

Wulfstan, Institutes of Polity (ed. Jost 1959), transl Michael Swanton, Anglo-Saxon Prose, Everyman's Library 1819, London 1975, pp. 125-138, hier pp. 126-127.

[p. 126] 2. *Concerning the Earthly King*

It behoves the Christian king in a Christian nation to be, as is right, the people's comfort and a righteous shepherd over the Christian flock. And it behoves him to raise up the Christian faith with all his power and zealously advance and protect God's Church everywhere, and with just law to bring peace and reconciliation to all Christian people, as diligently as he can, and in everything cherish righteousness in the sight of God and the world. For if he cherish justice in the sight of God and the world, through that he himself foremost shall prosper and his subjects similarly. And it behoves him diligently to support those who desire righteousness, and strictly punish those who desire perversity. He must severely correct wicked men with worldly punishment, and he must loathe and suppress robbers and plunderers and despoilers of the world's goods, and sternly resist all God's foes. And with justice he must be both merciful and austere: merciful to the good and stern to the evil. That is the king's right and a kingly custom, and that shall accomplish most in the nation.

Indeed, by what means shall peace and comfort come to God's servants and God's poor, but through Christ and through a Christian king? Through an unwise king, the people will be made wretched not once but very often, because of his misdirection. Through the king's wisdom the people will become prosperous and successful and victorious. And therefore the wise king must extol and exalt the Christian faith and kingship, and he must always repress and condemn heathenism. He must very earnestly attend to book-learning, and carefully keep God's commands and frequently seek out wisdom with the council, if he wish to obey God aright. And if anywhere in the nation anyone be so violent that he will keep no law as he should, but violates the law of God or hinders the law of the people, then it is to be made known to the king, if it is necessary; and then he is immediately to take counsel concerning the compensation and diligently subject him to that which is his duty, even by compulsion if he cannot otherwise. And he is to do what is needful for him if he wish to merit the mercy of God: purify his nation in the sight of God and the world, and frequently meditate what he is to do and what not to do according to God's law. And thus both in life and after life he shall in particular always gain reputation and respect to the extent that he love God's law and [p. 127] abhor injustice, and for his own good willingly attend to divine teaching over and again. For he who takes little bodily nourishment soon weakens, and he who rarely takes spiritual nourishment will soon severely injure his soul. But he who most often obeys the divine teaching and most diligently keeps it will be blessed.

3. *Concerning Kingship*

There are eight columns which firmly support lawful kingship: truth, patience, liberality, good counsel (*veritas, patientia, largitas, persuasibilitas*): formidableness, helpfulness, moderation, righteousness (*correctio malorum, exultatio bonorum, levitas tributi, equitas iudicii*). And seven things befit a righteous king: first that he have a very great awe of God and second that he always cherish righteousness, and third that he be humble before God; and fourth that he be resolute against evil; and fifth that he comfort and feed God's poor; and sixth that he advance and protect the Church of God, and seventh that he order correct judgement for friend and stranger alike.

4. *Concerning the Throne*

Every lawful throne which stands perfectly upright, stands on three pillars: one is *oratores*, and the second is *laboratores* and the third is *bellatores*. 'Oratores' are prayer-men, who must serve God and earnestly intercede both day and night for the entire nation. 'Laboratores' are workmen, who must supply that by which the entire nation shall live. 'Bellatores' are soldiers, who must defend the land by fighting with weapons. Every throne in a Christian nation must stand aright on these three pillars. And should any of them weaken, the throne will immediately totter; and should any of them shatter, then the throne will tumble down, and that is entirely to the nation's detriment. But let them be diligently fixed and strengthened and made firm with the wise teaching of God and with worldly justice; that will be to the lasting benefit of the nation. And it is true what I say: should the Christian faith weaken, the kingship will immediately totter; and should bad laws arise anywhere in the land, or vicious habits be too greatly cherished anywhere, that will be entirely to the nation's detriment. But let there be done what is necessary, injustice put down and God's law raised up; that may be of advantage in the sight of God and the world. Amen.