAC 2 (1959), pp. 146-148.

² L. KITSCHALT, *Die frühchristliche Basilika als Darstellung des himmlischen Jerusalems*, Münch. Beitr. z. Kunstgesch. 3 (1938)—(unavailable to the author). Cf. the critical review by KOLLWITZ in BZ 42 (1942), pp. 273-276. SESTON, *Le culte impérial, le culte des morts*. STANGE, *Kirchengebäude*, cf. the critical review by KOLLWITZ in BZ 47 (1954), pp. 169-171. LANGLOTZ, *Ursprung*. A. VON GERKAN, *Die profane und die christliche Basilika*, RQ 48 (1953), pp. 128-146. S. LANG, *A few Suggestions toward a New Solution of the Origin of the Early Christian Basilica*, RivAC 30 (1954), pp. 189-208. G. BANDMANN, *Mittelalterlicher Architektur als Bedeutungsträger* (1951), pp. 89 f. accepts KITSCHALT's hypothesis but with some reservations.

³ L. VOELKL, *Die konstantinischen Kirchenbauten nach Eusebius*, RivAC 29 (1953), pp. 49-66, 187-206. IDEM, *Die konstantinischen Kirchenbauten nach den literarischen Quellen des Okzidents*, RivAC 30 (1954), pp. 99-136, especially pp. 105 ff. LANG, *Suggestions*. A criticism of this hypothesis is given by A. M. SCHNEIDER, *Die*

We shall discuss both these theories in the following pages, in the context of the general problem of how the Kingship of Christ was envisaged during the Constantinian period.¹

This artistic and architectural development may be paralleled in the ceremonial of the Church. Candles and incense are brought before the Gospel or the image of Christ as they were once brought before the image of Caesar.² We know from the proceedings of a number of Councils that a particular stage in the proceedings the Gospel was placed on a throne, symbolizing the presence of Christ the King.³ There developed a rich ceremonial, on the pattern of that connected with the Emperor, around the bishop as the representative of Christ; the design of the bishop's throne was based on that of the imperial throne; his vestments and insignia resemble those of high civic dignitaries.⁴ The liturgy takes on more and more of the character of court ceremonial—before the invisible, but present, King of Glory.

This development is also reflected in the literature of the Theodosian period and after, particularly in the most outstanding preacher of the time, St. John Chrysostom.⁵ Sermons frequently describe Christ as the Heavenly King, enthroned in a palace gleaming with gold and precious stones; the angels form his body-guard and the martyrs his *philoï*; he is the supreme commander of the *militia christiania*; he presides over the imperial games of life, like Caesar in his circus, and crowns the victor. The "royal" motif has a particular eucharistic significance in the Antiochene tradition, in St. John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Narses: the Eucharist is compared to a royal audience, constant emphasis being placed on the fear and trembling in which

altchristlichen Bischofs- und Gemeindegkirchen und ihre Benennung, GN 1952. 7, pp. 153–161, and von GERKAN, *Basilika*.

¹ Cf. J. A. JUNGSMANN, *Missarum Sollemnia* (1948), pp. 51 f.

² KOLLWITZ, *Plastik*, p. 148. IDEM, *Das Bild*, p. 104. C. SCHNEIDER, *Studien zum Ursprung liturgischer Einzelheiten östlicher Liturgien* 2 (Θυμιάματα), *Kyrios* 3 (1938), pp. 149–190.

³ KOLLWITZ, *Plastik*, p. 149. IDEM, *Das Bild*, p. 107. GRABAR, *L'Empereur*, p. 199.

⁴ For the bishop's throne, see E. STOMMEL, *Die bischöfliche Kathedra im christlichen Altertum*, *MThZ* 3 (1952), pp. 17–32. IDEM, *Bischofsstuhl und Hoher Thron*, *JbAC* 1 (1958), pp. 52–78. H. U. INSTINSKY, *Bischofsstuhl und Kaiserthron* (1955). Cf. the criticism of INSTINSKY's ideas in STOMMEL, *Bischofsstuhl*. For the other episcopal insignia, see TH. KLAUSER, *Der Ursprung der bischöflichen Insignien und Ehrenrechte*, *Bonner Rektoratsrede* 11.12.1948 (1949).

⁵ Examples in KOLLWITZ *Plastik*, pp. 145 ff.

the faithful ought to approach the King, present in the bread and the wine.¹

As early as in the NT we find a striking degree of resemblance between the epithets applied to Christ and the titles bestowed upon the Roman Emperor;² this parallelism lived on in the post-Apostolic age. But the ecclesial literature of the 4th century, and the liturgies in particular, witness to a considerable amount of borrowing from the imperial ideology and hence to a new and characteristic accent in Christology.³

Certain of the military titles and attributes of the Roman Emperor were also taken over by the Church. Christ is depicted in the NT and in the pre-Constantinian Church as *victor*, *triumphator* and *imperator*; the faithful are described as his soldiers and the martyrs as sharing his victory.⁴ This terminology occurs most frequently in the Acts of the Martyrs, but also exercised a distinct influence on the developing Christian Latin, where concepts like *statio* and *sacramentum* were taken from the language of the Roman army.⁵ Again, this terminology becomes more common during the 4th century. Christian art, too, began at this time to make use of military symbols, such as the trophy and the laurel wreath; the Cross is the sign of Christ's victory and the wreath the martyr's prize, reserved for those who have proved victorious in the race of life.⁶

¹ J. QUASTEN, *Mysterium tremendum*, in *Vom christlichen Mysterium ... zum Gedächtnis von O. Casel* (1951), pp. 61–75. From the Homilies of Narses some examples are quoted by G. WIDENGREN, *Religionens värld*, 2nd ed. (1953), p. 248, which belong in this context. Cf. JUNGSMANN, *Missarum Sollemnia*, pp. 47 ff. On the *φóσος*-motif in Byzantine conception of the liturgy, cf. also examples in G. ANRICH, *Das antike Mysterienwesen in seinem Einfluss auf das Christentum* (1894), pp. 218 ff.

² G. A. DEISSMANN, *Licht vom Osten*, 4th ed. (1923), pp. 298 ff. See further below, p. 36.

³ KOLLWITZ, *Plastik*, pp. 145 ff. IDEM, *Das Bild*, pp. 96 ff. W. DÜRIG, *Pietas liturgica* (1958), pp. 170 ff.

⁴ A. VON HARNACK, *Militia Christi* (1905), *passim*. E. PETERSON, *Christus als Imperator*, PThT (1951), pp. 149–164. IDEM, *Zeuge der Wahrheit*, PThT, pp. 165–224. Cf. also S. W. J. TEEUWEN, *Sprachlicher Bedeutungswandel bei Tertullian*, StGKA 14.1 (1926).

⁵ HARNACK, *op. cit.*, pp. 33 ff. IDEM, *Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums* 1 (1906), pp. 348 ff. J. DE GHELLINCK, *Pour l'histoire du mot "sacramentum"*, SSL Études et doc. 3 (1924). Cf. also A. A. T. EHRHARDT, *Christian Baptism and Roman Law*, in *Festschrift G. Kisch* (1955), pp. 147–166.

⁶ J. GAGÉ, *Σταυρὸς νικοποῦός*, RhPhR 13 (1933), pp. 370–400. GRABAR, *L'Empereur*, pp. 237 ff. KOLLWITZ, *Plastik*, pp. 150 ff. IDEM, *Das Bild*, p. 97. J. VOGT,

We must note that the concept of Christ as King appears in different areas at different periods. From a purely literary and terminological point of view, Christ is described in royal terms as early as in the NT, and in the post-Apostolic age up to the time of Constantine, although the motif is not dominant. But it is difficult to demonstrate its occurrence in iconography before the time of Constantine; there have been attempts to trace the *Majestas* figure in the catacomb paintings and on sarcophagi, but all such attempts must be regarded as failures—or at least dubious in the extreme.¹ To judge from the evidence, the motif did not gain a foothold in the liturgy and ceremonial until an even later date.

