

Coronation Rites for Carolingian Queens: Judith and Ermentrude

Draft translation by Charles West, October 2018. Comments and suggestions welcome.

I. The coronation of Judith, 856

Edition: R. Jackson, *Ordines coronationis Franciae*, vol. 1 (1995), pp. 73-79

This is the text for the ordination of Judith, a daughter of Charles the Bald, on her marriage to the English king of Wessex, Æthelwulf. It is generally thought to have been written by Hincmar of Reims. The text preserved only in early modern editions from a now lost manuscript of Liège. This translation is arranged according to Jackson's edition.

TRANSLATION

1. Blessing upon the Queen, whom king Æthelwulf took in marriage
2. May you marry in Christ, veiled with a heavenly cloud, and, cooled with spiritual grace and protected from all illicit concupiscence, may you initiate a treaty with your eyes, that you shall not see another man with desire, and not commit adultery with your body or in your heart, and may you avert your eyes lest they see vain things. Then you will be alive in the way of the Lord and be able to say with the Prophet "I lifted my eyes to the hills whence comes my salvation". Through the creator and the Redeemer and our Lord Jesus Christ who reigns and lives with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end.
3. Bless O Lord this dowry, and deign to endow those taking it with your blessing; so that keeping the faith of marriage and the unstained marital bed, they may deserve to become part of the consortium of the holy patriarchs. Through God etc.
4. Accept this ring as a token [*signum*] of faith and love, and a bond of conjugal union, that man may not separate what God has joined together: Who lives and reigns world without end.
5. I marry you to one man, as a chaste virgin and an honourable [*pudica*] future wife, as these holy [*sanctae*] women were to their husbands: Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, Esther, Judith, Anna, Noemi, with the approval of the author and sanctifier of marriage, our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns for ever.
6. O Lord, who in the beginning of the world gave a blessing for the multiplication of children, hear our prayers, and to this your [male] servant [*famulus*], and this your [female] servant [*famula*], pour out the work of your blessing, that in conjugal union according to your will, they may be equal in devotion, similar in mind, and joined together with mutual sanctity. Endow them with holy fruits and blessed works. Make them to bring forth a progeny who can claim the inheritance of paradise. Open, O Lord, the gates of heaven and visit them with peace. Water their lands, that they may bring forth spiritual fruit. O You who were given to us from a virgin, bless them and endow them with the times of safety that the holy Prophet John prophesied for us before Your Advent, that they may believe faithfully, and that, living blessedly, there may follow an eternal life and Kingdom; by your Grace, Christ our saviour, who lives and reigns with God the Father in unity with the holy spirit, through all things.

7. Blessing of the queen. We invoke you O holy Lord, omnipotent Father, eternal God, that you shall make this your [female] servant, whom you have conceded by the providence of your holy dispensation to grow happily to the present day in youthful bloom, endowed with the gift of your piety and full of truth, always to improve to better things from day to day in the presence of you and of the people; so that she may joyfully accept the largess of supernal grace in her rule [*regimen*], and fortified on all sides by the walls of your mercy against adversity, she may merit to live with the peace of propitiation. Through the Lord [Amen].

8. Lift up your hearts.

9. Holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God, strength of the chosen, and exalter of the humble, You who wished in the beginning to purify the crimes of the world through the effusion of the flood; and who demonstrated the return of peace to the world through a dove carrying the olive branch; and again You who anointed your servant Aaron as a priest through the unction of oil; and who afterwards through the infusion of his anointed oil made priests, kings, and prophets to rule your people Israel, and who foretold through the prophetic voice of your servant David that the face of the church would be cheered through oil [*a reference to a Psalm*]. And You who with this oil has cheered the face of your servant Judith for the liberation of your servants and the confusion of your enemies, and who made the face of your servant Esther by this spiritual unction of your mercy so glorious that by her prayers You inclined the furious heart of the king to mercy, and to the salvation of those who believe in You. We seek from You, Almighty God, that through this oil [*creaturae pinguedinem*], you will make her beautiful with the peace of the dove, in simplicity and in chastity [*pudicitia*]. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your son, who will come again to judge.

