Who wants a Christian Coronation?

Nick Spencer and Nicholas Dixon

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executive summary

On 9 September 2015, Queen Elizabeth II will become Britain's longest reigning monarch. Various commentators and campaigners have, with suitable respect, begun to speculate on the shape of the next coronation, a number arguing that it should be secular.

The reasons for this are various but major on the fact that Britain is a more plural and more secular country than it was at the time of the last coronation, in 1953, and that a Christian coronation would therefore be exclusive, or alienating, or irrelevant to the general public.

This essay argues that this is incorrect. On the basis of newly commissioned quantitative research of the general public (with an additional booster sample for religious minority respondents as it is commonly claimed that this group would be particularly alienated) it has found that the consensus of opinion is consistently and sometimes very strongly against the idea that a Christian coronation would alienate non-Christians. Specifically:

- Less than one in five people (19%) thought that a Christian coronation would alienate people of non-Christian faiths from the ceremony, and even fewer (18%) agreed that it would alienate people of no religious faith.
- When asked whether they thought that a Christian coronation would alienate them from the ceremony, only 22% of people from a religious minority agreed that it would (9% agreeing strongly) and 18% of people of no religious faith said it would.
- A majority of people (57%) think that the ceremony should be Christian, compared with 19% who think it should be multi-faith and 23% who think it should be secular.
- Critically, support for a Christian coronation *among non-religious*[1]*, nominally-non-Christian*[2]*,* and *practising non-Christian religious people*[3] is consistently stronger than support for a secular or multi-faith coronation. [NB: "Nominal" is used throughout to refer to people who consider themselves belonging to a religious group, irrespective of their level of practice. "Practising" is used of those people who consider themselves as belonging to that group and who "participate in a religious service as a worshipper" once a month or more. See footnotes for more details.]

Together these data constitute a powerful refutation of the argument that a Christian coronation would alienate religious minorities or non-believers. Both the public as a whole, and people from those groups themselves, say clearly that they would not be so alienated.

The history of the coronation (chapter 3) shows it to be a highly flexible ceremony, which has taken on various different forms over the centuries. It is well placed to change to reflect the circumstances of the 21st century.

Moreover, the symbolism of the coronation (chapter 4) is a great deal more foundational and relevant to the political commitments of a modern liberal polity than is sometimes assumed, reflecting a commitment to the responsibilities, lawfulness and accountability of rulership.

The essay argues that, the widespread public inclination not to modify the ceremony notwithstanding, the next coronation should be altered within its existing framework in order to reflect the changed nature of society while retaining its core elements , in particular by inviting the appropriate participation of other faith groups, and perhaps even non-faith groups, within the ceremony. It concludes with some proposed adaptations intended to make the ceremony shorter, more accessible and more reflective of contemporary Britain.

executive summary – references

1 Defined as all respondents who when asked "To which of the following religious groups do you consider yourself to be a member of?", answered "None".

2 Defined as all respondents who said they considered themselves to be a member of a religious group (except Christian) and who participated in a religious service less than once a month.

3 Defined as all respondents who said they considered themselves to be a member of a religious group (except Christian) irrespective of their level of participation in religious services.

introduction

The events of the last coronation, held at Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953, seem irretrievably embedded in another era. Britain has changed considerably since the early '50s and this has led some commentators to argue that the next coronation should be radically different and, in particular, secular. This essay contends that this view is wrong.

The first chapter outlines the arguments that have been put forward for a modernised, secular coronation. Broadly speaking, they are of three kinds. The first is the dominant and sometimes seemingly the only real objection: the coronation is alienating or exclusive. A Christian ceremony, the argument goes, is inappropriate for a country with significant religious minorities, where a substantial proportion of people are only nominally Christian, and another substantial proportion profess no religious faith at all. A unifying ceremony of this nature cannot afford to divide its populace along these lines.

The second argument, often subsumed in the first, is that the coronation is antiquated. It is a relic of past ages and inappropriate to a modern nation. Whereas the country might wish to defend its monarchy on the 'heritage' grounds that 'it's good for tourism', the coronation's position at the heart of what passes for the nation's constitution cannot rely on this defence. It is, in essence, an ossified museum piece, and needs badly to be updated.