This lack of unanimity has proved something of a stumbling-block for scholars wishing to determine the precise point at which the concept gained general acceptance. Results achieved have varied enormously, depending on the kind of material which has been used: some say the victory of Constantine, others the accession of Theodosius—not to mention the many dates in between, and those scholars who would date the break-through to the time of the Tetrarchy or even earlier. The most important theories can however be summarized under three headings:

1. The motif came into use during the years immediately following the victory of Constantine. It is an expression of the self-consciousness

Berichte über Kreuzeserscheinungen aus dem 4. Jahrh. nach Chr., Mélange Grégoire 1 (1949), pp. 593–606. C. CECHELLI, *Il trionfo della croce* (1954). For the crown of victory as a Christian symbol, see K. BAUS, *Der Kranz in Antike und Christentum*, Theophaneia 2 (1940). TH. KLAUSER, *Aurum coronarium*, RM 59 (1944), pp. 129–153. K. WESSEL, *Kranzgold und Lebenskronen* AA 65–66 (1950–51), pp. 103–114. E. H. KANTOROWICZ, *Kaiser Friedrich II. und das Königsbild des Hellenismus*, in *Varia Variorum*, Festgabe für K. Reinhardt (1952), p. 182 and n. 73 f. See also GRABAR, *op. cit.*, pp. 202, 230 ff., and KOLLWITZ, *Das Bild*, p. 104.

¹ The two most important hypotheses of this kind, viz. those of VON SYBEL and WESSEL, are dealt with in special excursus to this chapter. It may be of interest in this context to draw attention to ROOSVAL's unfortunate attempt to date the Junius Bassus sarcophagus to the latter half of the 3rd century. See J. ROOSVAL, *Junius Bassus' sarkofag och dess datering*, in *Arkeologiska studier tillägnade HKH Kronprins Gustaf Adolf*, Stockholm 1932, pp. 273–287, and IDEM, *Petrus- och Moses-gruppen bland Roms sarkofager*, in *Konsthist. Tidskr.* 1 (1932), pp. 77–88. ROOSVAL's dating won little support, and is now considered to have been disproved by GERKE, *Ist der Sarkophag des Junius Bassus umzudatieren?* in *RivAC* 10 (1933), pp. 105–118. It is generally considered that the sarcophagus originated in 358 or 359.

and triumph felt by all Christians at that time; the persecutions were over, and the future of Christianity as the privileged religion of the Roman Empire seemed assured. In the victory of the Church was seen the victory of Christ. During the persecutions the Church had confessed Christ as leader and King; now, after a period of political revolution and under a new regime, what had previously been an illegal battle-cry had become the call of a victorious ideology. At the same time the Church was compelled to adapt her picture of Christ to meet the needs of a flood of converts, who wanted a powerful and victorious Lord, not a crucified God.¹

This theory has been expressed in extreme form by Gerke, who is of the opinion that the contrast between pre-Constantinian and Constantinian Christian art is based on profound ideological differences.² He expresses this contrast in a number of antitheses: the pre-Constantinian period is a time of trouble for the Church; the Constantinian a time of political security. Before Constantine Christian thought is dominated by Christian philosophy, the concept of immortality, which developed out of the individual Christian's longing for salvation. Here the stage is held by the conflict between death and salvation, But the later period sees the rise of other concepts: instead of symbolism and philosophy, the writing of history; instead of the abstract "shepherd" symbol, Christ the King in all his glory. The symbol of salvation is replaced by that of typology.

Although Gerke claims to be able to demonstrate this development from the art of the periods in question, his construction is nevertheless ideologically misleading. The pre-Constantinian Church was not distinguished by its supra-historical views, or by Hellenistic notions of immortality. Its God was not remote and transcendent; it was recognized even before the 4th century—even in Alexandrian theology—that God had revealed himself in history through Christ. Throughout

¹ See the account in C. RICHTSTAETTER, *Christusfrömmigkeit in ihrer historischen Entfaltung* (Köln 1949), pp. 36 ff. and its authoritative criticism in BAUS, *Das Nachwirken*, pp. 37 ff. The theory has been criticized from the point of view of iconography in GRABAR, *L'Empereur*, p. 193. GRABAR states that Christian triumphal art depicts, not the victory of the Christians, but of Christ. He considers the borrowing which took place from imperial triumphal art to be connected rather with the court theologians' view of Caesar as an earthly image of the heavenly monarch. On this view see further text, point 2.

² F. GERKE, *Ideengeschichte der ältesten christlichen Kunst*, ZKG 59 (1940), pp. 1-102. IDEM, *Der Trierer Agricola-Sarkophag* (1949), pp. 29 f.

the early Church there is the consciousness that the OT contains *typoi* of the coming salvation in Christ; this is no more prominent during the 4th century than it was earlier. Gerke's work is, consciously or unconsciously, dependent upon a view of the history of religions which has been superseded.¹

The theory that faith in Christ as King was dependent on the victory of the Church, a theory which seems to have been most common in older literature, has been favoured particularly by historians of art, who have attempted to show that the Christian basilica received its name from Christ the *basileus*, and that it was built as the throne-room of God or Christ.² This is supported by Eusebius' famous speech at the consecration of the basilica at Tyre, probably in the year 314 (HE X.4).³ Here the theme of the victory of Constantine and Licinius is combined with that of the Lordship of God and Christ. God is described with a mass of OT quotations, particularly from the Psalter, which describe him as a mighty King, who establishes and removes the kings of the earth according to his will (X.4.5-9). He has crushed his opponents and enemies and has raised up his friends, so that both emperors now confess him as the only God, confess Christ the Son of God as King of all creation, and write his beneficent deeds in Rome herself with royal letters (X.4.15-16). The speech continues with a panegyric of Christ the King which is worth reproducing *in extenso*. Of particular interest is the Hellenistic-Roman king-emperor ideal which forms the basis of the analogy:

For what king ever attained to so much virtue as to fill the ears and tongues of all mankind upon earth with his name? What king, when he had laid down laws so good and wise, was powerful enough to cause them to be published from the ends of the earth and to the bounds of the whole world in the hearing of all mankind? Who abolished the barbarous and uncivilized nations by his civilized and most humane laws? Who, when warred on by all men for whole ages, gave such proof of superhuman might as to flourish daily and remain young throughout his entire life? Who began, which now lies not hidden in some obscure corner of the earth but extends wherever the sun shines? Who so defended his soldiers with the weapons of piety that

¹ An example of this supra-historical interpretation is C. SCHNEIDER, *Geistesgeschichte des antiken Christentums* 1-2 (1954). Cf. the sharp criticism by E. STOMMEL in JbAC 1 (1958), pp. 119-129.

² VOELKL, *Kirchenbauten* (in RivAC 29), pp. 191 ff. LANG, *Suggestions*, pp. 195 f. Cf. the opinion of STANGE, who considers that the basilica was the throne-room of God, but not of Christ, before the Theodosian era; see below, p. 25 f.

