



ROYAL PRAYER

A SURPRISING HISTORY

DAVID BALDWIN



Royal Prayer

This page intentionally left blank

Royal Prayer

A Surprising History

DAVID BALDWIN



continuum

Published by the Continuum International Publishing Group

The Tower Building
11 York Road
London
SE1 7NX

80 Maiden Lane
Suite 704
New York
NY 10038

www.continuumbooks.com

copyright © David Baldwin, 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission from the publishers.

First published 2009

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 9780826423030

Designed and typeset by BookEns, Royston, Herts.

Printed and bound by MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin, Cornwall.

Contents

Introduction: Royal Prayer – A Justification	vii
1 Royal Launching and Christening of Ships	1
2 ‘Near Miss’ Royal Prayers	27
3 The Modern Application of Some Old Royal Prayers	38
4 Royal Prayers in Scotland	42
5 Royal Prayers for Bonapartes	49
6 ‘Royal’ Prayers of America	62
7 A Prophecy of 1732 Written in the Year of George Washington’s Birth	72
8 Star-Spangled Banner as Prayer	77
9 Royal Prayer at Times of Personal and National Distress	82
Manmade Disasters	82
Natural Disasters	92
10 Royal Prayers under Revolution	104
Prayers of the Russian Royal Family	104
Prayers of a Romanian Princess	112
Prayers of the Greek Royal Family	115
11 Royal Prayers of Dedication to Right Governance in Nation, Empire and Commonwealth	122
12 Royal Prayers of Royal Patronage	125
13 Royal Remembrance – Silent Royal Prayer	134
14 Royal Prayers of Diana, Princess of Wales	149
15 Royal Prayer in the Exploration of Earth and Space and the Development of Nuclear Theology	152
16 Epilogue: Royal Prayers – The Way Ahead	171

Royal Prayer

Appendix: Royal Military Prayers	179
Index	199

Introduction:

Royal Prayer – A Justification

In AD 57/8 St Paul wrote:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive unto themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.¹

In representing his or her people, a Monarch is at the same time both responsible and accountable to the People. This places the monarch with one foot at the edge of the realm of the known in company with the people – but the other in the realm of the mysterious unknown whose forces have been deemed by subjects to act upon their everyday lives. Thus the ancient Coronation Rite of the Sovereign includes the provision for Anointing of the Sovereign by the Archbishop of Canterbury:

in the form of a cross: On the palms of the hands, saying, Be thy Hands anointed with holy Oil. On the Breast, saying, Be thy Breast anointed with holy Oil. On the crown of the head, saying, Be thy Head anointed with holy Oil: as Kings, priests, and prophets were anointed: And as Solomon was anointed king by Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet, so be thou anointed, blessed, and consecrated Queen over the Peoples, whom the Lord thy God hath given thee to rule and govern, In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen . . . O Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who by his Father was anointed with the Oil of gladness above his fellows, by his holy Anointing pour down upon your Head and Heart the blessing of

the Holy Ghost, and prosper the works of your Hands: that by the assistance of his heavenly grace you may govern and preserve the people committed to your charge in wealth, peace and godliness ...²

The upshot is that monarchs have become appeasers of the unknown as advocates of their peoples. The monarch's role in invoking blessing upon particularly important events or things naturally results from this need. This is a direct and natural consequence of their duty of responsibility. On occasion the progression finds itself forced, as at the sixteenth-century Reformation when King Henry VIII assumed the responsibility in England of replacing the Holy Father in Rome's universal authority over 'his' Church to interface with the unknown realm of God.

