

COOPER AS LITURGIOLOGIST

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This paper is concerned with James Cooper more as liturgical practitioner than as liturgical scholar. He clearly ranked the conduct of worship very high among the duties of a parish minister. How, we may ask, did he come to do so ? If that be thought to be a strange question to ask concerning a minister, is not the more perplexing question how so many contrive to avoid a lively and informed interest in a matter of weekly involvement?

Writing in the Church Service Society *Annual* to mark the centenary of Cooper's birth J M Kirkpatrick says: "In the time when he began his ministry there prevailed no variety in Divine Service. The only special services were those on Fast Days and these varied, as those who can remember them will agree, in no special particular from those of a Sunday forenoon."¹ Liturgical concerns were clearly unusual. In Cooper's case they were awakened long before the need to make preparation for the leading of worship was an immediately pressing concern. His awareness stemmed partly from his family background and the circumstances of his childhood. His paternal grandmother had, previous to her marriage, been an Episcopalian and she instilled in her son, John, a merchant in Elgin, a love of the *Book of Common Prayer* of which his son, James, was in turn aware. And during a childhood illness he was sent to recuperate with an uncle who was a doctor in Old Deer. When there was no evening service in the Parish Church they went to the Episcopal Church. Cooper's widow was later to write:

"There he had opportunity of becoming familiar with the beautiful liturgy which was such a comfort to him during the last months of his life. He used to say 'It is beautiful; everything is there that one wants'".

Yet his admiration of Episcopalian usage was not uncritical. As a student he recorded that he had attended Holy Communion in an Episcopal Church and admired the service "but I like our own better." And later, when the

Society's *Euchologion* was being revised, he noted, not approvingly, that "Dr Donald McLeod wanted the services more Anglican."²

The use of the word "beautiful" will have been noted. There was undoubtedly a strong aesthetic element in the liturgical concern of the man who, as a little boy, had found pleasure in arranging the flowers on his mother's dining table. In a fragment of autobiography he writes: "Puritan I never was; I think they deprived the Church's worship of that glory and beauty for which God provided at the erection of the Tabernacle, and which He has impressed on every whit of His great Temple of the Universe."³ Yet the concern for beauty was not merely aesthetic. When his first charge at St Stephen's, Broughty Ferry, was erected, into a parish and the minister admitted to Presbytery, the Moderator of that court said, "he has by the exercise of good sense and refined taste improved the service in St Stephen's to such an extent as to make it not only more acceptable but beautiful and effective."⁴ Acceptability and effectiveness were not unimportant in an era when the Established Church was becoming concerned about the loss of members to the Episcopal Church. Dr Bisset of Bourtie (a parish c.15 miles NW of Aberdeen), in his Moderatorial Address in 1862 when Cooper was an Arts student, made a plea for innovation in worship to stem the loss. Cooper repeated that call for innovation in his own Moderatorial Address in 1917, "for a higher reason - the greater glory of Almighty God." That, without a doubt, was the chief basis on which Cooper's concern for worship was grounded, and for that, what he was pleased to call "right views as to the nature, character and will of God" were necessary. In a paper given to the *Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society* in 1887 he indicates what these right views might be. "God is essentially and altogether holy." He is a reconciled God. The same paper also suggests that we "must have a 'right idea' of our own nature and condition." That nature is both material and spiritual; so bodily posture is significant. Kneeling, he says, is "much easier than any form of 'hunkering'." ⁵

In addition to the aesthetic and doctrinal elements in Cooper's concern for worship there was also a historical or, less kindly, an antiquarian element. The splendidly beautiful ruins of Elgin Cathedral left their enduring mark on