³ GCS Eus. 2.2.862 ff. See VOELKL, *op. cit.*, pp. 191 ff.

their souls proved harder than adamant when they contended with their adversaries? Which of the kings exercises so great a sway, takes the field after death, triumphs over enemies, and fills every place and district and city, both Greek and barbarian, with votive offerings of his royal houses and divine temples, such as the fair ornaments and offerings that we see in this temple? Truly venerable and great are these things, worthy of amazement and wonder, and in themselves clear proofs of the sovereignty of our Saviour: for even now he spoke, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created: for what could resist the will of the universal King and Ruler and the Word of God himself? (X.4.17–20).¹

Eusebius is here carrying on a rhetorical tradition common in the early Church, but he fills it with new content. It was usual in pre-Constantinian Christian literature to point to the rapid and extensive spread of the Christian faith as a proof of its Divine character. Constant emphasis was placed on the way in which the Gospel had been transmitted to all peoples, to Greeks and barbarians, and to all sorts and conditions of men.² It is possible that tradition in its turn is dependent upon the Jewish interpretation of history: at all events, there is a tendency in late Hellenistic Judaism to look upon the diaspora not as a misfortune and a Divine punishment, but as a proof of the Divine commission of Judaism.³ The Christian Church looked upon itself as the new Israel, the third people, called to gather in both Jews and Gentiles. There was from the very beginning a consciousness of a political commission—a commission to form a nation. The world had been created for the sake of the Church; the victory of Christ had laid the world at his feet; and the task of the Church was to share both in his post-Resurrection rule and in the coming judgment.⁴

The theme that Christ had crushed the opposition of his enemies and placed the kings of the earth beneath his feet is occasionally encountered in pre-Constantinian Christian literature. It need hardly be said that this is not primarily intended to be descriptive of a historical situation; it is rather a confession of the Lordship of Christ after his

¹ GCS Eus. 2.2.868 f.

² VON HARNACK, *Mission* 2, pp. 1–16 contains a collection of examples, which provide excellent illustrations of this fact. See especially the following examples quoted by VON HARNACK: St. Justin, Dial. 117. Clemens of Alexandria, Strom. VI 18.167. Tertullian, Apolog. 37.4 f.; Adv. Jud. 7.6 f. Origenes, De princ. IV 1.1 f.; Comm. on Matt., Comm. ser. 39.

³ M. SIMON, *Verus Israel* (1948), pp. 64 ff.

⁴ VON HARNACK, *op. cit.*, 1, ch. 7 (Die Botschaft von dem neuen Volk und dem dritten Geschlecht), pp. 206–234.

victory—leaving aside the fact that these ideas were stimulated by the undeniable successes of the Church at certain times during the pre-Constantinian period.¹

What is new in Eusebius' address is to be seen largely in the new religious and political situation. He sees the Kingdom of Christ coming to occupy a more prominent position in the world, since both Constantine and Licinius have attributed their victories to the help of Christ.² Christ is the real ruler of the Roman Empire, and hence of the whole world. Eusebius' address in this respect gives a remarkably clear picture of the new situation in which the Church is now placed.³

It is also likely that what Eusebius is saying here is representative of common tendency, and that the Kingdom of Christ is a more prominent conception than formerly. Nevertheless, what we find in the earliest documents from the Constantinian period is no more than a point of departure for future developments.⁴

¹ Origenes, Hom. on Josh. 9.10, GCS Orig. 2.100: "Convenerunt reges terrae, senatus populusque et principes Romani, ut expugnarent nomen Jesu et Israel simul, decreverunt enim legibus suis ut non sint Christiani. Omnis civitas, omnis ordo Christianorum nomen impugnat. Sed ... principes vel potestates istae contrariae ut non Christianorum genus latius ac profusius propagetur obtinere non valebunt. Confidimus autem quia solum non nos poterunt obtinere visibiles inimici et adversarii nostri verum etiam velociter Jesu domine nostro vincente conteretur satanae sub pedibus servorum eius. Illo etenim duce semper vincent milites sui." VON HARNACK, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 10. N.b. also the classical conception of Christians as the soldiers of Christ, an idea which also occurs in Eusebius' consecration speech. The progress of the Church among the governing classes and at the imperial court is mentioned by Eusebius, HE VIII. 1.1 ff., GCS Eus. 2.2.736 ff.

² Lactantius, *De mort. persec.* 48.11, CSEL 27.2.233. Eusebius, HE IX. 9.12, GCS Eus. 2.2.832.

³ It is not easy to understand why VOELKL (*Kirchenbauten* in RivAC 29, pp. 191 f.) considers the consecration speech as an expression of Eusebius' double role of Nicene theologian and Constantinian court theologian. Both belong to a much later period in Eusebius' life—if Eusebius can be called a Nicene theologian at all. Furthermore, his speech is not an isolated phenomenon in his ecclesiastical history; the same ideas recur on a number of occasions elsewhere. Of particular significance is HE I 3.19, GCS Eus. 2.1.36 ff.: "It is a great and convincing proof of his incorporeal and divine unction that he alone of all those who have ever existed is even to the present day called Christ by all men throughout the world, and is confessed and witnessed to under this name, and is commemorated both by Greeks and Barbarians, and even to this day is honoured as a King by his followers throughout the world ..."

⁴ The theory that the oldest Christian basilicas, those from the time of Constantine, were designed as throne-rooms for Christ the King, has been sharply criticized

2. The concept derives its real importance from the Christological development after the Council of Nicaea; both Athanasian orthodoxy and Arian court theology must therefore be taken into consideration as contributory factors. The actual turning-point must thus be placed at some time before or around the death of Constantine in 337.

This estimate is confirmed by Roman iconography; we have no images of Christ which date from the time of Constantine and which can be regarded with certainty as being *Majestas* representations.¹ Not before the years around the death of Constantine do we encounter the first examples of Christian adaptations of imperial symbols: a group of passion sarcophagi, with the Cross in the centre, crowned by the Constantinian *labarum* in a laurel wreath, and surrounded by the sun and moon, symbolizing the cosmic dimensions of salvation.²

(see above p. 14). This is even more true of the statement that the Christian basilica derived its name from the idea that God or Christ was regarded as King. At this time "basilica" seems to have been the common name for a rectangular building with columns inside; it could also be used of other, larger buildings. In neither case is there a normal train of thought leading from basilica to *basileus*. The original meaning of the word seems to have declined altogether during the Constantinian period. Further, Eusebius' speech contains a rhetorical play on words, in which the basilica (βασιλειος οἶκος) is made into a palace for the victorious King of the world. A. M. SCHNEIDER's idea (*Bischofs- und Gemeindekirchen*, p. 161) that Eusebius' expression βασιλειος οἶκος in the consecration speech (X. 4.20, 42 and 63) was used as a technical term for the court basilica, *basilica forensis*, is based on a misunderstanding of X.4.20. SCHNEIDER understands it as meaning that it is *Constantine* who is said to have had built (court) basilicas and temples (= churches) after his victory; the first stage took place in the towns in which he did not reside, and where he thus had no need of a palace. But as is clear from the above quotation from the speech, it is *Christ* whom Eusebius calls the master-builder; the houses built by the King cannot be other than churches.

We cannot consider in this context the connexion between the Constantinian basilica and the palace architecture, or Constantine's ambition to create a Christian monumental architecture. See above, p. 13 f.

¹ The information in *Liber Pontificalis* (Duchesne I, p. 172) that Constantine gave the Lateran Church a *fastidium* bearing a picture of Christ enthroned between four angels (accepted by GRABAR, *L'Empereur*, p. 196), can hardly be accounted accurate since the theme is otherwise entirely unknown from this period. See KOLLWITZ, *Christus als Lehrer*, p. 54, n. 43. The reliability of *Liber Pontificalis* as a historical source-book is subject to serious doubts. On the sarcophagi of Arles and Florence and the sarcophagus of Cardinal Albani in St. Sebastiano, see Excursus 2.

² H. VON CAMPENHAUSEN, *Die Passionssarkophage*, *Marb. Jahrb. f. Kunstwiss.* 5 (1929), pp. 29 f. GRABAR, *op. cit.*, pp. 240 ff. F. GERKE, *Die Zeitbestimmung der Passionssarkophage*, *Archaeologiai Ertesitö* 52 (1939), pp. 195 ff. SCHUMACHER,

The first appearance of representations of Christ in which he is unmistakably portrayed as King of the world, cannot be dated earlier than to the middle of the century. We have a group of Roman sarcophagi from the period shortly after 350, on which Christ is represented, enthroned on the personified vault of heaven, *Coelus*, and handing the law to St. Peter.¹ Two mosaics in the smaller apses of the mausoleum of Constantine's daughter Constantina—usually known as St. Costanza—would seem to be of somewhat later date. One represents Christ, clad in a purple robe, enthroned on the world-globe and giving St. Peter the keys of heaven. On the other he is shown standing between the leading Apostles on the mount of Paradise; his right hand is raised in a gesture of power, and with his left he is holding out to St. Peter a scroll bearing the inscription *Dominus pacem dat*.² In all these compositions elements have been taken over from imperial art and its representations of Caesar: holding an *adlocutio* or passing on a *mandatum*.³ It is sometimes suggested that the mosaic in the apse of the

"*Dominus legem dat*", pp. 15 ff. The best known representative of this group, Lat. 171 (WS I 146.3), is dated by GERKE to about A.D. 340.

