

3 EMMA VILLE AVE., KINGSTON, JAMAICA, B.W.I.

SAINT GEORGE'S COLLEGE

2nd Prize

B + +
~~Commented~~
Good.

On June 2nd, 1953, the hearts of all in the British Empire were drawn towards Westminster Abbey. The world watched with bated breath as a Queen of England was crowned with England's greatest and oldest state ceremony. And we were all so happy at the thought that our beloved Queen's wish of "dedicating her life to our service" was being solemnized in the old Abbey.

The rites of the Coronation spring from a purely English tradition: in fact, their origin does not belong to all England, but to Wessex, the few Anglo-Saxon shires south of the Thames. From the dawn of their history, when the Anglo-Saxons elected a new king, he was shown to the people in order that they ~~may~~ ^{might} recognize him as their lawful chief. Then, probably at some sumptuous banquet, he was set upon a high seat known today as a throne.

As Christianity in its onward march embraced the British Isles, the kings sought to enhance their subjects' loyalty by obtaining the blessing of the Church, which for its part was not independent of royal support. In 838, King Egbert of Wessex made a treaty with the See of Canterbury, ~~and~~ as a result of which his successors were regularly consecrated.

by the archbishops. The pagan rites of the Anglo-Saxons were gradually transformed into Christian rites.

For more than a thousand years the essential character of the coronation has remained unchanged. Although the claims of precedent and of constitutional necessity, tradition and history, have lavishly added to the simple service of England's Saxon kings, the nucleus has always been the same - the Recognition, the Oath, the Investiture and the Crowning. These ancient rites are all recorded in a form of the Coronation service drawn up in the 8th century in a realm even more limited than England - for the complete unification of the country under one monarch had not taken place till the 9th century. The ceremony reached its fullest development in the 14th century when "the order according to which a king must be crowned and anointed" was fully elaborated and recorded in great detail in the famous *Liber Regalis*.

Coronation day was a day of great splendour when we tasted the full glory and pageantry of the historic ceremony. But lost as we were in all the colourful glittering spectacle, the deeper spiritual significance was overwhelmingly strong in our minds, for on that day, before God, a solemn

covenant was made between the Queen and her peoples everywhere.

The Queen entered Westminster Abbey through the West door: the procession advanced down the aisle. She passed the Throne, then turned toward the Chair of Estate placed to the right of the altar. After her private devotions, the Queen then took her place on the Chair of Estate, containing in its base the legendary stone of Scone. Then followed the Recognition, which is a relic of the earliest times when the king was chosen from among the male heirs in a single family which traced its descent from the gods. Today however, the Recognition is a mere formality. Standing in the Theatre, the Archbishop of Canterbury turned to the four sides of the Abbey, at each point saying, "Sirs, I here present unto you Queen Elizabeth, your undoubted Queen; Wherefore all you who are come this day to do your homage and service. Are you willing to do the same?" The acclamations of acknowledgement from the people were, "God save the Queen"; and a trumpet was sounded.

The formal recognition was followed by the formal guarantee. No element in the Coronation ceremonial was of such constitutional significance as the Oath, in the taking of which the sovereign promised to govern according to the laws and customs of the realm and to uphold "the Protestant reformed religion established

(4)

by law" - a reference to both the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. With the oath having been sworn, the sovereign was accepted by the people, and the religious aspect of the service then began with the mystery of Anointing.

The Archbishop then began the Communion Service, proceeding as far as the Creed, when the solemn office is interrupted for the first of the actual Coronation rites. The deep sacramental character of the service stems from the Anointing, the hallowing with holy oil, an act of more deep spiritual significance even than the practical act of the crowning. While this ceremony was going on, the Choir sang verses from the Book of Kings that refer to the anointing of Solomon. The Anointing, according to Christian tradition, sets the sovereign apart in the lonely dignity of dedication, emphasising the Queen's supremacy in all causes, both spiritual and temporal. For the Anointing, the Queen discarded her Crimson Robe and Cap of State, symbols of Parliamentary rank, and sat in King Edward's chair under a canopy held by four Knights of the Garter. The Dean of Westminster took the Ampulla and the ancient spoon containing the consecrated oil, and anointed the Queen in the form of a cross in three places; on the palms of the hands, on the breast, and the crown of the head.