There is very rare but tangible evidence of Henry VIII's own mind on his sacred duty as king to bring the teachings of the Bible to his subjects – and this before his sanctioning of Miles Coverdale's 1535/36 Bible in English and then the *Great Bible* of 1538 in English of which 9,000 copies had been produced by 1541 – but at an earlier point of no return in his determination to bring about his break with Rome over the governance of the Church in England. Only four complete, and three imperfect, books remain extant of Thomas Berthelet's Latin *Biblia Sacra* published in July 1535. Arthur Cayley pointed out in 1808 when producing his *Memoirs of Sir Thomas Moore* that Henry VIII was himself the personal author of the Preface to 'King's Printer' Berthelet's Bible. In this King Henry writes:

We therefore, considering it our duty to God, have undertaken this task, as we should be within our realm like unto the soul in the body, and the sun in the universe, and exercise God's judgement as God's representative in our kingdom. And having everything in our power as regards jurisdiction, to seek always, in God's stead, to govern and protect the very Church itself; for whether her discipline grows or slackens, we are to render our account to Him, who entrusted her to us ...³

Such awesome responsibility, therefore, also brings with it the necessity to face and ride misfortunes born by Monarch and

Subject as they arise – flagged up necessarily as the failure of one or the other to accord with the will of the greater unknown. This is the realm of accountability of the Monarch to the subject. Those who invest the Monarch with a sacred quality in recognizing the God-given duty to represent them in the realms of the unknown have been more apt to retain monarchy despite the onset of disaster – though the regicide of King Charles I in 1648 constitutes a notable exception.

When things go wrong in a sacred system embracing all of society in which everyone has duties and responsibilities, someone has to take the blame for incurring the wrath of the Almighty – the King or his subjects. King Charles I lost his life as a consequence of Civil War, blamed by Oliver Cromwell and others for the consequences of his ‘personal rule’ and particular religious convictions. In finally severing his neck, Cromwell uttered the words ‘dreadful necessity’.⁴ But if Cromwell and Parliament, representing the people, were to blame the king for what had happened in the Realm, the people themselves did not get off Scot-free and were in turn rendered accountable for their regicidal action and subject to the possibility of divine retribution at the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660. The Book of Common Prayer in 1662 included:

A form of prayer with fasting to be used yearly on the Thirtieth of January, being the day of Martyrdom of the Blessed King Charles the First; to implore the mercy of God, that neither the guilt of that sacred and innocent blood, nor those other sins, by which God was provoked to deliver up both us and our King into the hands of cruel and unreasonable men, may at any time hereafter be visited upon us or our posterity.

The rubric allowed for a selection of sentences to be read, including that from Psalm ii, 2: ‘The people stood up, and rulers took counsel together: against the Lord, and against his Anointed.’ Blame was spread fairly wide in the subsequent prayer: ‘We thy sinful creatures here assembled before thee, do, in the behalf of all the people of this land, humbly confess, that they were the crying sins of this Nation, which brought down this heavy judgement upon us.’ The prayer also attempts to head

off God's judgement upon the people for the bloodshed of regicide and civil war: 'lay it not to the charge of the people of this land; nor let it ever required of us or our posterity. Be merciful, O Lord, be merciful unto thy people, whom thou hast redeemed; and be not angry with us for ever'.

Elsewhere, monarchical systems of governance have gone to the wind in the face of secular principles of republican philosophy brought about by revolution. The United States of America in 1776, Russia in 1917 and France in 1789 and 1848 are examples over recent centuries.

Yet, even within such 'secular' systems of political governance, there is no getting away from responsibility. This is such an important concept that even heredity as an indication of the natural order of governance is tempered with the necessity for general consent as part of the Coronation ritual in Great Britain. The *Liber Regalis*, codified by Nicholas Lytlington,⁵ Abbot of Westminster Abbey from 1362 to 1388, and used thereafter for Coronations, including rites from King Edgar's Coronation in 973 (used also for William the Conqueror in 1066), includes provision for 'Recognition' in which the

Bishop that is to consecrate the king, shall address the people at the four sides of the stage, inquiring their will and consent about the consecration of the said king. The King meanwhile stands at his seat and turns himself to the four sides of the stage, as the Bishop addresses the people, who give their consent, as is customary, and with loud and unanimous shouts exclaim, *So be it, So be it, and Long live the king*, uttering with great joy the name of the King.