1 JM Kirkpatrick, "James Cooper, 1846 - 1922" *Church Service Society Annual* 17 (1947)

2 HJ Wotherspoon *James Cooper: A Memoir* (London 1926) Quotations in the preceding paragraph from pp 39, 50, 68, 150

3 *ibid.* p23

4 *ibid.* p103

5 James Cooper, "Principles of Christian Worship" *Transactions of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society* 11. pp12ff

him. There might have been much more ignorance in the middle ages; there might have been "abounding superstition", but, he writes, "the vigorous church extension, the glorious church building of these ages were, as a rule, the fruits of genuine, if unenlightened piety whose aim, moreover, was emphatically the increase of Divine worship."⁶ That seems to overlook the indicators that self-interest, with regard to personal safety in the next world, was a fairly strong element in much medieval piety - despite the formal wording of deeds of gift that all is for the glory and honour of God's name. Kirkpatrick comes to the defence of Cooper against charges of being a "medievalist" but one may doubt whether he is fully successful in enabling Cooper to escape such a judgement. Wotherspoon remarks in his *Memoir* that Cooper was no philosopher; that may shed some light on his doctrinal rigidity and on his somewhat uncritical attitude to Celtic and medieval practice. Perhaps he did not see either doctrine or practice sufficiently in historical context.

HOLY COMMUNION

From consideration of the bases of Cooper's liturgical interests, we may turn to practice, dealing first, as he would have thought proper, with the Holy Communion. In his paper on Principles he writes,

"The Eucharist is not only the highest act of the Christian's homage,
it is also the sacrament wherein God communicates to us his greatest gift.
It worthily completes our earthly worship."

And, as is well known, at least by those who know anything of him at all, Cooper favoured more frequent celebration of the Holy Communion. He had achieved that at Broughty Ferry and he made it clear that he would accept the call to Aberdeen only if there would be no opposition to quarterly (replacing the then current half-yearly) celebrations.

The shape and content of the service, as it was at least in the latter part of his ministry in East St Nicholas, may be discovered from a booklet, published in 1892, entitled, "The Divine Liturgy. The Order of the Holy Table." It begins, presumably after Preparation and the Liturgy of the Word, with the "*Gloria in Excelsis*". Then,

"In the Faith of the Catholic Church,
let us approach this Divine Service,
singing with one heart and with one voice" -

6 James Cooper, "*Reliques of Ancient Scottish Devotion*" (Edinburgh 1913) p10

the Nicene Creed.

Then, "at the Holy Table", the 'Peace' is offered in this form: "Peace be unto you. Have peace with God, and be at peace one with another." There follow the Words of Institution and the 'taking' of the elements: "these creatures of bread and wine." The Offertory Prayer offers the bread and the cup "of the fruits of the earth". and includes self-offering. The Prayer of the Veil follows, then the Salutation (in Trinitarian form) and *Sursum Corda*. The Preface contains the briefest of references to creation - briefer, for example, than the 4th edition of '*Euchologion*', but more than the 7th, published 4 years after Cooper. *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* follow. There are six Proper Prefaces, taken from the *Book of Common Prayer* with minor adjustments to fit the different context in which Cooper provides for their use. In the section headed CONSECRATION the Words of Institution are repeated in a slightly expanded (and suspiciously Romish!) form with "holy and venerable hands", but without the Fraction which accompanies their use at this point in the BCP. At the *Epiclesis* the Presbyter (so named) lays his hands on the elements. The effect sought by the Spirit's action is "that the bread which we break may be the Communion of the Body of Christ" There follows 'The Great Intercession', "pleading His precious sacrifice" and encompassing the Church, Catholic and local, 'priests' and people; rulers; friends; the sick. Thanksgiving for the saints is followed by this:

**"We remember also before Thee with thanksgiving,
with love, and faith, and hope,
those most dear to us who are fallen asleep in Jesus."**

That is surely a model of caution in what was in his day the very thorny matter of praying for the departed. It is succeeded by a prayer for the hastening of the Second Advent - a note characteristic of the Catholic Apostolic Church to the Liturgy of which our late-Victorian liturgical pioneers were considerably indebted. After Silent Prayer there comes "*Agnus Dei*" and the Lord's Prayer with, as it were, an appendix underscoring two of the clauses therein.

The Prayer of Humble Access from the BCP is inserted at this point with one slight amendment. Thereafter, having taken the bread, the Presbyter is to say "Holy things to the Holy" and then to break the bread. He receives the "Communion of Christ's body" and delivers to the people neither with direct quotation of the Dominical words nor with the words of

the Directory but with

"The Body of Jesus Christ, which is broken for you,
preserve you, body and soul, unto everlasting life."