¹ The best-known examples are the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus from 359 (WS I.13) and the sarcophagus hitherto called Lat. 174, but which has now been transferred to the Vatican grottoes (WS I.121.4). See also WS I.28.1, 3, 29.3, WS III.284.5, 286.10. On the Bassus sarcophagus, see A. DE WAAL, *Der Sarkophag des Junius Bassus* (1900), and F. GERKE, *Der Sarkophag des Iunius Bassus* (1936). On Lat. 174 (which has not so far received any other name in literature), see H. VON SCHOENEBECK, *Die christliche Sarkophagplastik unter Konstantin*, in RM 51 (1936), pp. 326 ff., and GERKE, *Christus in der spätantiken Plastik*, 3rd ed. (1948), p. 97. GERKE dates Lat. 174 to 350–360; SCHOENEBECK considers it to be rather more recent than the Bassus sarcophagus. On the question of the imperial patterns for this representation, see above p. 12, n. 1. Cf. also p. 17, n. 1 (ROOSVAL's hypothesis).

² The most usual dating of these mosaics, which are incidentally in very bad condition, is 360–370. A quite different dating is given by G. J. HOOGWERFF, *Il mosaico absidale di San Giovanni in Laterano ed altri mosaici romani*, AAR 27 (1953), p. 322, where he tries, somewhat surprisingly to date the mosaics to the 7th or 8th century. The two most modern works on St. Costanza, K. LEHMANN, *Sta. Costanza*, ArtB 37 (1955), pp. 194–196 and 291, and H. STERN, *Les mosaïques de l'église de Saint-Constante à Rome*, DOP 12 (1958), pp. 157–218, do not consider the apse mosaics. STERN states only (*op. cit.*, p. 160) that their dating is uncertain but that they are probably contemporary with the rest of the decoration from the middle of the 4th century.

³ SCHUMACHER, "*Dominus legem dat*", *passim*. For the question of the *traditio legis* see also the penetrating survey by G. DE FRANCOVICH, *Studi sulla scultura Ravennate* 1, FR 3.26–27 (1958), pp. 118 ff.

old Church of St. Peter, which in all probability dates from shortly after the death of Constantine,¹ represented Christ passing on the law to St. Peter. Extant copies of the mosaic destroyed in the 16th century—although it is by no means certain that this was identical with the Constantinian mosaic—show only Christ sitting between St. Peter and St. Paul,² and thus depict Christ the Philosopher rather than Christ the King.

Kollwitz has stated in a number of contexts that the turning-point, both artistic and conceptual, should be dated to the second quarter of the 4th century, i.e. after 324, when Constantine became sole ruler of the Empire, and after the Council of Nicaea, 325. It had been established at Nicaea that the Son is of one substance with the Father. All things are created through him, and he is therefore Lord of the whole world, and the object of the same honour as the Father. *Rex* and *basileus* are found among the titles appearing in *symbola* from this period.³ According to Kollwitz, there is another current of thought which contributed more than the theology of St. Athanasius and St. Hilary of Poitiers toward the transfer of the title and symbolism of Caesar to Christ: the work of the court theologians and panegyrists in general, and the later work of Eusebius in particular.

In this literature the Christian empire is represented as an image of the heavenly monarchy, and Caesar as an earthly parallel to Christ.⁴ The more this parallelism is pressed, the more epithets become transferred from Caesar to Christ.⁵ Kollwitz is of the opinion that this development may be discerned in Eusebius' Christological terminology. In the earlier writings the title *basileus* was applied to the Father, but

¹ E. KIRSCHBAUM, *Die Gräber der Apostelfürsten* (1957), pp. 151 ff.

² DE FRANCOVICH, *op. cit.*, pp. 127 ff. This fact has earlier been mentioned by L. DE BRUYNE, *La décoration des baptistères paléochrétiens*, Misc. L. C. Mohlberg, EL Bibl. 22 (1948), p. 196.

³ KOLLWITZ, *Christus als Lehrer*, pp. 57 f. IDEM, *Das Bild*, p. 101. These creeds will be discussed below, Chap. 11.

⁴ KOLLWITZ here bases his opinion primarily upon E. PETERSON, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem*, PThT (1951), pp. 45–147. The same problem is treated by TREITINGER, *Reichsidee*, pp. 34 ff. J. A. STRAUB, *Vom Herrscherideal in der Spätantike*, FKG 18 (1939), pp. 113 ff. (Das christliche Herrscherbild bei Eusebius von Caesarea). K. M. SETTON, *Christian Attitude towards the Emperor in the Fourth Century* (1941).

⁵ See also SETTON, *op. cit.*, pp. 57 f.

this restriction disappears in later works.¹ Kollwitz' view, that the motif came into general use at about the time of the death of Constantine, is shared by other art historians—Krautheimer and Weisbach, for example.² Stange, whose position is virtually unique (see under point 3), considers that Athanasius' visit to Rome in 340 was of significance for the Roman Church's idea of Christ, and hence for Roman Church art.³

3. Stange holds the theory that Christ did not come to be regarded as King until the time at which he became the object of prayer in the liturgy, i.e. during the reign of Theodosius. It is in connexion with Jungmann's work on the history of the liturgy that Stange dates the artistic turning-point to the Theodosian period.⁴ He is therefore compelled to reject the two theories to which we have referred in points 1 and 2. Stange is also of the opinion that the basilica was intended as a throne-room—he is in fact one of the most powerful advocates of the theory—but in his view it is not Christ, but the Father, who is the ruler in the basilica.⁵ Christ is not worshipped as *rex gloriae* until liturgical prayers begin to be addressed to him—i.e. at the close of the 4th century.⁶ The rebuilt cathedral in Trier (ca. 380) is the oldest example of a church designed as the throne-room of Christ.⁷ In the

¹ KOLLWITZ first put forward his theory in *Das Bild*, p. 97, but here builds entirely on material he had published earlier in *Christus als Lehrer*, p. 57 f. and n. 66–68. We shall take up the question in more detail in a later chapter (Chap. 11). The difficulties of the problem are seen in the consecration speech from 314, in which, as we have seen, the Kingship of Christ is the overall theme.

² R. KRAUTHEIMER, *The Beginning of Christian Architecture*, RevR 3 (1938–39), p. 138: "It is during the second quarter of the fourth century, shortly before the death of Constantine, that Christ, surrounded by the Apostles, is depicted like an Emperor surrounded by his Senate; it is about this time, that he is addressed as Basileus, as King of Kings, and is represented with a halo, an imperial attribute, and in imperial dress." W. WEISBACH, *Geschichtliche Voraussetzungen einer christlichen Kunst* (1937) has not been available to the author.

³ STANGE, *Kirchengebäude*, p. 85. This idea is, however, not carried out. It does not in fact fit into STANGE's system, because it is not until a later period that the motif—according to STANGE—breaks through.

⁴ STANGE bases his hypothesis primarily on J. A. JUNGMAN, *Die Stellung Christi im liturgischen Gebet*, LF 7–8 (1925).

⁵ STANGE, *op. cit.*, p. 87: "Nicht Thronsäle Christi konnten diese Basiliken sein, Thronsäle Gottes waren sie."