The third argument is that the coronation is irrelevant. Linked to the second point, this criticism sees in the coronation a vast performance of elaborate theatre, full of music and procession and signifying nothing, or certainly nothing of any significance. Sceptres, orbs, psalms and scriptures have no meaning for a contemporary liberal democracy, it is said.

The essay takes up each of these criticisms in turn in its second, third and fourth chapters respectively. Chapter 2 draws on new quantitative research, conducted by ComRes in June 2015, which looked in detail at the public's attitude to the next coronation, and in particular at how that attitude breaks down according to age, ethnicity and religious commitment.

Chapter 3 takes up the challenge of the coronation's antiquity. It shows that, as critics rightly point out, the coronation is an extremely ancient ceremony. However, it also shows

what critics often fail to recognise, namely that it is an extremely flexible and malleable ceremony, having changed, sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically, over the centuries to reflect the conditions of the day. As such, it is perfectly within its nature to change in accordance with the new social conditions of the 21st century whilst retaining its fundamental Christian format.

Chapter 4 addresses the challenge of the coronation's alleged irrelevance. The coronation is not simply a relic of national history but an event rich in symbolism. That much most people can agree on. The key issue is what that symbolism represents, and whether it has any relevance to the concerns of a modern liberal state. Chapter 4 unpacks some of the symbols to show how they speak to some of our most cherished political commitments, such as just judgment, the rule of law, and moral accountability.

Having addressed the criticisms of a Christian coronation, the final chapter explores what the next coronation might look like. Edward VII's coronation in 1902 took place 64 years after his mother's. As such, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, in 1897, provided more of a model than her coronation in 1838.[1] We argue that this is an approach worth adopting for the next coronation, which will be taking place after a similar space of time. In particular, with regard to the question of a Christian coronation in a religiously plural and increasingly secular country, we suggest that the words and example of the Queen at Lambeth Palace in 2012, at the start of the Jubilee celebration, when she spoke of (and enacted) a duty of positive religious support – of creating an environment for people of non-Christian faiths and of no faith to live freely and co-operate generously for the common good – offer a powerful model for what the next coronation could be like.

Who Wants a Christian Coronation? is a joint-author publication but the authors have had distinct roles in its creation. Nicholas Dixon wrote the chapters on the history and political symbolism (chapters 3 and 4), while Nick Spencer wrote the chapters outlining the overall arguments (1), the research data (2) and the shape of the next coronation (5). He also edited the final document, although it is worth noting that each author is responsible for the content of his chapters and not of the others. A number of colleagues and others read and commented on drafts and helped with the commissioning and analysis, although the final document should not be taken to reflect their views.

introduction – references

1 Roy Strong, *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), p. 452, and chapter 9 generally.

1

the case for a secular coronation

Although it is rightly seen as a little disrespectful to speculate in too much detail about the plans for the next coronation while the present monarch is in good health, various commentators have, over recent years, begun discreetly to raise the question about the form that any future ceremony might take.

Some of this discussion has reflected the constitutional changes of recent decades. The reform of the House of Lords over the last generation, albeit piecemeal, incomplete and problematic, means that the drafters of the next coronation service will need to reconsider carefully those parts of the service traditionally reserved for homage by hereditary peers and privileged members of the aristocracy.[1]

It is fair to say, however, that most of the commentary has revolved around the Christian, and specifically Anglican, character of the ceremony, with critics arguing that the next coronation needs to be secular. The reasons for this are varied, although they congregate around the core idea that the nation has changed so much since 1953, the date of the last coronation, that not only is any re-run of that ceremony untenable, but a Christian ceremony of any description is now unacceptable.

There is clearly something in this criticism. The UK is a very different country today compared to sixty years ago and the next coronation would do well to recognise that. This introductory chapter surveys the three main arguments which gather round the core conviction, quoting critics when possible, and outlining the broad case for a secular coronation.

the coronation is exclusive

The Christian, specifically Anglican, character and ritual of the coronation service is about as obvious as it is possible to be. The service is located in a Christian church (Westminster Abbey), is presided over by a Christian minister (the Archbishop of Canterbury) and incorporates the service of the Eucharist (in the form laid out by the Book of Common Prayer for the last three hundred years). It is replete with hymns, Bible readings, psalms,

anthems, oaths, prayers, and anointing. Whatever else one might think of it, its foundation on the Christian faith is undeniable.

