

The king is an ecclesiastical person

THE PRIESTLY CHARACTER OF KINGSHIP

Such, then, was essentially the King of France: a vigilante, who not only does justice, but is the source of all justice in his kingdom as a father in his family.

And the judicial functions had in his hands all the more authority, as they seemed supernatural and almost divine.

- " *The monarchy of Hugh Capet, writes Achille Luchaire, is priestly kingship: the king is a minister of God.* "
- " *The royal function," he says again, "is a divine mission.* "
- Suger represents Louis VI as " *the vicar of God whose living image he carries in himself* ".

In the XVth century yet, we watched the king as the first ecclesiastical person. The people rushed to the king's passage to touch the bottom of his robe like a relic.

THE THAUMATURG KING

Louis XIV and Louis XV operated on healings of scrofula and scrofula, of which we have many reports.

The Bolognese Locatelli, on the one hand, and the other a German, Dr. Nemeitz, give the description of the ceremony in Paris, which they attended. It takes place in the long vaulted rooms on the ground floor of the Louvre, where the Antiques Museum is located today. Patients with scrofula or scrofula are placed in two rows. Louis XIV puts his hand on everyone's head and says:

God heals him.

Then he kisses her. There were hundreds of unfortunate people there, counted up to eight hundred on the same day, suffering from these diseases of skin. They had certainly been washed beforehand; to reach the end, the king needed a good stomach.

After the ceremony in the cathedral of Reims where he had just been crowned king of France (October 1723), Louis XV, aged thirteen, in accordance with the traditional custom went to the abbey church of Saint-Rémi to hear the mass.

Along the route, where the tapestries of the crown had been stretched, the Swiss and French guards were hedging. The mounted grenadiers, the white musketeers, and the black musketeers, so called from the dress of their mounts, opened the march, followed by the light horse-horses; then the provost of the hotel walking on foot. The lords of the court, covered with silk and lace, on their richly harnessed horses, preceded the three steeds of the king, who went without rider, led by the bridle, under caparasses of blue velvet, embroidered with gold and silver, then twelve pages on horseback, and the trumpets of the Chamber, the hundred Swiss with their strawberries of linen in several ranks, halberds on their shoulders. Immediately before the king, he rode Prince Charles of Lorraine, first squire; finally, the young King Louis XV, dressed in ruby velvet, embroidered with gold: he was charming, with his pretty face framed by clear curls and large blue eyes. The reins of his horse were held by two squires; six Scottish guards walked on the sides. The procession was closed by the gendarmes of the Guard.

They had hesitated to impose on the young prince the ceremony of the scrofula because of the extreme fatigue which it was to cause him; after which it was recognized that it was impossible to suppress it, the tradition imposed it. The patients had also been transported to Reims from all parts of France.

On the 29th of October, after having heard Mass in the abbey of Saint-Rémi, the young king passed into the large park which adjoined him. On both sides of the long avenues, at the foot of the ancient elms, whose yellow leaves already covered the ground with a perforated carpet, the sick, scrofulous and paralytic, were arranged in rows, about two thousand in number.

Louis XV. Appeared, under a cloak of gold cloth, in which stood the light blue cord of the order of the Holy Ghost, and the insignia, a dove with outspread wings, sparkling with diamonds. The two ushers of the Chamber, in white satin doublets, in white velvet mantles knotted with silver ribbons, in white satin caps stuffed with white feathers, their masses of gold on their shoulders, were walking before him. The oils of the coronation had just sanctified it.

He stopped in front of each patient and gently touching his cheek with the back of his hand, he said:

The king touches you, God heals you.

The great chaplain, who was following, was putting a silver coin in his hand, while the drums of the Swiss rolled like thunder.

Shortly thereafter, the intendants of the various provinces sent certificates to the Court attesting to a number of cures.

The popular front of the monarchy

A KING ACCESSIBLE TO ALL HIS SUBJECTS

The most brilliant theorist of the old monarchy of the XIXth century, Bonald says:

What a great idea our fathers ought not to have of royalty, since they respected kings who walked, so to speak, in the midst of them, stripped of all the splendor which surrounds them today.

By the end of the XIth century Guibert of Nogent opposes paternal kindness of the kings of France up to the foreign sovereigns. " *In the kings of France* ," he says, " *a natural modesty shines*. He quotes from them the word of *Scripture* which they revive: " *Prince, do not exalt yourself, but be among your subjects as one of their own*. "

The palace of our kings, open to all comers, had the simplicity of bourgeois homes. The Englishman Walter Map enters there, like the others, he approaches the king. It was Louis VII. The conversation commits itself.