⁶ STANGE, *op. cit.*, p. 88: "Solange Christus noch nicht als *rex gloriae* verehrt wurde, solange sich die liturgischen Gebete noch nicht an ihn richteten, fehlte dafür eine, die entscheidende Voraussetzung."

⁷ STANGE, *op. cit.*, pp. 110 ff.

same way the mosaic in the apse of St. Pudenziana in Rome provides the first example of a pictorial representation of Christ as King.¹ Earlier representations of Christ, which we mentioned above under point 2, are explained by Stange as representing him as hero or victor, but not as King.² Stange's extreme position has not won very much support, but his ideas must be respected in the sense that these alterations in the form of liturgical prayer meant an important step forward in the Christological development he is discussing.³

As we see from this summary of some of the most generally favoured theories, the lack of unanimity in the dating of the break-through of the concept of Christ as King has to do partly with the disparate character of the material—in architecture, iconography, literature, etc.,—and partly with the many possibilities of interpretation which present themselves. Many and varied are the factors, external and internal, which are said to have contributed to this development; they range from politics and theology to Christological speculation and popular piety. Of the theological factors involved, attention is drawn to two

¹ STANGE, *op. cit.*, pp. 121 ff.

² STANGE, *op. cit.*, p. 85. On the subject of the apse mosaics in St. Costanza and the Junius Bassus sarcophagus we read: "... nun wird er als der Sieger über Tod und Sünde dargestellt, aber noch nicht als Kyrios. Und auch was nach 325 an Sarkophagen erlaubt schien, mied man in Apsiden darzustellen: wir haben keinen Anhaltspunkt, dass in irgendeiner der grossen römischen Basiliken dieser Jahrzehnte Christus als rex gloriae und Herr des Gotteshauses—was noch etwas anderes ist—sichtbar gemacht war." Quite impossible is of course STANGE's view that Christ was not believed to be *kyrios* until the Council of Nicaea, cf. below p. 28, n. 2. Further we must note that sarcophagus sculptures do not appear before 350. This type of representation of Christ is missing not only from the basilica decorations—as far as we can judge from the sparse remains—but from the catacomb paintings, which should have had the same freedom of expression as the sarcophagus sculptures. The probable explanation is that the image was first used in sculpture, and was never transferred to painting and mosaic. See DE FRANCOVICH, *op. cit.*, pp. 133 f.

³ See the critical review by KOLLWITZ, BZ 47 (1954), p. 170 f., which also includes a resumé of KOLLWITZ' own views, of which we have given an account above. DELVOYE agrees with STANGE's dating, though not for his reasons: "Les expressions de Χριστὸς Βασιλεύς, Rex Regum, utilisées sans doute dès avant Constantin mais parmi bien d'autres prédicats du Christ, n'auraient pris une valeur prédominante que dans la deuxième moitié du iv^e siècle à partir de Théodose lorsque s'est développée la théologie impériale avec la conception de l'empire chrétien image de la monarchie céleste." (*Op. cit.*, p. 220.) One wonders however whether this argument does not mean that DELVOYE agrees with KOLLWITZ' theory of the break-through of the motif during the last years of Constantine, when Eusebius set forth his imperial theology, according to which the Emperor is the image of God upon earth.

opposing systems—Athanasian orthodoxy and Arianizing court theology. If both of these theological systems in fact contributed to the concept of Christ as King, fully developed in the Theodosian period, their influence must have been quite distinct, even though both must to some extent have been determined by the political background against which the Arian struggle was fought out. However, the actualization of the idea of Christ as King belongs somewhere in this context. The development which we can trace as beginning with Eusebius' inaugural address in Tyre in 314, and which reached its full flowering during the reign of Theodosius, passed through its decisive phase some time in the middle of the century.

There is a fair consensus of opinion that the Christian Church looked upon Christ as King before the time of Constantine; it could hardly be otherwise, remembering the Messianism of the NT. But most scholars are also agreed that the motif became more prominent during the 4th century. There is however a general tendency to underestimate its significance in the pre-Constantinian period, and to overestimate its later significance,¹ evidently due to the fact that the most important work has been carried out by art historians, who have of course judged the development on a basis of their own material. But there are individual art historians who have interpreted the motif of Christ as King with the help of the pre-Constantinian doctrinal tradition and have taken into account such factors as Psalter exegesis and apocalyptic.²

The responsibility for the continued uncertainty as to the development of the concept must be laid primarily at the door of ecclesiastical historians and historians of doctrine, who have generally succeeded in overlooking this and many other questions of typology. For example, Harnack's *Dogmengeschichte* does not even mention the problem in its section on the Constantinian period.

The question of the development of Christological terminology between the NT and the Constantinian period has been dealt with for

¹ BAUS' essay *Das Nachwirken* provides an important corrective to this view. BAUS, as against RICHSTAETTER's one-sided stressing of the victorious Christ in the piety of the 4th century, shows the importance placed on the suffering of Christ, particularly in the preaching of St. Ambrose.

² S. H. GUTBERLET, *Die Himmelfahrt Christi in der bildenden Kunst* (1934), pp. 70 ff., deals with the role of Psalter exegesis in the concepts of the Ascension and parousia, but not in detail. She has no knowledge of the two most important Ascension Psalms, 23 (24) and 109 (110). F. VAN DER MEER, *op. cit.*, is the basic work on the role of Christian apocalyptic in primitive Church art.

the most part by art historians as a supplementary study. Notable contributions have been made by Kollwitz, Voelkl and others.¹ Nevertheless, their work has a number of shortcomings, due presumably to the fact that scholars have not had sufficient opportunity of carrying out adequate research in the enormous field involved. One notices in particular a difficulty in distinguishing between borrowed and newly-created terminology.² If reliable results are to be obtained from such terminological investigations, it is necessary to have a comprehensive overall view of the literature, of the kind which comes only from the texts themselves. There are at present no studies covering the period from the NT to the time of Constantine; Peterson's essays, though of high quality, deal only with individual points.³

Our theme in this dissertation will therefore be the pre-Constantinian Church's view of Christ as King, and we shall try to demonstrate what were the origins of the crisis which led eventually to the Theodosian figure of Christ the Heavenly King.

Excursus 1

Majestas Representations in pre-Constantinian Churches? L. v. Sybel has in a number of works put forward the hypothesis that the apses of several

¹ KOLLWITZ, *Christus als Lehrer, Plastik und Das Bild*, *passim*. VOELKL, *Kirchenbauten* (in RivAC 29), pp. 194 ff. Cf. also K. WESSEL, *Christus Rex*, AA 68 (1953), col. 118-136. (See Excursus 2 below, p. 30 f.)

² We have already dealt with the terminological problem p. 21, n. 4 and p. 26, n. 2. A further example of lack of clarity in the matter of the terminological development is KOLLWITZ' statement on the influence of the imperial titles on Christological expressions (*Christus als Lehrer*, p. 57): "Diese Kaisersymbolik wird nun auch auf Christus übertragen, Christus damit ebenfalls als *κοσμοκράτωρ* und *κύριος* bezeichnet." The choice of Christological titles in this case is entirely misleading. That Christ is *kyrios* has never been called in question. This word has ever since the NT been the principal title of Christ, and it is not more prominent in the 4th century than it was earlier. But on the other hand *κοσμοκράτωρ* was never a Christological term in the early Church, either before or after the 4th century. It is reserved in Christian language for the powers of this world, *κοσμοκράτορες*, whom Christ laid beneath his feet at his victory. There would have been more justification, had KOLLWITZ quoted the term *παντοκράτωρ*, which made its first appearance as a title for Christ during the 4th century; it had previously been reserved for the Father. But on the other hand this was no imperial title. See below, Chap. 13.