And that is the issue. Simon Jenkins, among others, has argued on various occasions that such a narrow following of Church of England rituals is no longer appropriate or relevant for a nation of Britons, a third to a half of whom regard themselves as non-religious and 7% of whom associate themselves with other faiths. Writing in *The Guardian* in May 2013, Jenkins commented, "to render the ceremony so overwhelmingly religious risks diminishing its status in the eyes of modern citizens."[2] The coronation service, he contends, should reflect the religious and spiritual diversity of the nation.

Others, less hostile, have also recognised the challenge here. Wesley Carr, writing while Dean of Westminster Abbey in 2002, acknowledged that, as well as becoming more religiously diverse, Britain's "level of public religious commitment and corresponding understanding has also declined." In the light of that, and of the service being centred round the institution of the Eucharist, he expressed concerns that

> if the bulk of the nominal Christians in Great Britain do not know what this is, and the members of other faiths feel that something of their tradition should be recognised, there will be a problem.[3]

There is an important difference between recognising the challenges facing the drafters and organisers of the next coronation and believing that those challenges are so great as to demand a wholesale re-engineering of the ceremony. This is clearly the side on which Simon Jenkins sits. Whilst Jenkins allows that it is perfectly within the Church of England's rights to appoint a hereditary 'head', it is at the point at which this compromises the "contract between the head of state and the people of the nation" that he draws the line.

> This contract is a symbol of stability and continuity. It is the fount of citizenship and focus of military loyalty. If ever 'civil partnership' meant anything, it is here. The transfer of monarchical office should be in the seat of representative democracy – parliament – and not a church. In an ever more secular nation, civil partnership must be in the royal family's best interest.[4]

This is a slightly curious argument. If the contract between the head of state and the people of the nation is indeed "a symbol of stability and continuity", seeking to change it in a radical and unprecedented (and, as we shall see, unsought-after and unpopular way) is surely the best way to *undermine* that stability. Moreover, Jenkins also seems to think that the transfer of monarchical office occurs in Westminster Abbey when, in fact, "a new sovereign succeeds to the throne as soon as his or her predecessor dies and is at once proclaimed at an Accession Council at St James's Palace".[5] This Accession Council is made

up of Privy Councillors, members of the House of Lords, the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London, and the High Commissioners of certain Commonwealth countries.

This aside, Jenkins' broader point still demands attention and the organisation that has paid it most is the National Secular Society (NSS), which has taken the debate in a new direction by bringing it into a framework of the Human Rights Act.

In November 2013, the NSS launched a controversial legal challenge to the coronation rite under human rights legislation.[6] Their argument was that allowing the Church of England to perform the ceremony obstructs and discriminates against the consciences of those who do not ascribe to Christian beliefs and is therefore questionable under articles 9 and 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Accordingly, the NSS initiated the process of seeking legal advice from the specialist human rights legal firm Leigh Day, on the human rights implications of the coronation in its current Christian form. Keith Porteous Wood put his case in comments picked up by *The Guardian*:

> The country has changed out of all recognition since the last coronation and we should now be devising an investiture ceremony for the next head of state everyone can feel part of. A non-religious ceremony allows everybody to feel equally valued, and there is no reason that it should lack pomp or colourful ceremony simply because it is not religious, as with the ceremonies that take place in France or the US. It is no longer appropriate to install the head of state in a religious service of one Christian denomination which – on a normal Sunday – less than 2% of the population attend. However religious our head of state is, the ceremony is not just for them. It needs to be borne in mind that the country is becoming less and less Christian and religious, especially among the young.[7]