The Cup is lifted with repetition of the Words of Institution. Again the Presbyter receives, and delivers with words similar to those over the bread. Other texts are provided, including "Eat, O Friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved" (Song of Songs, 5.1)⁷

⁷ In a paper to a Scottish Church Society Conference on "The Celtic Inheritance of the Scottish Church: Cooper remarks, "These words, so familiar to the older of us at the Communion of our youth, occur as the Communion Anthem in the Stowe Missal. They are cited by Bishop Dowden as evidence of the existence of Communion in both kinds in our Church in her Celtic period." Cooper himself refers to them, not altogether convincingly, as evidence that "features of the ancient Celtic ritual have lived on in the Scottish Church through all changes."

Provision is made for a post-communion address. The singing of part of Psalm 103 is introduced with a reference to the singing of a hymn after the Last Supper. There is a post-communion prayer and the *Nunc Dimittis*. Blessings, one for Easter and one for other times, are provided.⁸

MORNING & EVENING SERVICES

In the course of some internal building works at St Nicholas in 1987 there were discovered two begrimed order of service sheets for non-sacramental services, morning and evening. These bear the printed date 189- and presumably reflect Cooper's usage. They are as follows:

⁸ "*The Divine Liturgy. The Order at the Holy Table*" (Aberdeen 1892). I have not had a direct sight of this work but understand that a copy is to be found in the Library of the University of Glasgow. It was drawn to my attention by Kenneth Hughes who, many years ago, lent me, I think, a typed transcript from which I made extensive notes. It may be remarked that it predates by one year the original edition of HJ Wotherspoon's "*The Divine Service*".

MORNING

Praise
Prayer (Confession, Supplications, Prayers)
The Lord's Prayer
Psalm Chant
Old Testament Lesson
Canticle
New Testament Lesson
Anthem
The Creed
Prayer for Illumination
S E R M O N
Praise
Prayer (Intercessions, Thanksgivings)
Praise
The Offertory
The Benediction

EVENING

Psalm (Tune:)
Prayers (Invocations, Confession, Supplications, Prayers)
The Lord's Prayer after which the Choir sings AMEN
Prose Psalms Chants
Old Testament Lesson
Canticle
New Testament Lesson
Praise
Apostles' Creed
Prayers (Salutation, Kyrie, Collect of the Day, Intercessions)
Ending with "Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost
be glory and praise for ever".
After which the Choir sings AMEN
Anthem
S E R M O N
Ending with Ascription - "To God the Father,
the Son and the Holy Ghost
be glory and praise for ever."
After which the Choir sings AMEN.
INTIMATIONS
Praise
The Offering (Special Collections)
Benediction. After which the Choir sings AMEN.

It will be noted that, in both cases, the Lord's Prayer is placed at the conclusion of the first set of prayers. *The Directory*, on the other hand, in recommending the use of the Lord's Prayer in the prayers of the church, appears to suggest that it will come at the end. Cooper defends his practice in his paper on Principles thus:

"I think the natural thing, when we have heard the word of pardon,
is to cry, at once, Abba, Father. Here therefore it seems to me
the Lord's Prayer ought to come in."

Indeed he there places it before the supplications. Apart from this 'dislocation' one may conclude that, by and large, the Morning Service follows the 'Eucharistic norm' while the Evening Service concedes a little more to Prayer Book Evensong.

I do not know to what extent the order of morning service at East St Nicholas was altered by Cooper. One of the charges brought against him at an early stage of his ministry was that of varying the sequence of acts of Public Worship, although he had recorded, on his arrival, that Public Worship

"was on the whole satisfactory,
the praise having attained a high degree of excellence
due to the careful training given by the Precentor."

The innovation and variety which he desired and to which exception was taken presumably occurred less in structure than in content reflecting the Christian Year, on which he placed great emphasis.

WEEK DAY SERVICES

Worship in Cooper's time was never confined to Sundays. On the day following his induction he resumed the weekly Exercise which had been laid aside for a few years - since, it is alleged, a change in the law or practice concerning proclamation of banns had been made: by such curious circumstances are liturgical matters sometimes governed. Soon daily Morning Service was established - the first, as he claimed proudly, to be re-introduced into the Church of Scotland. The mere fact of holding these services was also an element in the complaint to the Presbytery. Some years afterwards a daily Evening Service was added. For these services there survives a typescript volume signed and dated by Cooper in February 1900,

after his ministry in East Nicholas had ended.⁹ Characteristically the title page is headed "*Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*". These are by no means brief daily prayers - hymn, reading, prayer - of the kind customary in many schools and in university chapels a generation ago. These services clearly have their roots in the offices of monastic tradition and are not, I judge, uninfluenced by Morning and Evening Prayer in the *Book of Common Prayer*. They have a richness of variation in content not characteristic of the latter - and also a greater wordiness. A detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this paper but attention may be drawn to certain features.

