

**TRANSACTIONS OF THE
ABERDEEN ECCLESIOLOGICAL
SOCIETY AND OF THE GLASGOW
ECCLESIOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649314737

Transactions of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society and of the Glasgow Ecclesiological Society
by James Cooper

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Cover @ 2017

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JAMES COOPER

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SPECIAL ISSUE

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FOUR SCOTTISH CORONATIONS

BY THE

REV. PROFESSOR COOPER, D.D.

PRESIDENT OF THE ABERDEEN ECCLESIOLOGICAL SOCIETY

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE TWO SOCIETIES

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NOTE.

While gratefully complying with the request wherewith the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society and the Glasgow Ecclesiological Society have honoured me to print the following Paper, I deem it only fair to the Members to say that I alone am responsible for its contents. It is the rule in both Societies, that the responsibility for each Article rests on the writer of that Article.

8, THE COLLEGE,
GLASGOW, 17th May, 1902.

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FOUR SCOTTISH CORONATIONS SINCE THE REFORMATION.

THE august solemnity which, by God's good hand upon us, will be fulfilled on Thursday the 26th of June this year in the Abbey Church of Westminster—the Coronation of His Most Sacred Majesty King Edward VII., King by the Grace of God "of all the Britains" and of our Gracious Queen Alexandra—is of a nature that requires, both on the Sovereign's part and on his subjects,' a serious and heedful preparation.

Were it indeed no more than a court pageant, it would need to be prepared for. No ceremony of any kind can be well performed, which has not been duly arranged beforehand. And a Royal Coronation is a ceremony as complicated as it is rich and splendid. The vast and honourable assemblage must be duly marshalled: his proper place must be assigned to every one. The Thrones must be set, the pavements strewn with carpets, the Altar decked; the Regalia must be brought to the Abbey from the Tower; the oil for the Anointing and the Royal Oblations¹ must be prepared; the words of the old Service must be adjusted to the new occasion; the music will have to be practised, the great officers of Church and State, and the King and Queen themselves, must be informed as to their several parts. Already, for months, a court has been sitting to adjudicate on the claims of those who allege a title to take part in the proceedings; and from Easter till well on in June the Abbey will be in the hands of workmen charged with the task of fitting it up for the great solemnity.

But the Coronation is no mere pageant. It is meant not to be "a dark and dumb ceremony" but a speaking and illuminating one; ordered so that it shall, in

¹ It is announced that in the coronation of King Edward VII. the 'First Oblation' will be omitted. As used at the coronation of William IV. this ceremony (which dates from the Fourteenth Century) was as follows:— "The King, supported by the two Bishops of Durham and Bath and Wells, and attended as always by the Dean of Westminster, two lords that carry the Regalia going before him, goes to the altar, and kneeling, uncovered, upon the steps of it makes his first oblation, which is a pall or altar-cloth of gold, delivered by the Master of the Great Wardrobe to the Lord Great Chamberlain, and by him, kneeling, to his Majesty; and an ingot or wedge of gold of a pound weight . . . [thence] his Majesty, kneeling, delivers to the Archbishop, who receives first the pall, to be reverently laid upon the altar, and then the gold to be received into the basin and with like reverence put upon the altar." The Queen also offered a pall. Abbreviation of the service was no doubt necessary, but many will regret the omission of a rite which expressed so beautifully the duty of a Christian king towards the Church of God, which is expressly prescribed in prophecy (Ps. lxxii. 10, 15; Isa. lx. 9), and was exemplified by the Wise men at our Lord's Nativity (S. Matt. ii. 11). We can only hope that if their Majesties lay it aside on an occasion when the ceremonies are very numerous, they may see fit, perhaps in their own persons, to perform it some time at the Feast of the Epiphany, where a sort of ghost of it still survives.

every detail, be significant, eloquent, persuasive, as to the nature of the Office with whose outward emblems the King and Queen will that day be invested. It is designed throughout with the purpose of exhibiting before the eyes of the Empire represented in the Abbey the theory of the Kingship and the Crown of Britain.

Considered in this light also, the announcement of it is a call, alike to the King and to his subjects, to study beforehand the history and the constitution of our ancient Realm; that all may discern, acknowledge, and mutually perform their several parts, whether high or humble, in the body politic.

But over and above all this, the coming Coronation will wear another and more sacred character. It will be an Act of Religious Worship, done in the House of God and towards God, by the hands of the Ministers of God.

Like all our religious services, though in a very eminent degree, the Act will be a complex one.

