CHRIST IS KING

PART I — THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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Concept & Direction

CHRIST IS KING

PART I

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Order, chaos, moral authority and the highest human ideal

CONCEIVED AND DIRECTED BY

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Christ Is King - Part I: The Psychological Significance
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A Note on Authorship

Christ Is King is a human-directed series that I conceived and directed. Its governing convictions, purpose and intellectual direction are my own. Its arguments, structure and prose were developed through an extended process of dialogue, drafting and revision with artificial intelligence.

I used AI as a research aid, interlocutor, drafting tool and editor, including to produce passages of prose. I determined the series' theological and philosophical position, challenged and revised its arguments, selected and approved the final text, and exercised final editorial judgement.

The AI's contributions do not represent personal beliefs or independent testimony. The positions advanced in these books are those I have chosen to endorse. Responsibility for the published work - including its claims, interpretations and any errors - rests with me.

JEROEN SLUITER

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Introduction — From Chaos and Order to the Biblical Stories

Why have human beings, separated by thousands of years and vast geographical distances, repeatedly arrived at remarkably similar stories about the nature of existence? Why do their myths and religious traditions so often describe the struggle between order and chaos, good and evil, tyranny and freedom, sacrifice and redemption? And why do these ancient narratives continue to resonate with the modern mind, long after the civilisations that first articulated them have disappeared?

These are not merely questions of religion. They concern the fundamental architecture of human experience.

For decades, the Canadian clinical psychologist and professor Jordan B. Peterson has investigated the relationship between belief, behaviour, meaning and the structures through which human beings interpret reality. His intellectual journey led him from the study of personality and psychological development into mythology, comparative religion, philosophy and the great ideological catastrophes of the twentieth century.

One of the questions driving that investigation was particularly troubling: how could entire societies, populated by otherwise ordinary human beings, become possessed by ideologies capable of producing extraordinary suffering? What happens when the systems of belief through which people understand their world become so powerful that they cease to recognise their own capacity for evil?

Peterson came to recognise that human beings do not encounter reality as disinterested observers. We encounter it as participants, constantly distinguishing between what is familiar and what is unknown, what is desirable and what is threatening, what ought to be preserved and what must be transformed.

He described these fundamental territories of experience as **order and chaos**.

Order is the domain of the known: the structures, traditions, relationships and expectations that make life intelligible and manageable. It provides stability, continuity and the possibility of purposeful action.

Chaos is the domain of the unknown: the unexpected, the unexplored, the unpredictable and the potentially transformative. It is the territory we enter when our assumptions fail, when established structures collapse or when life confronts us with circumstances for which our existing understanding is insufficient.

Neither can simply be eliminated.

Order without renewal can descend into rigidity, oppression and tyranny. Chaos without structure can dissolve into confusion, anxiety and despair. Human existence unfolds in the tension between them.

But Peterson's investigation revealed something more interesting than this fundamental opposition.

Across cultures and centuries, human beings have told stories about individuals who voluntarily confront the unknown, overcome adversity, discover something valuable and return to restore or renew the world they inhabit.

The hero is not simply the person who defeats chaos. He is the person capable of confronting it without surrendering the values that make meaningful existence possible.

And this raises a deeper question.

What is the highest principle by which such a person should orient himself? What determines whether the order he establishes is just rather than tyrannical? What distinguishes genuine moral authority from the mere exercise of power?

Peterson's 1999 book, *Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief*, brought these questions together in an ambitious synthesis of psychology, mythology, neuroscience and philosophy. Drawing upon thinkers such as Carl Jung, he explored the possibility that ancient religious narratives preserve sophisticated insights into the recurring structures of human experience.

The biblical stories consequently became an increasingly important subject of his investigation.

In his 2017 lecture series, *The Psychological Significance of the Biblical Stories*, Peterson approached the Book of Genesis not primarily as a theologian seeking to establish religious doctrine, but as a psychologist examining the meaning embedded within narratives that have shaped Western civilisation.

His interpretation of Genesis presents the emergence of order from chaos as something more than an ancient account of creation. It becomes a profound illustration of the relationship between consciousness, truthful speech, responsibility and the human capacity to transform the world.

The biblical narratives, viewed through this psychological lens, begin to reveal an intricate understanding of human nature.