Without that, the monarch's role becomes somehow irregular or vulnerable to accusation of illegitimacy in representing the people.

But even just elected Heads of State or Members of a Parliament cannot hide from that same duty of representing their people. Just like a Monarch they can 'foul up' though, unlike monarchs, they can more easily leave the field of ultimate responsibility by relying upon the political system to remove them from office without a mammoth hiatus. This happens on a

regular basis in the course of an election, or because they can resign or retire.

We shall see that royal prayers are no frivolous, fringe or irrelevant occurrences but rather have a place at the heart of many mainstream activities – and, moreover, have their exact parallel in systems of governance elsewhere that oddly proclaim themselves to be mercifully free of such trappings of monarchy.

Royal prayers, perhaps surprisingly to those who have not looked beyond the formalized constraints of the Prayer Book for them, in fact appear in welcome and regular use right across the mainstream of daily activity. The range is impressive despite detractors who misunderstand the reason for their inclusion and construct an inexact science to question their ‘efficacy’.

What is not in doubt is the bravery of the Sovereign, along with the teaching around the Good Samaritan, in leading the way across stubborn social taboos that have left swathes of society disadvantaged. This was evident early on in Queen Elizabeth II’s reign when she chose to visit a leper colony on the Oji River Settlement in Eastern Nigeria on 9 February 1956. In so doing she followed in the fearless footsteps of King Henry VI who in 1439 had stayed from 18 to 21 March as a resident of the Leper Hospital of St James’s, on the site of the present St James’s Palace in London. A year after this experience Henry VI publicly declared his intention of founding two colleges to provide good Christian education for the rising generation who would need to raise the wealth of the country in order, among other things, to tackle the circumstances of the disadvantaged. This understanding behind the founding of Eton College is perhaps less generally appreciated but was symbolized by King Henry VI granting perpetual custody of the Leper Hospital of St James’s to the Provost of Eton College from 1450, upon the completion of the college – an arrangement that stood in place until leprosy became less common and King Henry VIII turned the site into a Palace from October 1531 when the Provost of Eton College turned over the buildings to him.

Even twentieth-century post-war reformers of the Coronation rituals in Norway saw the necessity, when abandoning coronation ritual, to retain a form of ‘Benediction’ upon a Sovereign



*The Queen at the Oji River Settlement for lepers in Eastern Nigeria, 9 February 1956.
Photograph by David Moore, Camera Press, London.*

faced with responsibility for an entire nation – recognizing that even the king himself is subject to a yet higher authority beyond the realm of mortal life.

The coronation paragraph in the Norwegian Constitution was dropped in 1908, thereby rendering the 1906 Coronation the last of its kind stretching back to Magnus V Erlingsson Bergen's at Christ Church in 1164. The last coronation involving anointing in Denmark took place in 1840, and that in Sweden in 1873 with King Oscar II and Queen Sophie. Although the Norwegian Parliament saw that the personal union with Sweden under which they were ruled under a joint king and diplomatic service had now dissolved as envisaged by constitutional reforms instituted in 1814, they failed to vote any process to replace that. And so Olav V himself took action upon the eve of his succession in 1958, advocating what he said five years earlier as Crown Prince:

When you get married and found a family, it is a serious matter, and you are happy to kneel at the Lord's altar and be blessed with the laying on of hands and prayer. When you become a King, it is also a serious matter, and I would be happy

to kneel at the Lord's altar and be blessed with the laying on of hands and prayer.⁶

He further stated that he would like that to happen in the national sanctuary, by which he meant Trondheim Cathedral. This duly happened.

Of note was the specific request that those in charge of all three branches of government should be present, together with the chief of the armed forces. For this Benediction the Norwegian Crown was placed on the Altar of the Cross and the Royal Standard of 1906 and the ensign flown from HMS *Norfolk* (whose battle honours included *Bismark* and *Scharnhorst*) and which carried King Haakon VII back to Norway from Britain in 1945, were placed on the steps to the High Altar.