To your prince, said Louis VII, speaking of the Court of England, nothing is wanting: prizes, gold and silver, silk stuffs, precious stones, he has everything in abundance; at the Court of France we have only bread, wine, and gaiety.

The Englishman sees in these words a great eulogy of the monarchs of his country, and admires the courtesy shown by the King of France.

In the XIIIth century, King was walking on foot through the streets of Paris where everyone approached it without more ado. History has preserved a dialogue that would have been established between a juggler and Philippe-Auguste. The histrion asks the king for help, because he is, he assures, of his family.

- How are you my relative? said the king.

- I am your brother, lord, by Adam the first man; only his legacy was badly shared and I did not have my share.

- Come tomorrow and I'll give you your share.

The next day, in his palace, Philip Augustus saw the juggler among the crowd that had entered. He moves him forward and, giving him a denier:

- That's the portion I owe you. When I have given as much to each of our brothers descended from Adam, it is scarcely, in all my kingdom, I will have a denier.

The anecdote lack of authenticity, transmission by a contemporary would be no less characteristic.

Louis XIV writes:

If there is one singular character in this monarchy, it is the free and easy access of subjects to the prince.

One entered the palace of the king as in a mill. Foreigners do not cease to express their surprise. I went to the Louvre, writes Locatelli in 1665,

I went there in complete freedom, and, crossing the various guard-houses, I at last reached that door, which is opened as soon as it is touched, and most often by the king himself. You just have to scratch it and we introduce you immediately. This king wants all his subjects to enter freely.

THE KING AND QUEEN HAVE LITTLE PRIVACY

The Bolognese waiter attends the toilet of the queen who was done in public:

While she was being combed, Locatelli writes, she wore a light white corset, well trimmed with whales, tight at the waist, and a skirt so narrow that it seemed wrapped in a silk bag. The queen wearing her hair, the pages brought her outer garments, of a pretty stuff, extremely rich, with flowers alternately blue and gold on a background of silver, and the ornaments which were fitted to her waist by riders. They even lacerated her and finished dressing her, but the women placed the jewels on their heads and bodices. The toilet finished, she turned to the foreigners, made a beautiful bow and flew, so to speak, to the apartment of the queen-mother (Anne of Austria).

There were so many people in the room that Locatelli could see the queen only at this moment " *and only in the large mirror in front of her, where the whole room was reflected* ."

It will still be so under Louis XVI. In 1770 the dauphine Marie Antoinette takes residence at the castle of Muette. His toilet is in public. So that more people can attend, there are benches on amphitheater bleachers. The Dauphine writes to her mother:

I put my red and wash my hands in front of everyone; then the men go out, the ladies stay and I dress in front of them.

THE KING'S HOUSE IS EVERYONE'S HOME

The king's house became a public place. The first comer would behave freely. One everyone was at home. We imagine the difficulty of maintaining order and cleanliness. It was, from morning to night, a turbulent and noisy crowd of people from all kinds of conditions. The undersides and corners of the stairs, the corridors, the balconies, the drums of the doors served to satisfy all kinds of needs. In places, the castles of the Louvre, Vincennes or Fontainebleau became sentinels. To enter the queen's room, the ladies would take up their skirts. Until the third quarter of the XVIIth century, the Louvre is reported for its garbage and stench.

Nicolas de la Mare, intendant of the house of the Count de Vermandois, writes on this subject:

In many places of the courtyard, in the alleys (corridors) from above, behind the doors and almost everywhere, we see a thousand garbage, we feel a thousand intolerable stains, caused by the natural necessities that everyone will do all the days, both those who are lodged in the Louvre, and those who habitually frequent and cross it. In many places, there are balconies and advances laden with the same garbage and rubbish, sweeps, and basins of the rooms that the valets and servants are going to throw away every day.

Parts of the Palace of Versailles, and until the end of the Old Regime, will similarly release all sorts of perfumes. Viollet-le-Duc relates that having visited, under the Restoration, the palace of Versailles, in the company of an old lady who had frequented the old Court, one passed by a corridor where he felt very bad. And the marchioness to cover her nose with this reflection:

- That reminds me of a fine weather.

Louis XIV had tried to react. Bussy-Rabutin admires him for having managed to put some order in his house and to give him " *the cleanliness of the individual*. "

It is understandable that these ancient traditions, which could not be modified, inspired the King with the desire to transfer to Versailles the abode of the monarchy. In Paris, with the growth of the city and the multiplication of relations between the king and his subjects, it had become impossible to breathe.

He was also at the Palace of Versailles as in Paris. The royal residence remains open to all comers.

