

THE SACRIFICE OF THE QUEEN

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THE coronation service is not a picturesque anachronism, of purely secular interest. It is an historical drama of great antiquity. The central feature is the hallowing of the Queen effected by the anointing, as expressive of her own self-dedication to the service of God and of her people. At the crowning of the Emperor the whole ritual was called *ordo ad benedicendum imperatorem, quando coronatur*. Regal coronation therefore takes the form of a blessing imparted with great solemnity, with the Mass as its natural setting and culminating point. In origin it is a sacramental conjoined to a sacrament.

The Queen herself, in her broadcast last Christmas, asked for the prayers of her people, no matter what religion they belonged to, that she might be blessed by God, and be made faithful to the promises she would make before the altar of Westminster Abbey on the day of her coronation. Catholics will not be slow in responding to the deeply religious appeal publicly made by her Majesty.

In remote times the crowning and investiture of the Emperor was without religious character. When Leo II was crowned (473) we find the Patriarch reciting a prayer, and at length it became the duty of the Patriarch of Constantinople to set the diadem on the head of the Emperor. With the crowning in church of Phocas (602), the ceremonial assumed a formal and religious character.

In the *Ecclesiastical History of Theodoret* (d. 458), it is related how the Emperor Theodosius I (d. 395) saw himself in a dream being invested by a bishop with an imperial robe, and crowned with an imperial crown.¹ Constantine himself had already brought into prominence the regal diadem. Pope Gregory the Great seems already to be familiar with the anointing of kings. But the first direct reference to the anointing of a Christian sovereign occurs at the accession of the Spanish Visigothic King Wamba in 672. 'As the king knelt before the altar, at Toledo, the bishop poured upon his

¹ Theodoret, Bk. V, ch. vi.

head the oil of blessing, and immediately a cloud of vapour was seen to rise and from the midst a bee took to flight. Which was taken by the spectators to be a portent of felicity.²

In the English coronation service the consecration of the sovereign by the anointing with holy oils is an integral and central part. For some time after the Reformation the word *holy* was struck out, and presumably ordinary oil was used. The word *holy* has now been restored in the latest order. The kind of oil that should be used is not chrism, as has been wrongly stated, but the oil of catechumens blessed by the bishop on the previous Maundy Thursday.

It will be seen that the coronation and investiture are the ratification of an accomplished fact, viz. the election, recognition and consecration of the sovereign. The organic and liturgical connection of the whole coronation service with a solemn pontifical Mass, is clearly seen in the second oblation which takes place at the offertory, 'of bread and wine, and of an ingot or Wedge of Gold of a pound weight'. This ceremonial certainly points to a very ancient origin, before the modern notion of stipends became stabilised. According to the papal rubrics the newly crowned sovereign was to receive Holy Communion in both kinds, the sacred Host from the hands of the Pope seated on his throne, and the Chalice administered by the Cardinal Deacon by means of a *calamus* (a golden or silver tube). The fourteenth-century *Liber Regalis* mentions only the reception of wine from the stone chalice.

The first English order (and, most probably, the first in all Christendom) is contained in a pontifical ascribed to Egbert, Archbishop of York from 732 to 766, found in a tenth-century manuscript. It is thought not impossible that that the coronation Order in its primitive form was the work of Alcuin of York, the ecclesiastical adviser of Charlemagne,³ who was crowned in the year 800. But before him Pepin at his coronation had received the unction from Saint Boniface, papal legate, at Soissons in 752.

There were four recensions of the English Service, the last of which is the *Liber Regalis* in the early fourteenth

² Migne, P. L. 96, 766.

³ *The English Coronation Service*, E. C. Ratcliff, p. 38.

century, which gives the ritual in its most developed form. The sovereigns from Edward II to Elizabeth I were consecrated with the Latin service: from James I to Charles II inclusive, with the English version of the Latin.⁴ This version was made for the coronation of James I. In many details it resembles the orderly sequence in the coronation of an emperor or king by the Pope at St Peter's in Rome, as described in the Roman *Ordo XIV* (1300-1350).⁵

The investiture and the enthronement are the outward visible signs of the sovereign's assumption of office. The right of anointing the sovereign belongs by ancient custom to the Archbishop of Canterbury. In former times the Abbot of St Peter's Abbey of Westminster was to be at hand to instruct the monarch in matters touching the solemnity of coronation. Some of his duties are now undertaken by the Dean of Westminster. Since the Reformation the coronation liturgy has suffered from repeated mutilations, and particularly by the dislocation following the substitution of the Mass by a Communion Service according to the rites of the Church of England. This clearly robs the ceremonial of much of its religious splendour and meaning.

