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THE QUEENSHIP OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN IN

THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH

The *fact* of the Blessed Virgin's position as Queen of heaven and earth is beyond all doubt. This is true not only with regard to her Queenship in the improper and metaphorical sense of the term, but in the proper sense.¹ The *nature* of Mary's Queenship is a question discussed by theologians in recent years.² The various views expressed by outstanding Mariologists relative to the nature of Mary's Queenship can be reduced to the following two: According to one group of theologians, the nature of Mary's Queenship can best be understood by considering the influence she exercises in view of her position as Mother of the King and her position as Spouse of the King. In the matter of the distribution of grace Mary has special influence with her Divine Son. According to this view, Mary does not distribute grace of her own right nor does she possess in any way a three-fold power similar to that possessed by Christ as King of heaven and earth; by her unique intercessory power resulting from her Divine Maternity and her position as Spouse she influences her Son in our behalf.

¹ E. Dublancy, *Royauté de Marie sur l'ensemble des élus*, in *D.T.C.*, vol. 9, col. 2434: "Just as Our Lord can be called King in an improper sense, so also can the Blessed Virgin be called Queen in an improper and metaphorical sense of the term. This use of the term merely indicates that Mary enjoys an excellence and primacy over the rest of creation. The Litany of Loretto makes use of the term in this sense when it refers to Mary as Queen of the Apostles, Queen of Martyrs, etc. However, the Blessed Virgin is Queen not only in this wide sense of the term, that is by reason of her excellence in comparison with the rest of creation, but in a proper sense of the term, namely by reason of her dominative power over the rest of creation." G. Roschini, *Compendium Mariologiae*, Romae, 1946, p. 317. This author expresses a similar view; he compares the power of the Blessed Virgin to the dominative power possessed by Christ. The latter is the power of jurisdiction, the former is merely analogous to it.

² A. Luis, *La Realeza de María*, Madrid, 1942, pp. 123-133.

Since she is Mother and Spouse of the King she has a right to be considered Queen-Mother or Queen.³

The second theory agrees that Mary is Queen in the sense already mentioned, but the proponents of this theory consider that the above view of Mary's Queenship is too restrictive.⁴ According to the second theory, the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin should be patterned on what we know of the Kingship of Christ, preserving, of course, the essential difference existing between the prerogatives of Mary and the prerogatives of Our Lord. The nature of Mary's Queenship, according to this group, is determined from an analysis of her position as Co-redemptrix. The authors further maintain that since Mary merited the objective redemption together with Christ, she has acquired the right to distribute grace to whom she will (subordinate to the will of Christ). By reason of having co-merited the means of salvation, Mary can be said to direct us to salvation *in modo congruo post Christum*.⁵

It is not the purpose of this paper to pass judgment on either of the two theories proposed nor is it the purpose of this paper to make a speculative study of the principles in Mariology that have a bearing on Mary's role of Queen. The above theories have been summarized in order to give the reader the *status quaestionis* as it is at present.

The purpose of the present article is to assemble the various liturgical citations which have reference to the Queenship of Mary. In gathering together the proofs for the Queenship

³ Cf. Serapio de Iragui, *La Realeza de la Virgen María en la Liturgia*, in *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de América Latina*, Buenos Aires, 1950, p. 34.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ L. De Gruyter, *De Beata Maria Regina, Disquisitio Positivo-Speculativa*, Buscoduci, 1934, pp. 124-173. It seems that one's views on the nature, etc., of Mary's Queenship will ultimately be governed by one's views on the primary principle (or principles) of Mariology. For a very good treatment of this subject see L. Everett, C.S.S.R., *Mary's Co-redemption and Her Other Prerogatives*, in *Marian Studies*, vol. 2, 1951, pp. 132-137.

of Mary from this source we can underline the force of the argument for the fact of the Queenship *ex liturgia Ecclesiae*. Moreover, the assembling together of these liturgical citations will facilitate a later study of them in attempting to determine the nature of the Queenship.

Closely allied with the liturgy is the problem of the content of Marian archeology. A discussion of this topic would extend the present paper beyond its designated length. It is hoped that the subject will be treated at some future time.

It is unnecessary to review the theological value of the argument from the sacred liturgy. The recent documents of Pope Pius XII clearly point out the force of this theological source. For example, *Munificentissimus Deus* says: ". . . the liturgy of the Church does not engender the Catholic faith, but rather springs from it, in such a way that the practices of sacred worship proceed from the faith as the fruit comes from the tree. . . ." ⁶ In *Mediator Dei* Pope Pius XII scores the view that the sacred liturgy "is a proving ground for the truths to be held of faith . . . this is not what the Church teaches and enjoins (concerning the liturgy) . . . whenever there was a question of defining a truth revealed by God, the Sovereign Pontiff and the Councils in their recourse to the theological sources . . . have not seldom drawn many an argument from this sacred science of the liturgy." ⁷

Finally, it is pointed out that we should not expect to find in the liturgy that precision of terminology found in modern day doctrinal treatises on the Queenship of Mary. Moreover, in examining any text we should listen patiently to the author, allowing the writer his own choice of language; it would be

⁶ *A.A.S.*, vol. 42, 1950, p. 760.