Much the same process was repeated at the Benediction of King Harald V and Queen Sonja on 23 June 1991. The wording of the Benediction this time around was to:

Bless King Harald V, strengthen him and guide him in his work as Norway's King. Let our King with his people live in freedom and peace under your gracious hand. We ask you: may King Harald pursue his high vocation with wisdom and justice, and maintain truth and law in keeping with your will and with the people's laws. Sustain him by your mercy if evil days should come, and be yourself his strength and joy. We ask this in Jesus's name.

In the Benediction of the Queen there was also an appeal: 'God of all joy, look with favour on Queen Sonja. May her work support the King's work. Help her to use her talents and strength to the joy and benefit of Norway's land and people.'

The conclusion is that monarchy continues to fulfil a vital, pivotal, role in protecting the interests of a people or nation.

Notes

¹ Rom. 13, 1-2..

² 'The Form and Order of Her Majesty's Coronation' in E. Ratcliffe, *The Coronation Service of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II* (London: SPCK, 1953) - 'will help all listeners and viewers to follow the broadcast ceremonies'.

- ³ Henry was evidently influenced by Erasmus's *Institutio Principis Christiani* of 1516. Erasmus wrote: 'Quod Deus in universo, quod sol in mundo, quod oculus in corpore, hoc oportet esse Principem in Republica', whereas Henry substitutes 'anima' (i.e. soul) for 'oculus' (i.e. eyes) of the body when writing 'ut in regno simus sicut Anima in corpore et Sol in mundo'. Henry thereby adduces to himself the deeper responsibility under God of custodian of the very soul of the Church.

That so few examples of the Berthelet's 1535 Bible survive may indicate it was abandoned at publication – perhaps not surprisingly as Henry provoked shock in setting about the beheading of John Fisher at Tower Hill on 22 June, followed closely by Thomas Moore on 6 July. Cromwell's instruction of 1538 stated that the *Great Bible* be displayed in every parish church, containing as it did a highly illustrated preface requiring the reader to track back the pictorial origin of the repeated motif 'Verbum Dei' from the parishioners through the great officers of the Church (the Archbishop of Canterbury and Thomas Cromwell), to King Henry himself and ultimately to God. The British Library possesses a copy, BL C.18.d.10, which was probably King Henry VIII's own personal copy.

- ⁴ Dr George Bates, Physician to Charles I, stated of the King's body lying at St James's Palace from the following day: 'Cromwell, that he might to the full glut his traitorous eyes with that spectacle, having opened the coffin wherein the King's body was carried from the scaffold into the Palace, curiously viewed it, and with his finger severed the head from the shoulder, as we have been informed by eye-witnesses.' A more contrite reaction is that recording Cromwell as uttering 'dreadful necessity' upon that occasion.
- ⁵ MS '*Liber Regalis ...*', Abbot Lytlington, c.1390, Muniment Room, Westminster Abbey. Transcribed as '*Liber Regalis seu ordo consecrandi regem solum. Ordo consecrandi reginam cum rege. Ordo consecrandi reginam solam. Rubrica de Regis exequiis. E. codice Westmonasteriensi editus*', Roxburghe Club, 1870.
- ⁶ Conversation between Crown Prince Olav and Bishop Arne Fjellbu on St. Olav's Feast at Trondheim in 1953 quoted in G.T. Risasen, *The Norwegian Crown Regalia* (Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeider, 2006), p. 50.

Royal Launching and Christening of Ships

There has been an intimate association of royalty with boats down the aeons. Moses was placed in a basket of papyrus reeds and launched in the Nile – the Hebrew word for basket being used in the Bible only twice: in this instance with a river, and in describing the cypress wood ark of Noah, both being covered with bitumen imported from the Dead Sea – and in the case of Moses’ ‘basket’ launched into the Nile to be found by Pharaoh’s daughter, the future eighteenth dynasty princess who was to become Queen Hatchepsut. But around 2,350 years earlier there was the example of Sargon, King of Akkad, who wrote in c.3800: ‘my lowly mother conceived me, in secret she brought me forth. She set me in a basket of rushes, with bitumen she closed my door. She cast me into the River, which rose not over me ... Akki, the irrigator, as his own son reared me’.