We passed, writes Arthur Young, who is quite surprised, through a crowd of people and there were several who were not too well dressed.

Young comes a second time to Versailles: the king had just left his apartments, where everyone entered freely; he notes " *these little marks of disorder* " left by daily life in rooms that have not yet been arranged.

MEALS IN PUBLIC

The public was more particularly admitted to the "grand couvert" which took place regularly every Sunday and - which is to note - the holidays in the royal family. This one was then reunited whole, including the princes of the blood. Louis XIV forced himself to dine in public until the last days of his life, until August 24, 1715 - he was to die on September 1st. His tiredness had not allowed him to leave his dressing gown.

I observed, notes Saint-Simon, that he could swallow only liquid and that he had difficulty to be watched.

Under Louis XV, the Parisians, the provincials will come to attend the meal of the king to admire his presence, his elegance, but even more his skill to blow the top of the shell of an egg, quickly, the back of his fork.

" *Attention! the king will eat his egg!* "

At this point, the ladies sitting with the king strayed from him so that the crowd could see better. Louis XV. Knew the pleasure which his subjects found in this detail; so he insisted on regularly eating eggs under his cover. Louis XV is probably the man of the world who has eaten the greatest number of boiled eggs.

The onlookers, says M^{me} Campan, who came on Sunday in Versailles, returned home less thrilled with the beautiful figure of the king, as the skill with which he opened his eggs.

At dessert, the king offered all the ladies present fruit and ice cream. In 1772, a young Genevese girl, Rosalie de Constant, came to attend the grand cover.

They offered, she writes, the ice cream of the dessert to the ladies who were there to see. I found them very good.

ORGANIZED TRIPS FOR VERSAILLES

To transport to Versailles the Parisians who wished to visit the monarch, they had organized omnibus manners, some called " *carabas*," and the others " *chamber pots* ." Here is the description:

Twenty travelers, with ten sols each, were crammed into the enormous cage with squeaky axles, scrap metal bouncing on the pavement, in the midst of a cloud of white dust. The others sat beside the automédon, perched on the tarpaulin, or huddled in the baskets hanging on the sides. Eight strong horses pulled the coach, and when, at the ascent of Sèvres, sandy and difficult, the carriage sweated, blew, was returned, the whole company descended to relieve it a little, and climbed the coast while chatting.

Those at the front of the car were called " *the monkeys* " and those with the seat at the back were called " *rabbits* ". The expression traveling *in monkey* and *rabbit still* exists today in Brittany. One hears there say: " *I placed myself*" *in monkey* " ", which means forward, or " *rabbit* ", which means at the back of the car.

The *monkey* and the *rabbit* , writes Mercier, descend to the gilded gate of the castle, remove the powder from their shoes, put the sword to the side, enter the gallery and here they are who contemplate at their ease the royal family and who judge of the physiognomy and good grace of the princesses. They then do the courtiers as long as they want. They place themselves between two dukes, elbowing a prince who is too eager, who restrains his gesture when he has overridden it, and nothing prevents the *rabbit* and the *monkey* from appearing in the apartments and in the grand cover of the Court.

THE KING IS PART OF THE FAMILY

Also, as noted by Mercier,

All over France people talk about the Court of Versailles, and it is rare that, in the most remote city, there is someone who can not say *for sure* , for having come in caraba or pot

of chamber, how the king is made, how much the queen loves the " *apples of orange* ", if the Dauphine is pretty and if the princesses walk with a good air.

Everyone, called Rétif de la Bretonne, - even those who had never seen him - regarded the king as a personal acquaintance.

The events concerning the King and Queen are for the whole of France family events. The king's house is the own "house of France".

On the journey from Alsace to Paris, what did Marie Leszczyńska, betrothed to Louis XV, come to greet her? Whole parishes arrive, banners in the lead, singing hymns, kneeling before their new queen. The roads are strewn with grass and flowers.

The same spirit is found in the speech that the ladies of the Halle come to make to their young queen Marie Leszczyńska on November 14, 1725, upon her arrival at Fontainebleau. The Gellé woman speaks on behalf of her classmates:

Madam, I bring our most beautiful truffles to your Majesty. I would like to have more. Eat a lot and have the king eat it, because that is very good for the generation. We wish you all the best, and I hope you will make us all happy.

GENERAL INVITATION TO THE DAUPHIN'S WEDDING

At the ball given for the marriage of Marie-Josèphe de Saxe with the Dauphin, son of Louis XV, everyone is invited, I mean all the French: it's a family celebration. Some of these cousins of the king are even badly brought up: they are mounted on the silk benches to better see the dancers and answer with a word as energetic as laconic to the ushers who want them down.