10. Coronation. May the Lord crown you with glory and honour, and place upon your head a crown of a spiritual jewel, that what is signified in the shining of gold and in the gleaming of gems may shine forth always in your actions; which may He deign to bring about, to whom is all the honour and the glory world without end.

11. Blessings. O Lord, bless this your woman-servant, You who moderate for ever the kingdoms of kings. Amen. Accept the works of her hands, and may her land be filled with your blessing of the fruits of heaven, and the dew of the water and of the deep. May she rejoice with your blessing from the tops of the ancient mountains and eternal hills, from the fruits of the earth and its fullness.

Let the blessing of him that appeared in the Bush descend upon her head. Give to her the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, an abundance of fruit and wine: that they may serve her and the seed of her people, and that the people may adore her and her seed in your honour.

Fill her with the blessings of the breast and the womb. May the blessings of the ancient fathers be strengthened upon her and upon her seed, as you promised your servant Abraham and his seed for ever. Amen. Grant we beseech you Almighty and merciful God that these your gifts which your faithful have accepted from your hands may be to those giving taking and dispensing them an aid in the present life, a redemption of souls and a help for the taking of eternal life. Through God etc.

II. The Consecration of Queen Ermentrude, 866

Based on the edition by Jackson, *Ordines*, pp. 80-86.

This is the text for a coronation ritual for Queen Ermentrude, wife of Charles the Bald, in 866. This text is generally thought to have been composed by Hincmar of Reims, like the earlier *ordo* he wrote for Judith. There are no surviving manuscripts, and the text was preserved only through an edition by Jacques Sirmond.

TRANSLATION

1. The address of two bishops in the church of St Medard when Ermentrude was consecrated as queen:

2. “We wish you to know, brothers, that our lord and *senior*, the glorious king Charles, sought the devotion of Our Humility that, with the authority of the ministry conferred upon us by God, just as he was anointed and consecrated as king, by episcopal authority with sacred unction and blessing, as we read in the Scriptures God commanded that kings should be anointed and consecrated into royal power; so too we should bless his wife (*uxor*) our lady in the name of queen, just as we understand was done before for others by the apostolic see and by our predecessors.

And we shall explain to Your Fraternity the reason, so that it should not be a surprise to you that he asks. That is, since as it known to many people Omnipotent God by His grace wonderfully brought this kingdom together in the hands of his predecessors, which those predecessors nobly governed, and through succession their progeny has ruled (*rexit*) up to these times. And God gave children [or sons: *fili*] to our lord, as is known to you. His faithful followers rejoice that they have the greatest hope in the nobility of these, for the holy church and kingdom which God has given to him [Charles] to rule. From these he gave some to God, and he might offer an oblation to God from the fruit of his loins. Some God by His Grace took from this world while they were still at a young age, ‘lest’, as is written, ‘wickedness change their hearts’. Some, as is not hidden to you, He allowed to incur the suffering of His judgement, as his faithful followers grieve. Therefore Charles seeks the episcopal blessing of his wife, so that God may deign to give him a child from her whence the holy church may have solace, the kingdom its necessary defence, his faithful followers their desired aid, and Christianity its wished-for peace, law and justice, along with those he has already, with the agreement and assistance of the Lord.

And we have this authority in the Holy Scriptures, that as God said to Abraham, ‘In your seed all peoples will be blessed’, and to which hundred-year-old man, God gave his son Isaac from his ninety-year-old wife; and He made Isaac accept a sterile wife, so that in this as He is accustomed to do often He might show forth the generosity of His mercy. And as the Scriptures say, since ‘Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was sterile’, she conceived. And let it not be a surprise to you that he did not do this before, since as the Holy Scripture says, in the first union (*conjunctio*) of male and female the Lord said to Eve ‘You will turn to your husband, and he will rule over you’. And when Abraham and Sara, were far on in legitimate union and advanced in years, and when as St Peter says ‘Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord’, God said to Abraham – which previously we read that he had not said to him or anyone else, ‘All the things which Sara says to you, listen to her words’. Then indeed Abraham was rightly called priest, and womanly things, that is all lasciviousness, were absent

from Sara. And they accepted the blessing of the blessed seed from God, in Whom all peoples are blessed. Amen.