Adam and Eve confront the emergence of self-consciousness and moral knowledge. Cain and Abel reveal the destructive potential of resentment and the consequences of corrupted sacrifice. Abraham embodies the willingness to abandon the security of the familiar in pursuit of a higher calling.

These stories can be read not merely as accounts of distant events, but as enduring representations of the choices, conflicts and transformations through which human beings continue to navigate existence.

And throughout them emerges a recurring question.

What should occupy the highest position in the human hierarchy of values?

Every individual, whether consciously or otherwise, organises life around something regarded as ultimately important. Every society establishes structures of authority. Every civilisation must distinguish between the legitimate exercise of power and its corruption.

But power alone cannot establish legitimacy. Authority without wisdom becomes domination. Order without compassion becomes tyranny.

What, then, would constitute the ideal ruler?

Someone who possesses authority without corruption. Who embodies truth without deception. Who confronts adversity without surrendering to resentment. Who accepts responsibility not merely for himself, but for those entrusted to his care.

The Christian narrative presents an extraordinary answer.

Christ.

Not a king who secures his throne through conquest, but one whose authority is revealed through service. Not a ruler whose greatness depends upon the submission of others, but one who willingly bears the burden of their redemption.

Here, the ancient archetype of the King undergoes a remarkable transformation.

The highest expression of authority is no longer simply the capacity to command. It is the capacity to unite power with wisdom, responsibility with compassion, and strength with moral integrity.

This brings us to a declaration of extraordinary simplicity:

Christ is King.

Three words that, within Christianity, express a theological reality, but which also invite a profound psychological investigation.

What does the figure of Christ reveal about the nature of moral authority? Why does the human psyche require an organising principle beyond immediate desire and self-interest? What happens when individuals or societies elevate lesser values into positions of ultimate importance?

And what might it mean, psychologically, to orient one's life towards the ideal embodied in Christ?

These are the questions we shall explore.

Not by attempting to establish the theological truth of Christianity — that belongs to the next part of our investigation — but by examining the psychological significance of its most consequential declaration.

1. The King as the Ultimate Ordering Principle

Human beings cannot act without establishing, consciously or otherwise, what matters more and what matters less. Even the simplest decision requires us to prefer one possibility over another. Over time, these preferences form a hierarchy of values through which we interpret the world and determine how to act within it.

In the psychological interpretation of mythology, the King archetype represents the organising principle of such a hierarchy. At its best, it brings coherence to competing interests and gives direction to individual and collective life.

But the quality of an organising principle matters as much as its existence.

A person who places wealth above every other consideration may neglect relationships, integrity and personal wellbeing. A society that prizes ideological conformity above independent judgement may

lose its capacity for self-correction. An institution concerned primarily with its own survival may eventually betray the purpose for which it was established.

These examples reveal a fundamental psychological danger: human beings can become remarkably effective at pursuing objectives that are ultimately destructive.

Intelligence, discipline and determination offer no guarantee that the goal towards which they are directed is worthy of pursuit.

The declaration *Christ is King* introduces the possibility of an ultimate reference point against which lesser ambitions may be measured.

Psychologically understood, its significance lies in the recognition that our immediate desires, collective loyalties and established institutions cannot provide their own final justification.

Something must determine whether the purposes we pursue deserve our commitment.

The central question is not merely whether our lives possess order, but whether they are ordered towards what is good.

2. Christ as the Archetype of the Ideal Sovereign

If the first question concerns the proper ordering of human values, the second concerns the character of the one who embodies their highest expression.

Throughout history, kingship has frequently been associated with conquest, command and the ability to compel obedience. The ruler's greatness is measured by the extent of his dominion.

The Christian narrative presents a striking reversal.

Christ exercises authority through service, confronts injustice without abandoning compassion, and ultimately accepts the Crucifixion rather than renounce his mission.

From a psychological perspective, this challenges the assumption that strength must express itself through domination.

The contrast becomes particularly revealing when examined through the Jungian concept of the shadow: those aspects of human nature that remain unrecognised, rejected or insufficiently integrated.

The shadow of kingship appears in the tyrant, whose insecurity transforms authority into an instrument of self-preservation. Unable to distinguish his personal interests from the wellbeing of those he governs, he increasingly treats disagreement as disloyalty and opposition as a threat to his existence.