Whether or not this was a "publicity stunt" which aimed to "politicise the coronation", as the Church of England at the time claimed, the core criticism does deserve attention.[8] The coronation is one of the most symbolic and unifying moments for the nation, an occasion at which the entire community stands and speaks together. It is not the only one, and other ceremonies and official occasions, like the opening of parliament, state funerals, Remembrance Day, and even the Queen's Christmas Speech, can put forward a similar claim of being an official, unifying state occasion. Nonetheless, none has quite so much significance as the coronation. That the nation is more plural – ethnically, religiously, culturally, intellectually, politically – today than it was in 1953 is not in doubt. It is, therefore, important to ask whether maintaining the Christian basis, in whatever form, would compromise the unifying nature of the state occasion. Would the Christian basis alienate those who do not share a Christian faith? Indeed, does it alienate them? And if so,

Would the Christian basis alienate those who do not share a Christian faith?

would a secularised coronation sidestep such problems and constitute an improvement? We look to answer those questions in chapter 2.

the coronation is antiquated

Before we do, however, it is worth turning to two other criticisms of the coronation, which are frequently less visible as they tend to be implicit within the one outlined above. The first may be put this way: if it is the case that the first coronation of the 21st century would exclude the public in the way that the last of the 20th did not, there is an implication that the public has changed and the coronation has not, and perhaps cannot. In other words, the coronation is somehow a museum piece, appropriate to Britain then but not Britain now.

It is easy to make some kind of case for this, although much of this case rests simply on the issue of language. The very words 'majesty', 'oath', 'homage', and 'anointed', to name but a few that were used in the 1953 service, are so far from common parlance that it is easy to depict them as just incomprehensibly archaic.

More substantively, the case for wholesale modernisation rests on the premise that the coronation is *conceptually* out of date; not simply that its language sounds archaic but that its very idea and intellectual framework are obsolete. One needn't go further than the national anthem to find evidence for this. The very idea, many argue, of "God saving" the "gracious" and "glorious" monarch and sending her "victorious" to "reign over" her people might have made sense in the 1740s but it is conceptually wrong and even offensive now. Much the same might be said of the religious paraphernalia of the service, to which we shall turn shortly.

More broadly, the criticism of archaism applies to the coronation itself rather than its constituent elements. The National Secular Society carried out research that revealed that Britain is one of the last countries still to have a religious coronation.[9] Most modern monarchies have dispensed with coronation ceremonies, replacing them with enthronement, investiture or benediction ceremonies. Only the UK, Tonga and a few Asian countries have retained the traditional ceremony which includes overtly religious rituals such as the anointing of the monarch with sacred oil. The British coronation, they therefore argue, is an archaic anomaly, leaving the UK in an embarrassingly backward and antiquated position. The implication is quite clear: the United Kingdom should have *modernised* like everywhere else.

Overall, the second criticism, although often buried within the first, is worthy of a response in itself. The coronation is old. That may be a benefit to Westminster Abbey, or even to the

institution of the monarchy itself, but, the argument goes, it is a positive hindrance when it comes to one of the most significant ceremonies in the nation's national life.

the coronation is irrelevant

If one of the criticisms of the coronation is that while the world has changed the ceremony has not, a subtle variant of this is that the coronation is irrelevant. More precisely, the argument is that talk of sceptres, orbs, psalms and scriptures has no *meaning* for a contemporary liberal democracy. The coronation is a vast performance with elaborate theatre, but ultimately it is not much more than elderly men gliding about in gilded robes. It signifies nothing, or certainly nothing of any significance.

The next coronation needs to be modified within its existing Christian structure to reflect the changed nature of British society whilst maintaining its continuity with the past, its elevation over the rough and tumble of political life, and its commitment to core contemporary political values.

On the surface, once again, this is an easy criticism to make. During the last coronation the Queen was anointed on both hands, on the breast and on the head, with oil taken from an ampulla by the Dean of Westminster, while four Knights of the Garter held over her "a rich pall of silk, or cloth of gold". Following this, "the Spurs" were carried from the altar by the Dean of Westminster and delivered to the Lord Great Chamberlain who, "kneeling down… present[ed] them to the Queen", after which the Sword of State was passed from the Lord Chamberlain to the Archbishop and was laid upon the Altar, with the prayer in which God was beseeched to "so direct and support thy servant… that she may not bear the Sword in vain."[10]

What on earth, a contemporary, secularised British subject might legitimately ask, is actually going on here?