⁷ *A.A.S.*, vol. 39, 1947, p. 540. It is not to be maintained that every liturgical text is considered part of the Church's official teaching. Many times the lessons of the second nocturn refer to happenings, the truth of which the Church does not consider part of the Catholic faith. *Ineffabilis Deus* contains a classical example of the force and value of the argument *ex liturgia*.

wrong to attach to his words a connotation which has since become technical by reason of controversies begun centuries after his death.

A passing glance at the expressions used in the missal and the breviary is sufficient to show that Mary has been invoked as Queen throughout the centuries. The refrain is repeated time and time again and even in those feasts where such a reference would not be expected. There is a striking similarity between the cycle of Christological feasts and the Marian feasts. It is hoped that some day the Marian cycle will be completed with the insertion of a "feast of the Queenship of Mary."

In the present article I have confined myself to a consideration of the contents of the Roman-Latin Liturgy. In doing this, the universal element so necessary to the argument *ex liturgia* can be preserved and at the same time the article can be kept within its designated length.

The Contents of the Missal

1. Abstracting for the present from the precise meaning that is conveyed in the much discussed text of the Apocalypse, the text is used in reference to Mary many times in the liturgy. In the Feast of the Apparition at Lourdes we find it used in the Epistle of the Mass: "Mulier amicta sole, et luna sub pedibus ejus et in capite ejus corona stellarum duodecim. . . ."

2. The Feast of the Seven Sorrows: the Tract for this feast calls Mary "Regina coeli et Domina mundi. . . ."

3. The Communion versicle of the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel: "Regina mundi dignissima. . . ."

4. The Introit of the new Mass for the Feast of Assumption consists in the first verse of chapter twelve of the Apocalypse: "Signum magnum apparuit in coelo: Mulier amicta sole, et luna sub pedibus ejus, et in capite ejus corona stellarum duodecim."

5. Pope Benedict XV granted to many dioceses and religious orders the permission to celebrate the Feast of the Mediatrix of all Graces. This Feast abounds in references to Mary's queenly prerogatives, without, however, the use of the term Queen. The Introit of the Mass begins "Adeamus cum fiducia ad thronum gratiae. . . ."

6. The Masses taken from the *commune Beatae Virginis* repeat some of the prayers already referred to, for example, "gloriosa Regina mundi . . ." and "subveni, Domina, clamantibus ad te jugiter. . . ."

The Contents of the Breviary

The Breviary is even more explicit in its references to Mary under the aspect of Queen.

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8th). Although this feast does not *per se* pertain to that group of feasts which honor the royalty of the Blessed Virgin, there are expressions in the office for that day which refer to her position as Queen. The lessons of the day are of particular interest. In the fifth lesson the following text is applied to Mary: "De ipsa Salomon in Canticis, quasi in laudem ejus, Veni, inquit, columba mea . . . veni de Libano, veni, coronaberis." In lesson six we find the following expression: "Universo mundo auxiliatricem manum tuam porrige. . . ."

The Apparition of Our Lady at Lourdes (February 11th). In the second antiphon of Lauds the Blessed Virgin is presented to us as "Mulier amicta sole, et luna sub pedibus ejus, et in capite ejus corona stellarum duodecim."

The Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (July 16th). This feast has direct reference to the Queenship of Mary, but in a limited sense, namely as the Queen of Carmel. There are, however, texts which have reference to a Queenship in the strict sense of the term. In the first antiphon for Vespers we read: "Ego in altissimis habitavi, et thronus meus in columba

nubis." The first antiphon for the second nocturn is "Adstitt regina. . . ." The antiphon for the Benedictus during the octave contains these words: "Mundi princeps et Regina. . . ."

The Feast of the Assumption (August 15th). This feast has always been expressive of the queenly dignity of the Blessed Virgin, even though the theme of the feast is not the Queenship of Mary. The new office abounds in references to Mary as Queen. Of all the offices examined, this one is by far the most expressive concerning the position of Mary as Queen.

The hymn for the first Vespers says:

"Gleaming as you are in resplendent glory,
All nature extols thee,
You who have been called to scale
The heights of every dignity.
Queen in thy triumph we beseech thee,
Turn thine eyes on us poor exiles,
That through thy gracious help
We may attain our home in Paradise."

The last two stanzas of the hymn for Matins contain these lines:

"Rise! Enter heaven leaning on thy Loved One,
Take the crown of shining stars,
And receive from thy children the hymns that signal
Thy blessed triumph.
Praise to the highest Trinity forever,
Who to thee, O Blessed Virgin, the crown have awarded,
And proclaimed our Mother
Queen of heaven."

The hymn for Lauds bears citing in its entirety, but for the sake of brevity I will confine myself to translating some of the lines:

"Thou sittest by Christ in our assiduous service,
Heaven and earth celebrate your queenly power."