Christ embodies the opposite possibility.

His conduct suggests that the highest expression of strength may be the capacity to remain faithful to what is right even when doing so carries the greatest personal cost.

The Crucifixion gives this principle its most dramatic expression. Within the Christian narrative, apparent defeat becomes the occasion of redemption.

This does not make suffering inherently virtuous. Nor does it suggest that submission to abuse should be mistaken for moral courage.

The distinction lies in the purpose and voluntary character of Christ's actions.

The psychological insight is that power and moral greatness are not synonymous. Indeed, the greater the power an individual possesses, the more consequential his character becomes.

The ideal ruler is not the one who can make others submit, but the one who can exercise authority without becoming corrupted by it.

3. Psychological Integration and Personal Responsibility

The significance of an ideal becomes personal when we ask what it demands of those who recognise it.

Human beings are not psychologically unified creatures. We experience competing desires, unresolved resentments, contradictory beliefs and tensions between what we know to be right and what we find convenient.

We may value honesty while fearing its consequences. We may desire independence while avoiding responsibility. We may admire courage while organising our lives around the avoidance of discomfort.

Psychological maturity requires us to confront these contradictions rather than conceal them.

Peterson frequently emphasises the importance of truthful self-examination, voluntary responsibility and the willingness to face difficulties rather than retreat into resentment.

Christ's instruction to take up one's cross offers a powerful symbolic expression of this orientation.

Psychologically understood, it invites the individual to acknowledge that meaningful existence necessarily involves burdens, limitations and difficult choices. What matters is not simply what happens to us, but how we respond.

A person who consistently avoids uncomfortable truths gradually becomes dependent upon self-deception. Someone who attributes every failure to external circumstances may preserve a sense of innocence at the expense of personal agency.

Conversely, the willingness to acknowledge one's shortcomings creates the possibility of change.

This is the essential relationship between responsibility and freedom.

Freedom is not merely the absence of external restraint. It also depends upon the capacity to govern one's behaviour in accordance with considered principles rather than passing impulses.

To recognise Christ as a moral ideal is therefore to encounter a demanding form of self-examination.

Can I acknowledge my own capacity for wrongdoing?

Can I distinguish conviction from self-righteousness?

Can I accept responsibility without becoming consumed by guilt or resentment?

Can I act according to what I believe is right when doing so becomes inconvenient?

These questions reveal why the psychological significance of Christ extends beyond admiration for an exceptional historical or religious figure.

An ideal becomes transformative only when it changes the conduct of the person who recognises it.

4. Christ at the Boundary Between Chaos and Order

We return now to the tension that originally led Peterson towards the psychological significance of ancient narratives.

Human existence unfolds between the stability of the familiar and the uncertainty of the unknown. We depend upon established structures, yet those structures inevitably encounter circumstances they cannot adequately explain or accommodate.

The challenge is not simply to preserve what exists or to embrace whatever is new.

It is to recognise when established assumptions have become inadequate and to respond without losing the capacity for meaningful judgement.

The Gospel narratives offer a compelling illustration.

Christ repeatedly confronts interpretations of religious law that have become detached from their underlying moral purpose. His encounters with established authorities expose the danger of treating inherited rules as ends in themselves rather than as instruments of justice, mercy and human flourishing.

Yet he does not advocate the abandonment of moral order.

His challenge is directed towards its renewal.

This distinction is psychologically significant. People often respond to failing institutions in one of two ways: by defending them uncritically or by rejecting them indiscriminately.

Both reactions can become forms of avoidance.

The first refuses to acknowledge corruption. The second evades the more difficult task of determining what deserves preservation.

Christ's example suggests a third possibility: confronting what has become distorted while remaining faithful to the principles that originally gave it legitimacy.

This brings us to the biblical concept of the Logos.

In the opening of John's Gospel, Christ is identified with the Word through which creation comes into being. Within Peterson's psychological interpretation, truthful speech occupies a central role in making experience intelligible and transforming the unknown into something with which human beings can engage.

The connection is suggestive, although the theological meaning of the Logos extends far beyond its psychological interpretation.