On Wednesday morning, for instance, it is indicated that there may be a sermon but it is differently positioned from that which was, I think invariably, preached at the Thursday 'Exercise'. There is a more wide-ranging choice of canticles than that offered by the BCP, but the *Scottish Hymnal* was helpful in that direction. A rather strained attempt is made to relate each day to a biblical event - from the creation story or from the life of our Lord. On Wednesday evening provision was made for the use of the *Litany of Dunkeld* which Cooper had translated. On Friday mornings the Litany of the *Book of Common Prayer* was appointed. The Service Book indicates that it had been said in the East Church for more than seventeen years and that the people came on Fridays especially to take part in it. Baptism might be administered on Saturday evenings. Each day, before the Intercessions, notices were given, including notice of any who requested the prayers of the Church. After the Intercessions there is usually a Commemoration of the Faithful Departed.

In a lecture to a Clerical Society in the South of England on the Revival of Church Principles in Scotland Cooper comments, on the successive editions of *Euchologion*,

"The variations show on the whole a decided progress in tone.
If the language at times is somewhat stiff,
the book has done much to improve our Service
and has contributed not a little to the cause of Orthodoxy."¹⁰

I think that the judgement of the late twentieth century would be that his own language does not escape the charge of stiffness and that the elaborate

9 "*The Order of Divine Service on Week-Days, Morning and Evening in the East Oarish Church of S Nicholas, Aberdeen*. Typescript 1900. On permanent loan to the Kirk of S Nicholas from the Library of Christ's College, Aberdeen.

10 James Cooper, *The Revival of Church Principles in the Church of Scotland* (London 1895) pp16,17

statement of doctrinal orthodoxy in prayer is not always devotionally helpful. It is, however, not easy for me to say how much in these daily prayers is original composition and how much is drawn from other sources.

MANUAL OF THE GUILD OF ST MARGARET

Further evidence of Cooper's liturgical work is to be found in the *Manual of the Guild of St Margaret of Scotland*¹¹ (a parochial precursor of the national Woman's Guild) which he, with his Assistant T N Adamson, had founded in 1882. *The Manual*, published some years after the foundation, makes provision for occasions when the members were expected to meet for worship, as well as for family prayers which they were expected to encourage in their homes, and incorporates the *Scottish Hymnal* and an edition, authorised by the General Assembly, of the Psalter (in the *Authorised Version*) with thirty-eight scriptural and other canticles. For the corporate use of the Guild there are provided five 'Offices for the Morning Praises of God on Certain Days' and an 'Office for Quarterly Meetings at Evening Service'. The "certain days" are Christmas Day, Good Friday, Easter Day, Ascension Day and Whitsunday. The "quarterly" meetings were to be held on the Feasts of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the Annunciation, St Michael and All Angels, and St Margaret. These Offices are elaborately wrought with appropriate antiphons to the psalms, responsories (sic), collects and other prayers. While some elements both of form and content are clearly derivative from the Breviary and the Prayer Book, others seem to be original.

The records of the Guild give rise to some doubts as to how completely the ideals set forth were realised in practice. Yet we cannot but regard the achievement as considerable if not, indeed, astonishing. If Cooper's intention could not be fully realised nor his example closely followed, it must nevertheless have made the more modest advances of others towards catholic recovery easier to achieve.