The response of the fourth lesson is "Adstitit regina. . . ." The ninth lesson in part is as follows: "Felix dies, qui ancillam Domini humillimam eo usque provexit ac extulit, ut prae-stantissima caeli Regina, et ne altius quidem posset assurgere, quoniam in Regni solio sublimata, post Christum gloriosa resedit." The Magnificat for the second Vespers completes the many references to the royalty of Mary found in this office: "Hodie Maria Virgo caelos ascendit: gaudete, quia cum Christo regnat in aeternum." Although it is true that all the blessed in heaven "reign with Christ," this phrase has a different meaning when applied to Mary.⁸

The Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (September 8th). The hymn for Lauds refers to Mary as "Gloriosa Domina. . . ."

The Feast of the Rosary (October 7th). The hymns for this feast are quite expressive of the royal dignity of the Blessed Virgin.

"Bis sena cingunt sidera
Almae parentis verticem;
Throno propinqua Filii
Cunctis creatis imperat." (Lauds)

The hymn for second Vespers contains these words:

"Ave, in triumphis Filii,
In ignibus Paracliti,
In regni honore et lumine,
Regina fulgens gloria."

The Magnificat antiphon reads: "Gloriosa Regina mundi. . . ." The response for the sixth lesson contains the words from the Apocalypse: "Mulier amicta. . . ." The last antiphon for

⁸ In *Mystici Corporis* we find the same expression: "unaque simul cum Filio suo regnat. . . ." *A.A.S.*, vol. 35, 1943, p. 248.

Lauds refers to Mary as "Exalted over all the choirs of Angels and wearing a crown of twelve stars on her head."

The *commune Beatae Virginis* frequently refers to the Blessed Virgin as "gloriosa Regina mundi. . . ." Assistance is often sought from Mary in the words "Subveni, Domina, clamantibus ad te jugiter."

Those antiphons which are called "final antiphons" are further evidence of the solicitude the Church employs to invoke Mary under her title of Queen.⁹ One of the most expressive declarations of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin is the "Salve Regina." For centuries the Church has sung this song of praise to Mary, and has permitted it to remain as part of the Mass in some rites. The "Regina caeli . . ." is another expression of our devotion to the Queen of heaven. The content of this prayer is similar to the former prayer, although the latter is not as explicit in expressing the royal prerogatives of Mary. Two other final antiphons which are worthy of note are: "Ave, Regina caelorum . . . Ave, Domina angelorum . . ." and "O gloriosa Domina." In the Divine Office the final prayers are directed to Mary; three out of four of these prayers salute Mary as Queen.

Conclusion

The fact of the Queenship of Mary is proclaimed with such evidence and constancy in the liturgy of the Church that a passing glance would be sufficient to enable us to maintain that this prerogative is enjoyed by Mary. Some authors would maintain the fact of the Queenship on the evidence of the Salve Regina alone, even though there were no other proofs. I would say that the fact of the Queenship is most evident in

⁹ Cf. A. J. Koenders, O.Carm., *Maria in den Eeredienst der Katholieke Kerk*, Amsterdam, vol. 2, 1932, pp. 87-97. This work, consisting of 3 volumes, was published in Amsterdam, 1927-1937. It is one of the most exhaustive studies in its field.

the new office for the Feast of the Assumption. All in all, the liturgy provides us with an abundance of proofs for the justification of the title of "Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth."

Do the liturgical texts offer any solution concerning the sense in which the title is to be understood? It seems to me that many of the texts can be understood as indicating a Queenship in the wide sense of the term. I would interpret all such expressions as "Queen of the Martyrs . . . Virgins," etc., in this manner. The sense of these terms is that Mary excels any and all of those in the designated group. It would, however, be quite impossible to limit all of the texts to this restricted sense. We are justified in stating that the liturgy refers to Our Lady as Queen of heaven and earth in the strict sense of the term, namely, one who rules and directs mankind to its ultimate end. There does not seem to be any other way in which to interpret such expressions as: "Domina mundi . . . Regina mundi dignissima . . . Domina angelorum . . . Subveni, Domina, Clamantibus ad te jugiter . . . Ave, Domina angelorum. . . ." "The Blessed Trinity hath proclaimed Our Mother Queen of heaven and awarded to her the crown . . ." etc.

Finally, there are some expressions which have reference to the *manner* in which Mary exercises her queenly power. At first sight, some phrases seem to attribute to Mary a full dominative power, a power which would seem to be that of a substitute king. It would be absurd to interpret these isolated phrases in this manner. There is only one dominative power in the kingdom of God and that is exercised exclusively by Christ. We can say that Mary enjoys a power analogous to the power of Christ, a power of directing and ruling in the Kingdom of Christ, subordinate to, and dependent on, the power of her divine Son. In this view Mary's part in the directing of mankind to its ultimate end would consist in bestowing the means to our ultimate end—grace—which she merited together with Christ and subordinate to Him.

It is hoped that some day the Holy Father may issue an Encyclical on the Queenship of Mary similar to the *Quas primas*. If such an Encyclical is issued, one will find the solution to the problems which present-day Mariologists discuss concerning the nature of the Queenship of Mary. For the present we know that the liturgy of the Church justifies the title "Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth."

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