Archbishop Sancroft revised the service partly in view of King James II's refusal to receive Communion according to rites of the Church of England. Probably the King and Queen already previously heard Mass at the Chapel Royal. Sancroft disapproved of the blessing of material objects. Accordingly the regalia are no longer blessed before presentation, and the benedictions are converted into prayers for the monarch. An exception is now made for the Crown, which according to the revised Order is to receive a special blessing, pronounced by the Archbishop of Canterbury, but without the use of holy water and incense which formed part of the ancient ceremonial. The remnants of what was once the Mass are still discernible, in the Introit, Epistle, Gospel, Nicene Creed, Offertory, Preface, Prayer of Consecration, and the Communion. The retention of the Offertory anthem of the *Liber Regalis* would have been more in place than

⁴ *The Coronation Order of King James I*, J. Wickham-Legg, p. xxv.

⁵ Migne P. L. 78, 1238 sqq.

the sixteenth-century hymn 'All people that on earth do dwell', which has been lately introduced.

The Coronation Service, in its general structure, has notwithstanding many changes, preserved substantial identity with that of the later Anglo-Saxon Kings. There are evident resemblances if not of direct borrowing from the enthronement of Byzantine Emperors, of Western Emperors and Kings, and of the Spanish and French Kings. The close resemblance to the consecration of a bishop led Dr Armitage Robinson, and others after him, to think that the coronation service was consciously moulded upon it. Associated with this is the giving of the Ring, and singing of the *Veni Creator*, which first appears conjoined with the anointing in the fourteenth century. More ancient still is the restored anthem 'Zadok the priest' which recalls the anointing and acclamation of King Solomon.⁶ We are not, however, entitled to conclude that this feature was incorporated into the primitive ritual under Hebrew influence. It might well have disappeared had it not been immortalised by Handel's music.

The use of embroidered gloves is not especially royal or episcopal. It is a relic of the Middle Ages indicative of rank. The office of presenting the glove to the sovereign immediately before the reception of the Royal Sceptre, pertained by hereditary right to the Lords of the Manors of Farnham and Worksop and dates back beyond the reign of Richard II. On this occasion, the right having lapsed, the duty has been entrusted by the Queen to Lord Woolton. As announced by the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal, 'It has been part of the Coronation ceremonies for so long that it is felt that the glove has now become one of the regalia accessories and should not be allowed to disappear from the ritual'.

Under the post-Reformation dispensation the Bible was regarded as more holy than the communion table, still called an 'altar' in the Order of Coronation. The Bible is not numbered among the Regalia. Its presentation as 'the lively Oracles of God' was an innovation made by Compton as a Protestant gesture for the joint coronation of William and

⁶ I Kings, i, 39 sqq.

Mary in 1689. And, finally, a further rubric has been added enabling the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to deliver the Bible jointly with the Archbishop.⁷

MODES OF THOUGHT IN PRIMITIVE SOCIETY¹

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NO one who studies savage societies would say, today, that there are modes of thought which are confined to primitive peoples. It is rather that we ourselves have specialised ways of apprehending reality. The contributors to this series may, indeed, have described notions which we do not easily take for granted, but which are commonplace among many peoples without our modern science and technology. But any historical sense of proportion—and our historical thought, our sense of relativities, is among our distinguishing characteristics—reminds us that it is some of our own habits of thought which are newly-formed and uncommon. We stand more or less alone, for example, in not taking witchcraft seriously, or distant kinship; and our indifference in such matters divides us equally from savages, and from those ancient cultures whose civilisation, in other respects, we are proud to inherit.

Further, since the eighteenth century at least, we have been rather disposed to forget that a satisfying representation of reality may be sought in more than one way, that reasoning is not the only way of thinking, that there is a place for meditative and imaginative thought.

Our thought has in some ways broken the traditional mould; and a regret for a lost integrity of thought and feeling which seemed to be part of primitive experience led such men as D. H. Lawrence, for example, or Gauguin, to depict a gnostic savage, instinctively aware of some harmony absent from modern urban life—a savage vigorous, active, unreflec-

⁷ *The Form and Order of the Coronation of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II* is published by the Oxford University Press (Standard Edition 5s.).

¹ Broadcast in the Third Programme of the B.B.C., 7th April, 1953, in the series, 'The Values of Primitive Society'.