³ PETERSON, *Christus als Imperator and Zeuge der Wahrheit*.

pre-Constantinian Roman churches, *tituli*, though no longer extant, were decorated with two kinds of picture of Christ. The older type portrayed Christ with a short beard, standing, his right hand raised (*aufrufend*) and an open scroll in his left hand. Another type arose later: a bearded Christ, enthroned among the Apostles (*Majestas Domini*). According to v. Sybel we have imitations of both types in the catacombs (WMKR 40.2; and 49 and 75 respectively).¹ The group of three figures, with Christ enthroned between St. Peter and St. Paul, is also believed by v. Sybel to have originated in the pre-Constantinian period.²

The problem of the decoration of pre-Constantinian churches in general, and Roman title-churches in particular, is met with now and again in the literature on the subject. It provides a most fascinating topic. There is however no chance of arriving at a satisfactory solution at present, since as far as we know, all the tangible evidence has disappeared (with the exception of the chapel at Dura-Europos, which incidentally provides no support for v. Sybel's thesis). There is of course no reason for supposing the liturgical room to have had the same sort of paintings as the catacombs,³ but we have not the slightest clue as to the way in which church art and mortuary art differed, if they differed.

v. Sybel's hypothesis has been conclusively disproved—in so far as it concerns itself with matters capable of proof or disproof—by J. P. Kirsch.⁴ Kirsch proves that the catacomb painting (WMKR 40.2) taken by v. Sybel to be an example of the older type, does not represent Christ at all, but a prophet or an apostle. There is in fact no evidence from this period to show that Christ was ever portrayed with a beard.

On the second type, Kirsch regards it is probable that it formed part of the decorations inside the liturgical room, and was imitated in catacomb art.⁵ However, the Christ type represented here is not *Majestas Domini*, but Christ the Philosopher and his disciples. If the figure of Christ seated among the Apostles was common in the apses of pre-Constantinian churches, it is

¹ L. VON SYBEL, *Das Werden christlicher Kunst*, RepK 39 (1916), pp. 125 ff. IDEM, *Mosaiken römischer Apsiden*, ZKG 37 (1918), pp. 274 ff. Cf. IDEM, *Christliche Antike* 1 (1906), pp. 280 ff. and *Das Christentum der Katakomben und Basiliken*, HZ 106 (1910), pp. 23 ff. We have not had access to the two works in which von SYBEL claims to have considered his hypothesis in most detail, i.e. *Der Herr der Seligkeit* (1913) and *Die Anfänge der Kirchenmalerei*, Christl. Kunstbl., Sept. 1915.

² VON SYBEL, *Mosaiken*, p. 278.

³ E. MÂLE, *Rome et ses vieilles églises* (1942), pp. 52 f.

⁴ J. P. KIRSCH, *Sull'origine dei motivi iconografici nella pittura cimiteriale di Roma*, RivAC 4 (1927), pp. 278 ff. and 284 ff.

⁵ Cf. also KIRSCH, *op. cit.*, pp. 275 ff. and fig. 6. The apse fresco reproduced in this figure from the catacomb of Domitilla (WMKR 193) bears a striking resemblance to the mosaic of the Chapel of St. Aquilino in St. Lorenzo, Milan. N.b. *inter alia* the holder for the lecturer's scrolls. There seems to be reason for talking about an imitation of paintings in vanished churches here.

likely that this was due to a desire to represent him as the exalted Teacher—not as King.

Excursus 2

Majestas Representations on Tetrarchic Sarcophagi? K. Wessel has said that the origin of the *Majestas* image is to be dated to the Tetrarchic period.¹ He maintains, as against Grabar, Kollwitz and others, that the adoption of imperial symbolism by Christian art was not due to any sympathy felt by the Church for Caesar; on the contrary, it is expressive of a violent polemic against the Caesar cult of the Tetrarchic period. The theme disappeared until a time when the political situation changed, and was later taken up again, though in an altered form (Lat. 171).

Wessel's hypothesis is built on extremely diffuse material: on two Christian sarcophagi from the beginning of the 4th century, dated by Gerke to the Tetrarchic period. The first is the so-called sarcophagus of Jairus, from Arles (WS I.38.3); the second is probably somewhat more recent, and comes from Florence (WS III.287.1). A third sarcophagus of the same type, now in St. Sebastino, Rome, as the tomb of Cardinal Albani (WS I.40), is dated by Gerke to the Constantinian period.

All three have the same scene: a beardless Christ, seated on a raised chair with footstool. His right hand is raised in a rhetorical gesture; in his left hand he holds a scroll. Christ is surrounded by six persons: two stand on either side of the chair; two others are approaching—again, one from either side—with hands and face concealed by a cloth; the last two lie in *proskynesis*, their hands on the footstool.

This scene has been interpreted in various ways: as different grades of church penance, as the prayers of the living or as Jesus' farewell discourse. The third alternative is favoured by Wilpert, and before him by Gerke, though with certain reservations.² Gerke has since stressed the undeniable "royal" motif of the scene, pointing out that the *proskynesis*, as well as the custom of covering hands and face, reproduce Persian court ceremonial; he thus calls the representation "*Thronrede*".³ Its composition evidently belongs somewhere along the line of development from the philosophical to the royal Christ, though the emphasis still seems to be laid on the teaching aspect.⁴

¹ WESSEL, *Christus Rex*, pp. 118 ff.

² WILPERT in WS I, pp. 49 ff. F. GERKE, *Der neugefundene altchristliche Fries-sarkophag im Museo Archeologico zu Florenz und das Problem der Entwicklung der ältesten christlichen Friessarkophagen*, ZKG 54 (1935), p. 19, n. 4. Cf. pp. 29 ff.

³ GERKE, *Die christlichen Sarkophage*, p. 292, n. 1. IDEM, *Der Trierer Agriculus-Sarkophag*, pp. 29 f.

⁴ This is at least KOLLWITZ' view: "Mir scheint, dass auch hier ... an Gläubige zu denken ist, die nun aber nicht mehr neben Christus sitzen als seine Schüler, sondern in demütiger Haltung sich ihrem Lehrer nahen, wobei Lehrer wohl einen

The problem of iconography is a difficult one; this is no less true of the problem of dating. Although Gerke's dating of the Arles sarcophagus to 300 and the Florence sarcophagus to 310¹ has still not been challenged, Gerke himself tends to link the sarcophagi with Constantinian, rather than with Tetrarchic representations. He has characterized the scene as "*spät-tetrarchisch-frühkonstantinisch*",² and has explained that it originated from "the spirit of Lactantius and Eusebius",³ which places the composition in the conceptual context of the beginning of the Constantinian age. A further indication that Gerke considers these sarcophagi to stand on the boundary of the Constantinian period is to be seen in the cursory treatment they receive in his comprehensive work *Die christlichen Sarkophage der vorkonstantinischen Zeit*; he evidently considers them to be outside the bounds of his period.

Furthermore, there appears to be good reason for dating all three sarcophagi to late Constantinian times.⁴ Should such a dating win general recognition, those who favour the pre-Constantinian origins of the *Majestas* representation would lose their most important support.

sehr abgeblassten Sinn hat. Es ist einfach das Christusbild der Zeit." (*Christus als Lehrer*, pp. 51 ff., not noted by WESSEL.) KOLLWITZ further points (on p. 53) to a number of examples, showing that *proskynesis* was not unknown in the catacomb paintings and in sarcophagus art, and that in this context it had nothing to do with the *Majestas* image, but rather with the representation of Christ as miracle-worker.

¹ See above, p. 30, n. 3.

² *Die christlichen Sarkophage*, p. 226, n. 1.

³ *Der Trierer Agricius-Sarkophag*, p. 30.

⁴ Professor H. P. L'Orange, in conversation with the author, has said that all three sarcophagi ought to be dated later than the reliefs on the Arch of Constantine.