The elaborate Palaces of the Minoan civilization on Crete were synonymous with shipping and trading outposts to support the enormous expense of their building and upkeep, but, more particularly, warships were chosen to defend the surrounding waters rather than building defensive walls around the palace complexes (so elaborate that the Minotaur in its maze at Knossos became symbolic of the sheer size of the palaces).

The association of royalty with the sea often resulted in the ship and crew becoming an extension of the sovereign himself. Thus King Joao II of Portugal equipped the explorer Diogo Cao with limestone pillars quarried from Alcantara, capped with a cross on a cube of stone that bore the Royal Arms, to mark out claims to territory. Part of that which Cao set up at Santa Maria (on the present day Angolan coast) in 1482 was retrieved and taken back to Lisbon, where its inscription may be read:

In the year 6681, from the creation of the world, and 1482 from the birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, the most high, most excellent prince King Joao, the second of Portugal, ordered this land to be discovered and these pillars to be set up by Diogo Cao, squire of his household.

Just five years later King Joao II issued orders to two Arabic-speaking explorers, Pedro de Civilha in his Royal Household, and Alfonso de Pavia, to search for a sea route to India, issuing them with a Carta de Marear copied from a chart of the world drawn in 1428 (itself according to Gavin Menzies taken from the Pizzigano Chart of 1424 and therefore of Chinese origin).

King Joao knew therefore that the Cape of Good Hope had already been ‘discovered’, though Bartholomew Dias is credited with doing so in 1487. As it happens, the Chinese had been trading westward across the Indian Ocean to the east coast of Africa since the Tang Dynasty (AD 618–907) and traded in porcelain as far south as Sofala, with chronicles left by Ma Huan and Fei Xin who sailed on five voyages before 1421. The clinching evidence of trade with East Africa in practical navigational terms is the extant rutter of Wui Pei Chi with its sailing directions for reaching East Africa from China. But voyagers from China, unless they were Nestorians,¹were not interpreting their endeavours in the context of Christianity, and had no ‘baggage’ of archaic prohibitions with which to reconcile what they saw, did, and expected to see.

With regard to Christendom, mariners have in general challenged the Church more than the Monarch when it comes to the ‘truths’ they represent as they have crossed horizons of discovery and seen for the first time with their own eyes things hitherto denied by the Church. Ferdinand Magellan set off in 1519 from Spain on his circumnavigatory voyage with the statement that: ‘The Church says that the earth is flat, but I know that it is round, for I have seen the shadow on the moon, and I have more faith in a shadow than in the Church.’

Yet the actions of the elements and curious coincidences down the ages far outstripping mathematical probability have effectively removed such confidence mariners might have otherwise had in their own ability to the extent that they

understood that happenstance often looked to be the work of something sacred – spiritual realms beyond the geographically or meteorologically discoverable or explicable, whose blessing on their activities or intentions needed to be invoked, and fatal wrath deflected. Here enters the Monarch and the Church in their natural roles of responsibility as advocates or intercessors for their peoples between God and man.

As it turns out, Christopher Marlow's question in *Doctor Faustus* relating to the classical 'Helen of Greece ... Was this the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium?' turns out to be truer of the modern monarchy's contribution to maritime activity. Egyptians, Greeks and Romans all appealed to their gods to protect seamen. Poseidon in Greek mythology (Neptune in Roman) was the object of these supplications. Ship-launching in classical Greece involved participants wreathing their heads with olive branches, drinking wine to honour the gods and the pouring of water on the new vessel as a symbol of blessing. Shrines were carried on board Greek and Roman ships; a practice extended into the Middle Ages. The shrine was usually placed upon the quarterdeck, which for that reason continues to have sacred significance to sailors.