(1) There will be in it, to begin with, a public expression of the Nation's Christianity—of our Catholic Orthodoxy. The Nicene Creed and the *Te Deum* (which is the Creed in poetry) will both be sung. The King will promise before God to maintain alike the Nation's liberties and the Church's rights. He reigns "by the Grace of God," with the glad acceptance of a loyal people. They will therefore recognize his title; and he will receive his Crown as from the King of Kings. The Primate will gird him with the Sword, in token that he is ordained by God, *a minister of God for good, . . . a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.*¹ In his right hand he will place the Sceptre, Cross-topped, *the Rod of Jesus' strength;*² and in his left the Sceptre with the Dove, the emblem of the Holy Ghost—for the prerogative of mercy. He will robe him with the Pall, in shape like a Churchman's cope, the most dignified of ecclesiastical vestments; he will deliver to him the Cross-crowned Orb, reminding him how "the whole world is subject to the power and empire of "Christ our Redeemer;" and the Holy Bible, the Royal Law, which a Christian King must keep and do.³

All these, with the Sermon, will tell the King of the great powers, and the holy vocation, bestowed on him by God; and of the corresponding duties God requires him to perform.

(2) But the service will not consist only of such acts as these. It will be rich in witness to God's readiness and grace to enable the King for the fulfilling of his sacred and tremendous calling. It will be mingled with prayers to God to send down on him and on his Consort the Holy Ghost, to fit them for their duties; they will be anointed by God's minister as a sign and token of God's willingness to

¹ Romans xiii. 4. (n. v.)

² In allusion to the promise to our Ascended Lord in Ps. cx. 2. *The Lord shall send forth the rod of Thy strength out of Zion.* This is why this Sceptre is topped with a Cross.

³ cf. Deut. xvii. 18; and S. James ii. 8.

give what He hath promised, *the Holy Ghost to them that ask Him*,¹ and they will receive together the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, not alone for their individual nourishment unto everlasting life, but expressly "that they may be enabled to the discharge of their weighty office, whereunto of His great goodness He hath called and appointed them."² Here at least there will be not simply their (and the Nation's) prayer but God's *answer* thereto, out of His holy place.

By the law of the English Coronation it is the Dean of Westminster's duty to put the King in mind beforehand of the sacred character of the great solemnity, and to exhort him therefore to take a certain space for prayer and meditation prior to his going to the Abbey. Our Society is, alike by its work and constitution, a religious one. Its first object is to "study the Principles of Christian Worship." It is, accordingly, in view of these principles that I approach the theme on which I am to speak. I shall deal with the Four Coronations not so much in their political or spectacular aspects, as in their adaptation to their two-fold purpose—the expression of Christian doctrine, and the ministration of Divine grace.

I.

SCOTTISH CORONATIONS BEFORE THE REFORMATION.

It is needful, however, for our understanding of the Four Coronations I am specially to treat of, that I should premise a little as to the Ceremonies observed at Scottish Coronations in the times before the Reformation.

The details of these which have come down to us may be meagre, but at least the line goes back to a remote antiquity. The Apostle of Scotland, S. Columba himself, was the minister at the making of a King of Scots, the first of the Dalriad Kings whose accession took place after the coming of the great missionary into Scotland—Aidan M^cGabhraim. If no more illustrious priest could have been found to minister the rite, Aidan seems to have been equally worthy to head the roll of those on whom it was performed. "The great Prince," so the late Marquess of Bute describes him, "from whom not only is our present Royal Family descended,

¹The Anointing, which constitutes the 8th section of our Coronation service, was considered by such Fathers as S. Augustine (Adv. Petilium II. 112) and S. Gregory the Great, as partaking of the nature of a Sacrament, as indelible, and as conveying spiritual jurisdiction as the delivery of the Crown conferred temporal power. It is, at the very least, an impressive symbol of a gift whereof the Church can give assurance since God hath promised it to *them that ask Him* (S. Luke xi 13). The ceremony of the Anointing begins with the Hymn, *Veni Creator*, and contains (a) Petitions to God the Father to strengthen and confirm the Sovereign with the Holy Ghost the Comforter; (b) a Prayer in the act of Unction, "Be you anointed," etc., and (c) a Prayer to God the Son, the Anointed of the Father, to "pour down upon your Head and Heart the blessing of the Holy Ghost;" and prosper the work of your hands. Can we doubt that the Divine Gift is given to those who with the prayer of faith, receive the rite?

²These are the words at the King's oblation of the Communion Elements in the Coronation Service. If the King and Queen receive at their Coronation the Holy Communion for this purpose, surely it is proper that the Clergy and people throughout their realm should make it part of their observance of the day in their several parishes to receive the same Sacrament for grace to fulfil their duties as the King's subjects.