3. Supported with these authorities, 'in giving out the gifts of God', we [bishops] who are constituted His ministers by Him for this purpose, as [Pope] Leo says, 'ought not to be troublesome', nor should we neglect the petitions of devout people, especially if we plainly see that those petitions spring from the mercy of God. For many times the mercy of God has decreed to assist human salvation, that this salvation might be obtained especially by the prayers of the priests. In their works, as we read in holy letters, the Saviour himself intervened: nor is He ever absent from those things which he committed his ministers to carry out, saying 'Behold, I am with you for ever'. And as Leo says, 'if we asked for something with grateful intent and in good order through our service, we do not doubt that it was given to us through the Holy Spirit'. Therefore, brothers, since things are so, and our ministration for you is joined with your devotion to us, that there may be a single prayer to the Lord, as we read that priests are appointed to do, that they should first pray for their own sins, then for those of the people. And there was a prayer without interruption to God for Peter, that is for the whole chorus of bishops. So while we pray for our common salvation and necessity, indeed for the salvation and necessity of the whole church and people, let this common prayer follow the common will, to Him who makes all live unanimously in the household, and lives and reigns, world without end, Amen."

3. [blank]

4. Prayer. Holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God, who made all things from nothing by your power, and having ordered the beginnings of the universe, established the inseparable help of woman for the man made in your image, and gave fleshly origin to the female body from the man, teaching that since it pleased You to institute them from one flesh, so it should not be licit for mankind to separate them. Look kindly upon this your woman servant joined in marital union [*maritali consortio*], who seeks to be fortified by Your protection. May there be in her the yoke of love and peace, may she marry in Christ faithfully and chastely, and may she remain the imitator of holy women. May she be as lovable as Rachel was to her husband, as wise as Rebecca, as long-lived and faithful as Sara. May the Author of prevarication usurp nothing in her by his actions, may she remain bound up in the commands of faith, may she flee from illicit contact, joined to a single marriage-bed; may she fortify her infirmity with the strength of discipline. May she be weighty in modesty, venerable in decency, educated in heavenly doctrines. May she be fertile in offspring pleasing to her, may she be proven and innocent. May she receive through this holy unction of merciful, joyful and exultant oil, health of mind, integrity of body, safety of salvation, security of holy, corroboration of the faith, and the fullness of love. Crown her, Lord, with a crown of justice. Crown her with the fruit of the saints and with blessed works. May she be a queen by merit and in name and virtue, cleaving to the right path in this world with good words, and crowned in future honour and glory by the right hand of the King, dressed in good works, and girded with the variety of virtues. Make her bring forth offspring who belong to the inheritance of your paradise. Bestow, Lord, upon this woman servant such an intention of love, zeal for mercy, and growth of religion, that she may constantly be worth of Your help. Repel from her the venom of the cunning serpent, and defend her, protected by the breastplate of faith, with the shield of salvation; correct her actions, improve her life, order her habits, and deign to bring her in at a ripe old age to the celestial kingdoms. Through our Lord, [Amen].

5. May the Lord crown you in glory and honour, and with eternal protection. Who lives and reigns, [Amen].

6. May Almighty God, who blessed Adam and Eve, saying 'Go forth and multiply', and blessed the marriages of the patriarchs, and who sent Raphael His angel with Tobias, by whose ministry he

repelled the demon from Sara his wife, bless you and this your future wife. So that according to the precept of God, 'two may be made one flesh', and 'What God has joined, let no one separate', and may he give to you the blessing of the heavenly dew and the fatness of the land.

And we bless you too in the name of the Lord, who sends his good angels that they may always look after you, and drive all fantasy and wickedness and trickery of all wicked spirits and of men away from you. And may they protect, fortify and defend you from the stain of any adultery, and from all the traps of men and demons, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May He pour his love and fear constantly into your hearts, that you may both grow old in a good old age, and see the children of your children flourishing in the will of the Lord. And may peace remain with you. And persevering in the right faith, good works, good concord and a sincere conjugal love, and in the confession of the holy Trinity and communion of the catholic Church, may you both reach eternal life. May He deign to grant this, whose kingdom and rule lasts without end, world without end, Amen.