PART II

The Kingship of Christ in New Testament Messianism and its Development in the post-Apostolic Age

2. ROYAL TERMINOLOGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

The Kingship of Christ in the New Testament is an eschatological concept, and must be seen in relation to the various Messianic concepts of Judaism. It is closely related to the NT doctrine that the Kingdom of God began to be manifested at the coming of Christ, and is soon to be consummated at the expected judgment. Christ and the Kingdom are intimately connected; as K. L. Schmidt has emphasized, Christ *is* the Kingdom: to use Origen's classical expression, he is αὐτοβασίλεια.¹ The relationship of Christ to the Kingdom has been expressed in a number of ways by different exegetes—doubtless due to the far from straightforward character of those NT texts in which the Kingdom of God is mentioned.² There is however a large group of NT texts in which Christ is said to be ruler in the Kingdom. God appointed Christ King over his Kingdom when he set him at his right hand at the Ascension; it is Christ, as God's representative, who will judge mankind when the Kingdom comes in its fulness.

First, then, we must be quite clear as to what is *not* meant by the Kingship of Christ in the NT. It is never a question of a this-worldly political or social entity over which Christ is in some way or other

¹ K. L. SCHMIDT, *Die Wortgruppe βασιλεύς κτλ. im N. T.*, ThWB I (1932–33), pp. 576–595.

² See the survey by J. W. DOEVE, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (1953), pp. 119 ff.

ruler. That kind of Messianism was common in Judaism, and has had its day, too, in some Christian circles (e.g. that around Cerinthus). But the main stream of early Christianity looked upon Christ as the *heavenly* King, whose Kingdom is not of this world. He rules over the Church from his heavenly throne, but there is to be no overthrowing of political powers—not until the day when the present economy in its entirety ceases to exist.¹

Nor is Christ called “King” as a way of expressing his relationship to the individual. Christ the King of the individual, controlling his desires and guiding him according to the will of God, is a motif which was soon to appear in mystical theology—from Origen onward—but of which there is no trace in the NT. When Christ is referred to as King in the NT writings, this is always understood as referring to his Kingship over the Kingdom of God, or the People of God, the new Israel, which he has purchased by his suffering. The vital aspects of the early Christian attitude to the Kingship are thus the eschatological and the collective.

These aspects are not as outstanding in the post-Apostolic age as in the NT, due mainly to the fact that the doctrine of the Church became increasingly independent of its Semitic background, once it was transferred to the Hellenistic world. The Greeks found a number of concepts used by the early Church more or less incomprehensible, the result being that the early Christian kerygma had to be reformulated in a manner which was not always adequate to express the content to be transmitted.² Not least the eschatological basis and the idea of the People of God were forced into the background in this situation: Christ came to be looked upon as θεός and σωτήρ.³ The Messianic terminology of Judaism virtually disappeared, or was reinterpreted in various ways: Χριστός was understood as a personal name; ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου as an expression of Christ’s humanity; κύριος as an expression of his

¹ See J. HÉRING, *Le Royaume de Dieu et sa venue*, EHPH 35 (1937), *passim*. J. BONSIRVEN, *Le Règne de Dieu*, *Théologie* 37 (1957), *passim*. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Gottes Herrschaft und Reich* (1959), *passim*. Cf. on the other hand the too-political interpretation of NT theology in A. A. T. EHRHARDT, *Politische Metaphysik von Solon bis Augustin* 2 (1959), and the critical review by P. BESKOW in *SEÅ* 26 (1961), pp. 147–151.

² This problem is well presented by G. DIX, *The Gospel for the Greeks*, in his book *Jew and Greek* (1953), pp. 76 ff. Cf. also C. F. D. MOULE, *The Influence of Circumstances on the Use of Christological Terms*, *JTS* 10 (1959), pp. 247–263.

³ See below, p. 58.

Divinity. The royal aspect of Christ in particular became obscured—noticeable in the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists (with the exception of Justin Martyr, whose writings contain a large proportion of *testimonia* material). The eschatological aspect is given little prominence in the Alexandrian authors; this leaves distinct traces in their attitude to the Kingship of Christ.

But on the other hand the Messianic categories retained their significance in certain types of conservative literature, in which the heritage of the OT and Palestinian Judaism were most clearly conserved: in apocalyptic literature, in the *testimonia* tradition and the literature of the Martyrs; this is also true, though to a lesser extent, of the liturgies. We shall find that 4th century ideas on the Kingship of Christ constantly hark back to these classes of literature.

In the following section we shall therefore consider those types of literature in which the NT ideas on the Kingship of Christ are most clearly expressed and through which they live on during the pre-Constantinian period. We have been compelled to restrict our investigation to those themes we consider vital to the pre-Constantinian development. We do not feel it necessary in this context to give a complete account of the NT doctrine of the Kingship of Christ.¹ Nor have we concerned ourselves to any great extent with Gnostic material; although the Kingship of Christ would seem to have played a certain role in Gnosticism, its meaning there was quite different. This is a by-path, and of little or no significance for our investigation of the origins and growth of the overall conception which we find fully developed during the Theodosian period.

Constant reference has been made in this debate to the royal epithets given to Christ by the early Church. However, it has not always been shown with sufficient clarity just when and in what contexts the terms in question make their appearance as Christological epithets. When there exist parallels between the terminology of the Christian Church and the Roman empire, there has often been an uncritical

¹ For a more complete treatment of these problems we may refer especially to the works by O. CULLMANN, *Königsherrschaft Christi und Kirche im Neuen Testament*, ThSt 10 (1941). IDEM, *Christus und die Zeit* (1948). IDEM, *Les premières confessions de foi chrétiennes*, CRHPhR 30 (1948). IDEM, *Dieu et César* (1956). IDEM, *Die Christologie des Neuen Testaments*, 2nd ed. (1958). A good survey of Prof. CULLMANN's conception of the Kingdom of Christ is given (with some critical remarks) by J. FRISQUE, *Oscar Cullmann* (1960), especially pp. 106 ff. ("La royauté du Christ et l'Église").

tendency to assume influence by the latter on the former, without stopping to examine alternative possibilities. And finally, the distinction between epithets given to Christ and those reserved for the Father has not always been clearly drawn. It is therefore necessary, if we would obtain a clear picture of the faith of the early Church in Christ the King, to examine the nature and use of this Christological terminology.

The pioneer work on the comparative terminology of Christianity and the imperial cult is Deissmann's *Licht vom Osten*.¹ Deissmann discovered a large number of cases in which the language of the earliest Christian Church corresponded with that of Hellenistic State ideology in the Greek-speaking parts of the Roman empire. He saw the main cause of this correspondence in the *Kontraststimmung* felt by the early Church over against the imperial cult.² The ostentatious cultic terms applied to Caesar were taken by Christians and transferred to the Son of God, whom they considered to be their rightful bearer. In this way there arose a polemic parallelism between the cult of Caesar and the cult of Christ; even when the Christological terms were originally derived from the LXX or the Gospels, they later came into conflict with similar terms from the imperial cult.

Deissmann took up most of the terms which have since come under discussion: ἄξιος, ἀρχιερεύς, ἀρχιστράτηγος, βασιλεύς, δεσπότης, εὐεργέτης, θεός, θεοῦ υἱός, ἱερά γράμματα, κύριος, κυριακός, σωτήρ, εὐαγγέλιον, ἐπιφάνεια, παρουσία, φιλανθρωπία.³ He found parallels to all these in the language of the Roman imperial cult. But it must not be imagined that he was so naïve as to attempt to *derive* them all from this source. His work was however responsible for starting the debate on the relation between the terminology applied to Christ and that applied to Caesar.

Research has since shown it to be impossible to deal with all these

¹ G. A. DEISSMANN, *Licht vom Osten*, 1st ed. (1908); in the following pages we refer to the 4th ed. (1923). Before DEISSMANN no important work on the whole subject seems to have been published; only examinations of separate Christological terms. DEISSMANN himself refers mainly to works by classical scholars, especially to D. MAGIE, *De Romanorum iuris publici sacrique vocabulis sollemnibus in Graecum conversis* (1905).