An incomprehensible coronation, so the argument runs, is an irrelevant coronation, and worse, an irrelevant coronation is one that is diminished in credibility, making the head of state and the basic architecture of the constitution, such as it is, at best disconnected from the public, and at worst a source of derision and contempt.

conclusion

Although few people are as passionate about the next coronation as to deploy human rights lawyers against it in the manner of the National Secular Society, there are

undoubtedly many people – how many we will turn to – who will be sceptical in some degree, or at least believe that the topic merits further and serious debate.

This essay is a contribution to that discussion. The following chapters take each of these three objections in turn and argue that while they have merits, they do not constitute a sufficient reason to abandon a millennium of tradition. Rather, to pre-empt a conclusion that will be explained in greater detail in the final chapter, the criticisms suggest that the next coronation needs to be modified within its existing Christian structure to reflect the changed nature of British society whilst maintaining its continuity with the past, its elevation over the rough and tumble of political life, and its commitment to core contemporary political values. That, however, is to get ahead of ourselves, and we turn first to a detailed investigation of what the British people actually think about the British coronation.

chapter 1 – references

1 Wesley Carr, 'This Intimate Ritual: The Coronation Service', *Political Theology*, Vol 4. No 1. (2002) p. 13.

2 Simon Jenkins, 'The next coronation should be a civil partnership ceremony', *The Guardian* 30 May 2013 http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/may/30/coronation-ceremony-dead-long-live-queen

3 Carr, 'This Intimate Ritual', op. cit. p. 22.

4 Simon Jenkins, 'Civil partnership ceremony', op. cit.

5 See for more details: http://www.royal.gov.uk/royaleventsandceremonies/accession/accession.aspx I am grateful to John Langlois for highlighting this to me.

6 Caroline Davies, 'Christian coronations of future monarchs face legal challenge', *The Guardian,* 10 November 2013 http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/nov/10/christian-coronations-legal-challenge-monarchs

7 Ibid.

8 'Secularists want Christian coronation oath scrapped', The Christian Institute,13 November 2013 http://www.christian.org.uk/news/secularists-want-christian-coronation-oath-scrapped/

9 'Religion and the investiture of the Monarch: The European context', National Secular Society http://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/european-monarchy-coronation.pdf

10 The 1953 Coronation service can be read in full here: http://www.oremus.org/liturgy/coronation/cor1953b.html

2

an exclusive coronation?

Would a Christian coronation alienate or exclude the British public? The claim that it would lies at the heart of objections to such a ceremony and needs to be assessed in proper detail. A principled defence of the Christian coronation – such as one highlighting its historical significance or political symbolism – is clearly necessary but would not, in itself, be sufficient. Were a clear majority of the British public to feel somehow estranged or disenfranchised by the very fact of a Christian coronation, it would be hard to sustain the ceremony on principled grounds alone. Inevitably, a ceremony of this significance requires a measure of principled and practical legitimacy.

For this reason, Theos commissioned the polling company ComRes to conduct a quantitative research study into public attitudes to the coronation. The survey was conducted between 10 and 12 June 2015 and interviewed 2,159 British adults (aged 18+) online. The final data were weighted to be representative of all British adults, as is standard in polling. It is worth emphasising that because the question of alienating religious minorities plays such a significant role in this whole debate, the research included a booster sample of people from religious minorities, so that the final sub-group of these respondents was more reliable and robust than would normally be the case.[1]

The research asked a series of questions concerning respondents' attitudes to the coronation,[2] their attitude to the monarchy,[3] and whether they ever participated in a religious service,[4] which allowed a further degree of data analysis alongside the usual demographic, socio-economic and religious affiliation factors. Full data tables are available online from theosthinktank.co.uk and the main findings of the research are outlined in this chapter.