At Marie-Antoinette's marriage with the Dauphin, who will be named Louis XVI on the throne, the presiding spirit is the same. Everyone, indistinctly, enters the great Hall of Mirrors where the royal family is assembled. Game tables have been arranged. The ladies who do not play took place on stands arranged throughout the gallery, against the wall. Opposite, on the side of the windows which give on the "green carpet", has been arranged a balustrade which reigns from one end to the other of the gallery. Through this pass the people. Everyone is admitted without any other formality, provided that one is not messy or ragged and that one follows the fixed route. M^{me} the Dauphine, future queen of France, sits next to the king her father-in-law, and with them the royal family took their place around a large table where the king, queen, princes and princesses chatter familiarly and They play bourgeois cards, while the people parade by staring at the bride, the future queen, and all the members of the house of France.

Speaking of the bedding of the future Queen of France, on the wedding night, Marshal Saxe writes:

Certainly, there are times when you need all the assurance of a person trained to support this role with dignity. There is one, among others, which is that of the bed, where the curtains are opened when the bride and groom have been put to the nuptial bed, which is terrible, for the whole Court is in the room.

THE QUEEN GIVES BIRTH IN PUBLIC

The queen, the Dauphine will give an heir to the crown. Childbirth must be done in public, in front of everyone, under the eyes of the people to whom the child belongs.

" *It is the grandeur of you and your child,* " Henri IV said to Marie de Medici.

The midwife recognized the pain. Henry IV immediately warned the Queen of the usages of the Court. Marie replies that she has always been determined to do whatever he sees fit:

"I know, my dear, that you want everything I want; but I know your naturalness, which is timid and shameful, and I fear that if you do not take a great resolution, seeing them, it prevents you from giving birth.

The king, the midwife writes, went to open the door of the room and brought in all the persons he found in the antechamber and large cabinet. I believe there were two hundred people. So that one could not move to carry the queen in her bed. I was very sorry to see her like this.

M^{me} Boursier protests against the presence of so many people:

The king heard me, who struck me on the shoulder and said to me:

- Shut up, shut up, midwife; do not be angry; this child belongs to everyone, everyone must rejoice.

The child appears: he is a dolphin.

For the whole village (Fontainebleau), written M^{me} Boursier, all night, it was only bonfires, drums and trumpets; barrels of wine shattered to drink to the health of the king, the queen, and the Dauphin; it was only people who took the post to go to various countries to carry the news and by all the provinces and good cities of France.

Here is the birth of the last queen before the Revolution. The minister of the seals, the ministers and secretaries of state waited in the large cabinet with the "house of the king", the "house of the queen" and the great entrances. The rest of the Court filled the gambling hall and the gallery. Suddenly a voice dominates: " *The queen is going to give birth!* "

The Court rushes pell-mell with the crowd. It is customary for all to enter at this moment that no one should be refused. The show is public. They invade the room in such a jostling that the screens around the Queen's bed are overturned. The room turns into a public square. Savoyards climb on a piece of furniture to see better. A compact mass fills the room:

- Air ! screams the obstetrician.

The king rushes to the windows and opens them with the violence of a madman. The ushers, the valets de chambre are obliged to repel the onlookers who jostle each other. The hot water, which the practitioners have asked for, does not arrive, the first surgeon stings the queen's foot dry. The blood gushes. The two Savoyards, mounted on a chest of drawers, got into a quarrel and called themselves insults. Neighbors intervene. It's a din. At last Marie Antoinette opens her eyes: she is saved.

THE KING DIES IN PUBLIC

As the king has come into the world, so must he die, surrounded by his own, that is, by all. Louis XIII is in Saint-Germain, in the new castle, now almost entirely destroyed. Anne of Austria had remained at the old castle, which still stands on the pretty terrace overlooking the Seine. At times when the king was well, he could enjoy some rest, remain a little quiet, in a relative retreat; but the moment his condition worsened, the label regained its rights. This label, we know it. The stream of courtiers who remain with the queen in the old castle, augmented by a stream of Parisians hastening from the capital, invade the room where the king is dying and throng into a restless and compact mass.

NOSTALGIA FOR THE SIMPLICITY OF OLD USAGES

With his profound social feeling, Napoleon understood the reason for these hereditary customs rooted in the house of France. He had thought of reestablishing the "grand couvert," that is to say, the public meal, of the reigning family, and then he had given it up: he would have been embarrassed. Neither Louis XIII, Louis XIV, Louis XV, nor Louis XVI were. And he adds these words which mark well the character of these old usages:

Perhaps this ceremony should have been limited to the Prince Imperial, and only at the time of his youth, for he was the child of the nation; he must therefore belong to all feelings, to all eyes.