² DEISSMANN, *op. cit.*, p. 287. Note, however, that Deissmann (*op. cit.*, p. 288, n. 1) criticizes the overstatements in H. WEINEL, *Die Stellung des Urchristentums zum Staat* (1908).

³ DEISSMANN, *op. cit.*, pp. 290 ff.

terms *en bloc*. All they have in common is their parallelism with imperial terminology—a fact which tells us little or nothing about their meaning. We must therefore divide them up into a number of groups:

1. Messianic titles taken over by the NT from the LXX and from Jewish traditions. To this category belong βασιλεύς, κύριος and θεός. Another LXX word is ἀρχιερεύς: this does not however have the same explicitly royal character, since a distinction is drawn in the NT and post-canonical literature between the royal and the priestly functions of Christ.

2. Hellenistic terms which do not belong to the language of the LXX or which, when they do occur in the LXX, have no Messianic significance. Such terms are found mainly in the Pastoral Epistles: σωτήρ—σωτηρία, παρουσία, ἐπιφάνεια, φιλανθρωπία and εὐεργεσία. The terminology of Rev. may also be mentioned in this context.

3. Terms having royal character, but which in the NT are particularly linked with God, and which are first transferred to Christ at the time of the Arian conflict, viz. παντοκράτωρ and ὕψιστος.

Messianic Titles

The faith of the NT in Christ as King, ruling the world and the new People of God, drew its inspiration from the Messianic sayings of the OT. The LXX was an inexhaustible source of concepts originally connected with the sacral king, concepts which could be transferred to Christ. He is the fulfilment of all the prophecies of the OT—all the books of the OT, not least the Psalter, being regarded as prophecy. Virtually all the Christological titles in the NT are therefore royal in character: Χριστός, θεοῦ υἱός, υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου and possibly also ἀμνός.¹ This has been clearly demonstrated by recent scholarship,

¹ On C. J. BALL's and C. F. BURNEY's theory, that ἀμνός as a Christological title comes from Aram. מְלִיץ, which also has the meaning of "servant" (Greek παῖς), see J. JEREMIAS, art. ἀμνός, ThWB 1 (1932–33), pp. 342–344. IDEM, art. παῖς θεοῦ, ThWB 5 (1944–54), pp. 676–713. IDEM, Ἀμνός θεοῦ—παῖς θεοῦ, ZNW 34 (1935), pp. 115–123. B. GÄRTNER, מְלִיץ als Messiasbezeichnung, SEÅ 18–19 (1953–54), pp. 98–108. C. K. BARRETT, *The Lamb of God*, NTS 1 (1954–55), pp. 210–218. C. H. DODD, who does not accept the מְלִיץ theory, nevertheless believes that ἀμνός is a Messianic title, "virtually equivalent to ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ", *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (1953), p. 238. For the Messianic titles in general, see W. STAERK, *Soter* 1, BFTb 31 (1933). IDEM, *Die Erlösererwartung in den östlichen Religionen*, *Soter* 2 (1938). V. TAYLOR, *The Names of Jesus* (1953).

which has shown how closely the Messianic sayings of Judaism and hence of the NT are connected with the sacral kingship of pre-exilic Israel.¹

In the following account we must therefore limit our attention to those Messianic titles and functions which were clearly understood as being "royal" during the post-Apostolic age. The Church Fathers did not consider "the Son of Man" to be a royal title, but an expression of the humanity of Christ.² Not even Χριστός, which, by virtue of its being the Greek equivalent of "Messiah", ought to be the royal title *par excellence* is taken to be an expression of Christ's royal power after the NT. It becomes in general no more than a proper name for Jesus; and when its proper meaning—"anointed"—is expounded, equal emphasis is placed on its priestly or prophetic aspects and on its royal aspect.³ The concept of the *suffering* king, so important in OT Messianism,⁴ is less dominant in the early Church, where those OT sayings which have to do with the suffering of the Messiah (e.g. Isa. 53) and sayings about the Kingly power of Christ are often contrasted. There is however an expository tradition in which Ps. 95 (96).10 and Isa. 9.6 are interpreted to mean that Christ's Kingly power was purchased through suffering.⁵ Those functions normally associated with the concept of "King" are those of the exalted ruler, judge and conqueror; the Kingship of Christ is therefore principally associated with the Ascension, *sessio* and *parousia*. We shall see that Ps. 109 (110) and Dan. 7 are central to faith in Christ as King. He is King because he has been exalted to the right hand of God; God has placed his enemies beneath his feet; and he shall come again on the clouds of heaven to judge the world.

Another complex of ideas centring on the Kingship of Christ has to

¹ See the literature mentioned below, p. 124.

² Cf. however L. BOUYER, *La notion christologique du Fils de l'homme, a-t-elle disparu dans la patristique grecque?* in *Mélanges Robert, Travaux de l'Inst. Cath. de Paris* 4 (1957), pp. 519-530.

³ See below, pp. 106 ff. MOULE, *Influence*, p. 260, points out how incomprehensible the title Χριστός was to the non-Jewish Hellenistic world.

⁴ I. ENGNELL, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (1943), *passim*. IDEM, *The 'Ebed Yahweh Songs and the Suffering Messiah in "Deutero-Isaiah"*, BJRL 31 (1948), pp. 54-93. G. W. AHLSTRÖM, *Psalm 89* (1959), *passim*.

⁵ See below, pp. 98 ff. It must be stressed that the motif of victory and triumph dominates over the idea of suffering in OT Messianism also; see I. ENGNELL, art. *Herrens Tjänare*, SBU 1 (1948), col. 846.

do with the authority by which he claims to be the Messiah. The main stream of Judaism required of the true Messiah that he should be a son of David; his legitimacy was confirmed by his membership of the family of David. The Kingdom he came to found should also be politically nationalist in character. There is therefore a latent revolutionary tendency in Messianism, a tendency periodically expressed in local rebellions. Jesus, by contrast, represented a form of non-political Messianism which seems to have had earlier parallels in the apocalyptic speculations of esoteric Judaism (the Enoch literature).¹ The view of the NT is that the Kingdom of God is not of this world, but other-worldly and eschatological; Christ is not an earthly ruler: he is the heavenly King. The Church did not attach a great deal of significance to the Davidic descent, and the Kingship derived therefrom. The Kingship of Christ was instead traced back to his Divine Sonship. This means that from the very first the Kingship of Christ was connected with his Divinity, and it is characteristic that the problem of his Kingship was not solved, theologically speaking, before the Council of Nicaea laid down that he is "begotten of his Father before all worlds".

βασιλεύς

The title βασιλεύς has little significance in the NT as an epithet of Christ. The Christian Church, seeking to express its faith in the royal power of Christ, normally used the title κύριος—the most common Christological term in the NT, apart from Χριστός—while βασιλεύς on the whole (the exceptions include Jn.) was used so little as to prompt Cullmann to call it "a variant of the title *kyrios*".²

The reason for this is not far to seek. The term βασιλεύς, which was the most usual word in Koiné Greek for "king" in a purely political sense, and which was later to become the standard designation for the Roman emperor,³ was colourless, political and secular in character. To be sure, it had been used in the LXX and elsewhere as an equivalent to the Hebrew *mālak* (also referring to God), and it was a common

¹ H. WINDISCH, *Der messianische Krieg und das Urchristentum* (1909). Cf. also literature mentioned above, p. 34, n. 1.

² K. L. SCHMIDT, βασιλεύς. CULLMANN, *Christologie*, p. 227.

³ V. VON SCHOEFFER, art. βασιλεύς 1, PWK 3 (1899), col. 55–82. DEISSMANN, *Licht*, pp. 310 f. E. LOHMEYER, *Christuskult und Kaiserkult*, SGVS 90 (1919), pp. 11 ff. och *passim*. H. KLEINKNECHT, art. βασιλεύς im Griechentum, ThWB 1 (1932–33), pp. 562–563.