The earliest forms of medieval Christian ritual applied in the world of shipping to invoke blessing took the form of a priest sprinkling holy water on the deck of a vessel in the direction of the four corners of the compass, together with invocatory prayers for the well-being of the vessel and its crew, and the shrine placed on the quarterdeck. The Ottoman Empire practice also involved an appeal to the divine, with the sacrificing of a sheep on the deck in accordance with Muslim ritual, followed by fasting.

The justification for the Christian practice lay in Jesus's ability to calm the raging waves upon the Sea of Galilee that so terrified his disciples while he slept. The rubric for the Royal Naval Act of Dedication of a vessel includes this Gospel account from St Mark, 4.36-41, concluding:

And he was in the hinder part of the ship, sleeping upon a pillow. And they awake him and say to him: Master, doth it not

concern thee that we perish? And rising up, he rebuked the wind and said to the sea: Peace. Be still, And the wind ceased; and there was a great calm. And he said to them: Why are you fearful? Have you not faith yet? And they feared exceedingly. And they said to one another: Who is this (thinkest thou) that both the wind and sea obey him?

Likewise the Acts of the Apostles constitutes the justification for the Church's role in maritime affairs in recording Paul's imminent shipwreck off Malta, when he stood up on the rolling deck to caution the centurion Julius and his terrified crew with the words:

Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me ... have faith that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.

The vessel broke up in the waves smashing the Maltese coast but St Paul and the entire crew survived as he prophesied.

Maritime peoples have tended to call upon their representatives, hereditary or elected, with much the same request: for safety at sea and for the sea to protect them.

The Venetians, whose form of governance in mediaeval days veered between the Doge being effectively elected by a common franchise or from time to time instead by a restricted elite of hereditary patriciate, went further than most, perhaps because they owed their very existence to the sea to whose lagoons they fled from AD 375 to protect themselves from the marauding Huns and Visigoths. A direct consequence of this and the total dependence of the Venetians upon the sea surrounding their lagoon for their livelihood, trade and subsequent empire, was the ceremony known as the 'Sposalizio del Mare' – Marriage with the Sea.

At the close of the tenth century, to commemorate Venetian control of Dalmatia, Doge Pietro Orseolo (AD 991–1008) created a ceremony involving a combination of the Doge, City

authorities, clergy and people going to the port of San Nicolo di Lido on Ascension Day for a blessing of the Adriatic Sea.

For this the Doge was dressed in gold and ermine robes, with corno atop, and sailed in the most elaborately carved and gilded galley called the Bucintoro ('bucin' being a many oared boat and 'di oro' meaning gilded with gold) to the harbour mouth of San Nicolo on the Lido, where he was joined by the Patriarch. Here the Doge threw the 'wedding' ring, first donated by Alexander III in 1177 in gratitude for Venice's role in reconciling the papacy with the Imperial empire, onto the waters, at the same time pronouncing the prayer: 'We marry you, O sea, in a sign of true and perpetual dominion, asking God to protect those who travel by sea.' Alexander had given the ring in recognition of the Venetian Republic's dominion over the sea, likening the relationship as a bride to a groom. Taking this literally, the Senate decreed the construction of a Bucintoro 'quod fabricentur navilium ducentorum hominum' for the annual commemoration, the first of which was launched in 1277 and the last, under Doge Alvise Mocenigo, on 12 January 1728. Paralleling the British Sovereign personifying Justice by means of the sacred conferral of the Sword of Justice at the Coronation, the Doge's Bucintoro in the sixteenth century had a statue mounted on the prow called the 'Venezia in Giustizia' (i.e. 'Venice in Justice')

Later it was sometimes the practice for the Patriarch to bless the ring but for the Doge to pour a bucket of holy water into the sea instead of the ring. A number of these rings survive, together with remnants of the last Bucintoro which was desecrated by the French invaders in 1797, the hull being used as a prison ship to humiliate the Venetians. A magnificent model of the Bucintoro is to be seen at the Museo Storico Navale, where also are to be found similar rings surviving from the launching of modern Italian warships.² From 1866 every ship launched in the Arsenal shipyard had a bronze ring secured by ribbon to the stern so that the ring touched the water as the ship descended down the slipway thus renewing the marriage with the sea. These rings were recovered and preserved in decorated coffers, a large collection of which are displayed in the Museo Storico Navale.