To speak truthfully is to allow reality to challenge our assumptions. To act courageously is to accept that genuine renewal may require us to abandon familiar certainties.

The task is not to choose permanently between order and chaos, but to develop the wisdom to preserve what is valuable while transforming what is no longer adequate.

5. The Battle of Allegiances: What Rules You?

The preceding arguments lead to a question that is both simple and unsettling.

What actually governs our lives?

Not what we claim to value, but what our decisions reveal.

We may profess independence while remaining dependent upon approval. We may celebrate truth while avoiding information that challenges our convictions. We may defend freedom while demanding conformity from those who disagree with us.

The discrepancy between declared principles and actual behaviour is one of the enduring subjects of psychological investigation.

It becomes particularly consequential in the study of ideology.

Ideologies provide frameworks through which complex realities become comprehensible. They offer identity, belonging and a sense of purpose. These functions can be valuable, especially during periods of uncertainty.

But when a system of belief becomes immune to criticism, it can cease to serve understanding and begin to obstruct it.

Contradictory evidence is dismissed. Dissent becomes betrayal. Moral judgement is increasingly determined by group membership rather than individual conduct.

Peterson's investigation of ideological possession was motivated in part by the catastrophic consequences of such processes in twentieth-century totalitarian societies.

The psychological danger is not confined to politics. Religious institutions, professional communities and individuals can exhibit similar patterns whenever loyalty becomes more important than honest examination.

Here the declaration *Christ is King* acquires a challenging implication.

If the highest moral standard exists beyond human institutions, then none of those institutions can legitimately claim to embody it without qualification.

This includes institutions that invoke Christ's authority.

The distinction matters because religious language itself can become an instrument of domination when human judgement is presented as unquestionable divine command.

The psychological lesson is therefore not simply that we should choose the correct allegiance.

It is that **our allegiances must remain answerable to truth and conscience**.

A belief worthy of commitment should deepen our capacity for responsibility, humility and moral judgement rather than extinguish them.

And so the investigation returns to the individual.

What do your actions reveal about your deepest commitments?

Which convictions are you willing to examine?

And what happens when the demands of belonging conflict with the obligations of conscience?

These are not questions that can be answered once and permanently set aside.

They are questions through which character is continually formed.

Conclusion — The Call to Sovereignty Through Christ

The psychological significance of *Christ is King* emerges from a fundamental characteristic of human existence: we cannot live meaningfully without orienting ourselves towards something we regard as ultimately important.

Our values influence our choices. Our choices shape our character. And the ideals we elevate above competing interests affect not only the lives we lead, but the societies we create.

Through the psychological perspective developed by Jordan B. Peterson, we have explored how the biblical narratives illuminate this process.

The King archetype raises the question of what deserves our highest commitment. Christ's example challenges conventional assumptions about power. His call to personal responsibility confronts the individual with the necessity of self-examination. His engagement with established authority reveals the importance of renewal through truth. And the question of allegiance exposes the dangers of allowing any human institution or ideology to become morally unquestionable.

Together, these insights suggest that the significance of Christ cannot be confined to an abstract ideal of goodness.

Psychologically understood, his example presents a demanding orientation towards life: one in which moral conviction must find expression in conduct, responsibility cannot be indefinitely avoided, and the search for truth takes precedence over the comfort of certainty.

The declaration *Christ is King* therefore invites us to examine not only what we believe, but how we live.

These questions concern believers and non-believers alike, because the human need for meaning, direction and moral coherence is not confined to religious experience.

Yet our investigation has deliberately remained within the boundaries of psychology.

We have considered what Christ represents to the human mind and why that representation may possess such enduring significance.

But the Christian proclamation makes a claim that psychology alone cannot establish.

Christ is not merely presented as the highest ideal humanity can conceive. Christianity proclaims that he is the living Son of God, through whom humanity is reconciled to the Father.

And that raises a question which takes us beyond psychological interpretation.

What if the ultimate moral ideal is not simply something humanity has discovered within its own consciousness, but the reflection of a reality that exists independently of it?

To investigate that possibility, we must turn from the psychological significance of the declaration to its theological foundations.

For Christianity does not merely invite us to contemplate the ideal King.

It proclaims that the King has come.

Continued in Part II — The Theological Significance of Christ Is King.