BUILDINGS AND ACCESSORIES FOR THE LITURGY

No account of the liturgical work of Cooper would be complete without at least brief mention of (a) the setting of worship and (b) the 'utensils' of worship. His concern for the promotion of 'sound views' on these matters found expression in his founding of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society in

¹¹ *The Manual of the Guild of St Margaret of Scotland*. (Aberdeen 1893)

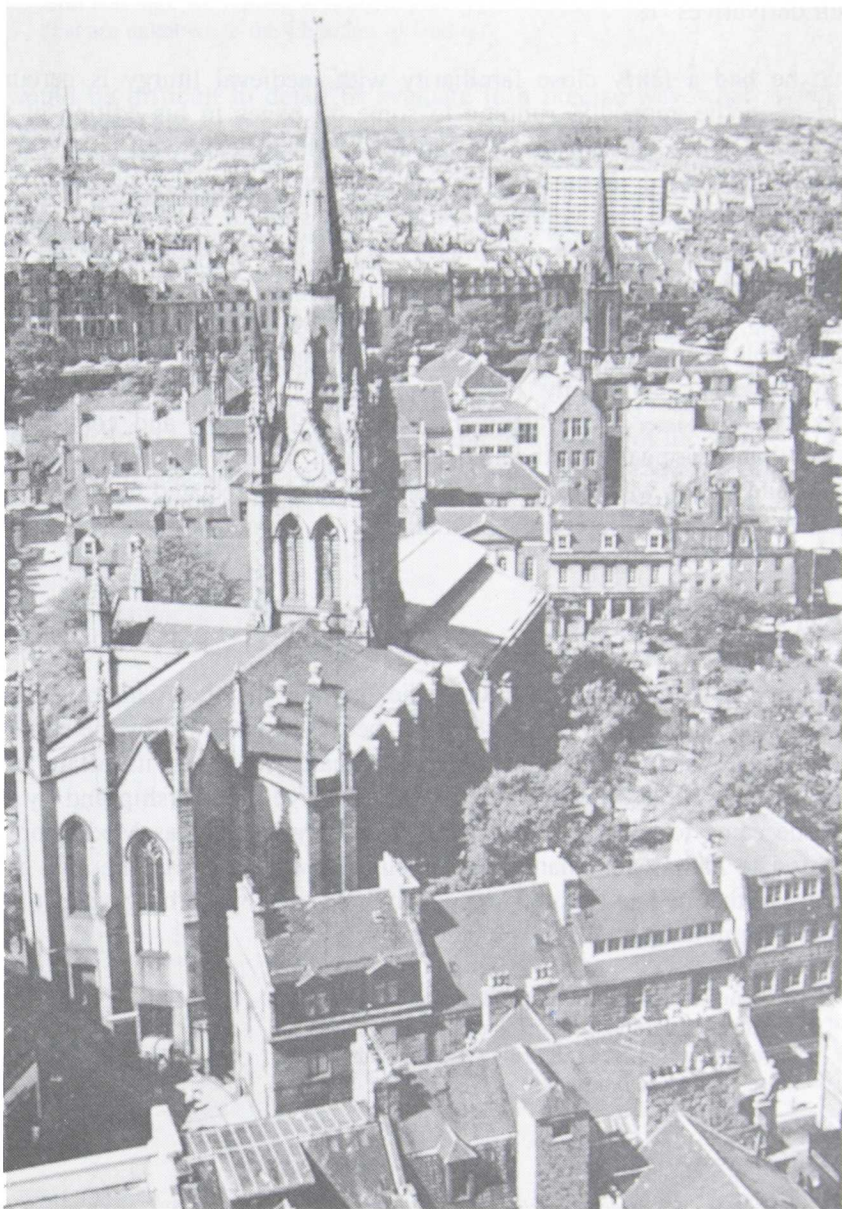
1887. Yet, for all his antiquarian enthusiasm for medieval buildings and his aesthetic concern for 'truer taste' reflected in the pages of the Society's *Transactions*, Cooper, in practice, did not lose sight of the primacy of the words and actions of worship over the setting and the apparatus. Although he had been responsible for one of the earliest cases of *chancelitis* in the Church of Scotland at St Stephen's, Broughty Ferry, the splendid apse of the East Church had to wait for fifteen years after his death before it was developed (as a memorial to him) along the kind of lines of which he approved. A massive two-staired pulpit with canopy stood centrally under the arch of the apse throughout his ministry, though he resolutely, and successfully, opposed the placing of the organ behind it when that instrument was introduced in 1886. In front of it, however, the Holy Table was vested with embroidered frontals of the kind which were to land his assistant, Adamson, in trouble at Barnhill a few years later; and when a lectern was introduced it was made of oak and bell-metal surviving after a fire (1874) in the medieval steeple and in the shape of a pelican as its medieval forerunner had been. Cooper's first gift to the East Church, soon after his arrival, was a brass alms dish. Later came a small silver paten (following the design of one given by Jeremy Taylor to his cathedral at Dromore)

"intended chiefly for carrying to the sick the blessed sacrament".