Following the Anointing, the Queen was invested with the Royal and priestly robes, and the regalia

(5)

was delivered. The robes resemble those worn by a bishop, and they emphasise the distinctly religious character of the ceremony. As the Queen stood by St. Edwards Chair, the Dean of Westminster put upon Her Majesty the Colobium sidonis, a fine white sleeveless garment of linen closely resembling a bishop's rochet. Over the Colobium he placed the supertunica, a close fitting surcoat of rich cloth of gold, together with a girdle, or sword belt, of the same material. The Queen's hands were touched with the golden spurs of chivalry; then she was presented with the sword (substituted for the heavy sword of state), which the Archbishop bid her use for the punishment of evil doers and the protection of the law abiding. This she immediately took to the altar and surrendered to God.

The Officer of the Great Wardrobe brought the Robe Royal to the Dean of Westminster who put it round the Queen's shoulders. This Robe Royal or Imperial Mantle, by far the most magnificent of the vestments, was specially made for the Queen in cloth of gold, richly embroidered with the national emblems.

Thus clad she took up the Orb. It is a golden globe, six inches in diameter, surmounted by a cross, and it symbolizes the sovereignty of Christ over the world. Then

⑥

the Archbishop blessed and placed on her fourth finger the coronation Ring, representing that which St. John the Evangelist is said to have sent to St. Edward, and which the Queen declared had wedded her to her people. Then the sceptre with the Cross, the ensign of power and justice and the oldest of all emblems of authority, was put in her right hand. Into her left hand was put the Rod with the Dove, referred to as the rod of Equity and Mercy.

Then the solemn moment approached. With all these symbols of power and authority presented to the Queen, the last and grandest symbol, the Crown of St. Edward which is the ritual crown of England, was brought from the altar by the Dean of Westminster to the waiting Archbishop of Canterbury. The culminating act of the coronation, when the Primate reverently place the Crown upon the Queen's head was at once the most glorious and most memorable. At this point in the ancient rituals it is said "at the sight whereof the people with loud and repeated shouts shall cry: God save the Queen!" The loud acclamation reverberated through the ancient Abbey once more, a fanfare of trumpets was sounded, and in the distance the guns of the Tower of London were heard booming a Royal salute.

This was the moment when the Queen was truly

⑦

crowned.

Simultaneously, the Peers and Peeresses, and the King of Arms put on their coronets. The mighty acclamation re-echoed for several minutes before finally dying down, and the Archbishop stepped back from St. Edward's Chair and in measured tones, uttered words of benediction and encouragement.

The crown has long been an ensign of sovereignty and its use as such may be traced back even before the Christian era. It seemed to have evolved from the fillet or circlet of the later Roman Emperors.

The Communion service having been resumed, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh received Holy Communion. The solemnity of the Coronation ended with the Homage. The Queen, now crowned and in all her Regalia, sat in the Chair of State elevated upon a dais of five steps where she received the fealty of the Lords Spiritual and the homage of the Lords Temporal according to their degree. First the Archbishop of Canterbury with the other bishops in their respective positions all knelt. Repeating after the Archbishop, they swore to be "faithful and true, and faith and

⑧

truth will bear unto you our sovereign Lady, Queen of this Realm, and Defender of the Faith." Then the Duke of Edinburgh came forward and, kneeling and removing his coronet, pronounced the words of homage and fealty. Then came the Princes of the Blood Royal, followed by the Dukes, Marquesses, Earls, Viscounts and Barons - all knelt in their positions speaking together by their ranks, the first of each order kneeling before the Queen to pay homage and swear fealty on their behalf.

The historic ceremony ended with the Church's great song of praise, *Te Deum Laudamus*, sung by the choir as Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, by the grace of God, Sovereign of the United Kingdom and northern Ireland and of her other realms and territories, Head of Commonwealth and Defender of Faith, descended from the Throne, crowned.

REFERENCES:

The Daily Gleaner Coronation Supplement

The Shell Magazine: Coronation Issue

Coronation Souvenir Programme edited by King George's Jubilee Trust.