A modern version of the ceremony is still kept on the First

Sunday after Feast of the Ascension persists, these days with the Mayor sailing to the traditional spot in the San Nicolo in decorated boat to throw a laurel wreath into the lagoon.

The Church representing such a potent force in the face of nature, ship christening has survived as an integral element of launching and commissioning, though the onset of the English Reformation did see an initial diminution of the clergy's role in favour of the royal family, which imbalance was to last for two and a half centuries or so, and in some other European Protestant countries, before Anglican Church and Monarchy 'teamed up' again for such occasions.

Thus the christening party for the launch of the 64-gun ship-of-the-line *Prince Royal* in 1610 included the Prince of Wales and naval architect Phineas Pett, who was master shipwright at the Woolwich yard. Pett described the proceedings thus:

The noble Prince ... accompanied with the Lord Admiral and the great lords, were on the poop, where the standing great gilt cup was ready filled with wine to name the ship so soon as she had been afloat, according to ancient custom and ceremony performed at such times, and heaving the standing cup overboard. His Highness then standing upon the poop with a selected company only, besides the trumpeters, with a great deal of expression of princely joy, and with the ceremony of drinking in the standing cup, threw all the wine forwards towards the half-deck, and solemnly calling her by name of the Prince Royal, the trumpets sounding the while, with many gracious words to me, gave the standing cup into my hands.

The 'standing cup' was a large cup fashioned of precious metal. When the ship began to slide down the ways, the presiding officer took a ceremonial sip of wine from the cup, and poured the rest on the deck or over the bow. Until Charles II's day the cup was thrown overboard and belonged to the retriever, but thereafter it was presented to the master shipwright. The National Maritime Museum has in its collection a tankard inscribed: 'At the launching of His Majestes Ship the Captain a 3rd rate of 70 Guns 1230 Tuns ye 14 of April 1743. Built by Mr John Holland at Woolwich.'

Meanwhile abroad, where the liturgical aspects of ship

Royal Launching and Christening of Ships

christenings continued unabated in Roman Catholic countries, Royal Navy Chaplain, the Revd Henry Teonge, left a record in 1675 of the launch by the Knights of Malta of a 'briganteen of 23 oars':

Two fryers and an attendant went into the vessel, and kneeling down prayed halfe an houre, and layd their hands on every mast, and other places of the vessel, and sprinkled her all over with holy water. Then they came out and hoysted a pendent to signify she was a man of war; then at once thrust her into the water.

In Hanoverian Britain the 'standing cup' ceremony was replaced by the practice of breaking a bottle across the bow, the first recorded case being one of the Princesses of Hanover who threw the bottle herself, though missing the ship entirely and injuring one of the spectators at the launch (who subsequently put in a claim for damages against the Admiralty). Significantly, from 1810 a lady was usually asked to perform the ceremony.

Although 'sponsors' of English warships were customarily members of the royal family, senior naval officers or Admiralty officials, a few civilians were invited to sponsor Royal Navy ships during the nineteenth century.

Finally, in 1875, the religious element returned to naval christenings with Princess Alexandra, wife of the Prince of Wales, personally introducing an Anglican choral service at the launching ceremony for the battleship HMS *Alexandra*. The usage continues to this day with the singing of Psalm 107, incorporating its special meaning to mariners:

They that go down to the sea in ships;
And occupy their business in great waters;
These men see the works of the Lord,
and His wonders in the deep

It had been intended to call the ship HMS *Superb*, but the name was changed to *Alexandra* at her launching. It was an immensely important event to naval architecture for *Alexandra* was the first British ironclad to be launched by a member of the royal family; the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, the Duke and Duchess of Teck and the Duke of Cambridge were also present.