Local designers known to be sympathetic to his aims were used when two larger plates and a flagon were provided by donors as they were when he himself, on his departure to Glasgow, was presented with a bejewelled and enamelled chalice and paten. Under the terms of his will it has returned to the congregation.

THE SCHOLAR AND EDITOR

Cooper's editorial and scholarly work must also be briefly mentioned. He joined the *Church Service Society* soon after he went to St Stephen's and was taken on to the editorial committee at an early stage and soon after coming to Aberdeen notes that he was busy with the Society's affairs. It was at this time preparing the second edition of *Euchologion*. It is not surprising to learn that Cooper's interest lay in the order for Holy Communion. Wotherspoon tells us that he was much in correspondence with Sprott and sometimes in controversy. Sprott drew chiefly from Reformed sources,



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Modern view of the St Nicholas churches. The brick spire of the Triple church is immediately to the right.

Scottish and Continental, "while Cooper leant to the ancient Liturgies and their derivatives."¹²

That he had a fairly close familiarity with medieval liturgy is certainly evident in the appendix, running to some 50 pages in his edition of the *Cartulary of the Church of St Nicholas*¹³, which deals with some of the Masses mentioned in the text of the charters which were collected and translated in these two volumes. A later and slighter volume, *Reliques of Ancient Scottish Devotion*, contains a Service for Communion of the Sick from the *Book of Deer* which he indicates he had used for that purpose, and previously mentioned *Dunkeld Litany*, and other minor items. His major attributable work for the Society was an edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1637 "commonly" (and, as he argued, wrongly) "known as Laud's Liturgy" (1904)¹⁴. The comment is largely historical and comparative rather than liturgically or theologically critical, though he clearly believed that it had merits which had never been properly appreciated because of the manner of its imposition on the church.

CONCLUSION

As early as 1895 Cooper ventured the opinion that the *Church Service Society* was "unlikely to do much more" because "paralysed by the spirit of compromise" among those to whom the management of its affairs was entrusted¹⁵. Nevertheless he continued in active membership and by the time he came to address the General Assembly in 1917 as Moderator, in addition to calling for change in worship (*as noted above*), he also gave some hint that he had become less uncompromising by warning against rash or ignorant innovation.

"We must remember that our Church is not new.
We must be careful not to dislodge in ignorance
old customs that are more truly Catholic than
those we seek to introduce.

¹² Wotherspoon, op cit p126

¹³ James Cooper, ed *Cartularium Ecclesiae S Nicolai Aberdonensis* II (Aberdeen 1892) Appendix IV
pp399 - 443

¹⁴ James Cooper, ed. *Book of Common Prayer: Scottish Liturgy 1637* (Edinburgh and London 1904)

¹⁵ see note 10

We must avoid innovations that will hardly go with our sober usages.
Still less dare we venture to bring in practices
that are unknown to the Churches of God.¹⁶ "

It would be difficult to detail or evaluate in a precise way what is James Cooper's enduring liturgical legacy to the church but one may, perhaps, say that although much of his pioneering liturgical work was done as a parish minister in Aberdeen, it was as Professor of Ecclesiastical History in Glasgow that he was in a position to propagate his views most widely and influentially. One of his students, Dr Charles L Warr, writes in his autobiography of Cooper's "great personal influence over his students" as being due "to his deep piety, sincerity and ecumenical mind", having noted that "he was a sound historian, though not of the front rank; but he had the most prodigious knowledge of the byways of history, of ecclesiastical architecture and antiquities, of liturgics, and of the lives of the saints.¹⁷ " By way of summary for present purposes we might simply substitute 'liturgiologist' for 'historian'.

¹⁶ Kirkpatrick, loc.cit. p8 The address was published as *Our Sacred Heritage* (Edinburgh 1917)

¹⁷ CL Warr, *The Glimmering Landscape* (London 1960) p104. Dr Warr gives an amusing account of the devotional exercises in Cooper's classroom.