The king, head of the families

A FATHER MUST CONSENT TO MARRIAGES

Marshal de Tavannes said:

Order at his kingdom or at his house, there is only difference.

Louis XIV commands his kingdom as his house. In this one no marriage can be done without its approval. The Duke and Duchess of Orleans thought they could marry their children to their desire; a union is projected. The king makes them come, reprimands them severely, and the project is broken. In the same way for the prince and the princess of Conti, Louis XIV decides on the marriage of their children as on those of the Duke of Orleans. The prince and the princess believe they can resist:

King writes Saint-Simon took all sorts of caution and saw that he was not moving, he spoke to king and master and told M^{me} the Princess of Conti he wanted the double wedding of his children and that he had decided that he would do them both in spite of herself.

Which did not fail.

In the nobility, no union can be contracted without the approval of the king. Frequently, the prince signs the contract, elevates on that occasion the husband in dignity, erects one of his lands in marquisate or duchy; sometimes he pays the wedding and gives the bride.

The same goes for the dress families. Olivier d'Ormesson writes that he had to seek royal approval to unite his daughter to the future president of Harlay.

Generally Louis XIV is limited to giving advice. To the Duchess of La Ferte he says:

- Madam, your daughter is very young.

"It is true, Sire, but it is urgent; because I want M. de Mirepoix and that, in ten years, when your Majesty will know his merit, and that it will have rewarded him, he will not want us any more.

To the Duke of Elbeuf, on the contrary, who wants to remarry at the age of sixty-four, the king objects that he is too old:

- Sire, I am in love.

It was taking Louis XIV by his weak; no one, more than he, loved love and lovers. The Duke d'Elbeuf was permitted to follow the voice of his heart, and the next day he married M^{lle}. De Navailles.

Solicitude that extends to the provinces. Incessantly, by gentlemen he does not know, from whom he may never have heard the name, the king is asked to contribute to the establishment of a girl: the Comptroller General of Finance has funds for to this object.

On the other hand, we know the fertility of these families of country gentlemen. Here again, by virtue of the character of his functions, the king must intervene. What examples to quote! Let us confine ourselves to that gentleman of Brittany, Denis Denis, who is very bourgeois, and whom the offices of the General Inspectorate commonly refer to as " *the gentleman who has three children at a time, and looks forward to the goodness of the king.*" "

A FATHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

Once our household, the king, father, who has taken care of their union, must continue to take care of their business. The Maréchale de la Meilleraye, secretly remarried to Saint-Ruth, comes to tell her misfortunes to Louis XIV: her husband beats him with sticks. The king calls Saint-Ruth and reprimands him. St. Ruth promises to be sweeter; but soon - it was stronger than him - he started beating his wife again. The latter complains again to the king, who calls Saint-Ruth again, who makes new promises, which he lacks again. Louis XIV resolved to inform. St. Ruth was a good soldier. He was sent with a command to the Irish army where the affair was arranged. Saint-Ruth had his head removed from a cannonball, which made it impossible for him to continue beating his wife.

The young Duke de Richelieu was sent to the Bastille because he did not like the duchess, his wife. The daring gentleman was kept under lock and key for several weeks in " *dark solitude* ". These are his expressions; when the door opened and M^{me} Richelieu entered graceful and charming, dressed in her most brilliant attire.

The beautiful angel, writes the duke, who flew from heaven to earth to deliver Peter, was not so radiant.

A good way of reviving conjugal love when, by a bad gust of wind, it has come to extinction, and which must make us pardon the Bastille for one or two of its inconveniences.

Essential task of the king. He opens the door of the houses, takes part in the honor, the tranquility and the domestic happiness, makes sure that the affairs of the husband prosper, that the children are well looked after and obedient.

In fact, the records of the provincial burials are filled with burlesque quarrels: sons-in-law and mothers-in-law, jealous women, sassy step-sisters, quarrelsome neighbors. They are torn hats, shoes sneaked into soup tureens, water of dishes spread from the top of a first to a passer-by who receives it all by chance; and then also musketeer boots found very unexpectedly in Madame's room.

All this is scrupulously noted, described, examined, weighed and weighed, then transmitted to the intendant who transmits it to the minister, who passes it on to the king, who pronounces his sentence paternally. We see these comic novels which, for two years, keep the minister's attention awake; again, after two years, is the case not over and is the last piece of the record a note from the subdelegate informing the Royal Government " *that he will not fail to give him notice of what will happen in this household.*" "