We put the following eight statements pertaining to the British coronation before respondents[5] and asked them to state how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each one:

- Having a Christian coronation would alienate people of non-Christian faiths from the ceremony

- Having a Christian coronation would alienate people of no religious faith from the ceremony
- Having a Christian coronation would alienate me from the ceremony
- The coronation of the next monarch should be a multi-faith ceremony
- The coronation of the next monarch should be a Christian ceremony
- The coronation of the next monarch should be a secular ceremony
- The coronation is pointless pageantry, and should be abolished
- The coronation is the symbolic centrepiece of British law and should not be modified

Readers will recognise that these eight statements come at the same issue from a variety of different positions. This is because respondents can sometimes be led by the wording of questions, and we want to avoid this by asking about the same issue (the next coronation) in a multitude of different ways. From these statements, and the extra question we asked pertaining to the monarchy itself, this chapter is divided into three parts, looking (1) at attitudes to coronation and monarchy in general, (2) at attitudes to the prospect of a Christian coronation specifically and (3) at the shape of the next coronation in the light of these attitudes.

attitudes to coronation and monarchy

Although research into the public's attitude concerning the next coronation is, to the best of our knowledge, non-existent, the attitude to the monarchy itself is rather better known. A 2013 ComRes/*Telegraph* survey found that 17% of people wanted a republic.[6] A 2012 *Guardian*/ICM poll reported that 22% said Britain would be better off without a monarchy.[7] An Ipsos/MORI poll of the same year found the proportion of republicans in the UK to be only 13%, a low point (for republicans) which could probably be explained by the recent Royal Wedding and the Diamond Jubilee. Indeed, Ipsos/MORI, who have been tracking public opinion on the monarchy vs. republic question since 1983, have found that the proportion of people favouring a republic has never risen above 22% (its high point in 2005) and in fact has averaged just under 18% over the last 30 or so years.

This was confirmed by our research, which asked respondents whether the country should "remain a monarchy with a Queen or King as the head of state or should it become a republic without a Royal Family?" Seven in ten respondents (70%) favoured a monarch, and one in six (17%) a republic, with 13% saying they didn't know. The most monarchistic

groups in the population were those aged over 65 (84%), those aged between 55 and 64 (78%), and nominal Christians at 79% (meaning those who considered themselves as being a member of a Christian group irrespective of whether they attended Christian services). Practising Christians were only slightly less supportive, at 77%. Women were more monarchist than men (72% vs. 67%). The most republican groups were people of Asian ethnicity (31%), people who live in Scotland (28%), people who belong to no religious group (26%) and people aged 35-44 (at 24% support for a republic, more than 18-24s (19%) or 25-34 (23%)).

More focused on the coronation, although still enquiring at a general level, we asked respondents whether they thought the coronation was "pointless pageantry, and should be abolished", a deliberately strong statement intended to draw out an idea of the number of people with strong generic opposition to the coronation (as opposed to the Christian element of it).

Strong support for this was low (9% strongly agreed) and overall support (21% strongly agreed or tended to agree) was very heavily outweighed by overall opposition (42% strongly disagreed and 19% tended to disagree). Similar to the monarchy/republic question, strongest opposition to the coronation came from people of Asian ethnicity (42% strongly agreed or tended to agree that it should be abolished), people aged 25-34 (38%), and practising Muslims (39%).[8] Predictably, older respondents, and Christians, both nominal and attending, were most likely to disagree. There were no significant differences by gender, social grade and geographical location, other than people in Scotland being more inclined to see the coronation as pointless pageantry (30% strongly agreed or tended to agree) than those elsewhere.

In contrast to this statement, we asked about the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the coronation was the "symbolic centrepiece of British law and should not be modified." Not surprisingly, in light of the answers to the previous statement, there was overwhelming agreement with this sentiment, 63% agreeing (35% agreeing strongly) compared with 16% disagreeing (6% disagreeing strongly).

Moreover, there was remarkably little dissent from this view across different groups. Even the most critical groups (18-24s, respondents in Scotland and non-white respondents) on balance agreed, with 48% of the younger group, 49% of Scots and 42% of non-white respondents agreeing, compared with 27%, 18% and 24% respectively disagreeing. Non-Christian religious groups were of the same opinion, with 51% overall agreeing with the presenting statement and even the more critical ones (e.g. nominal and practising Muslims) on balance agreeing that the coronation was the symbolic centrepiece of British law and should not be modified.

These data confirm the picture drawn by broader background research that the British population is naturally far more monarchistic than republican in its outlook and that it sees value in the coronation and doesn't wish to see it abolished. There are certainly variations within this overall picture but it is worth emphasising that even among those sub-groups that are clearly more antagonistic towards monarchy and coronation, most were still on balance in favour of both.[9]

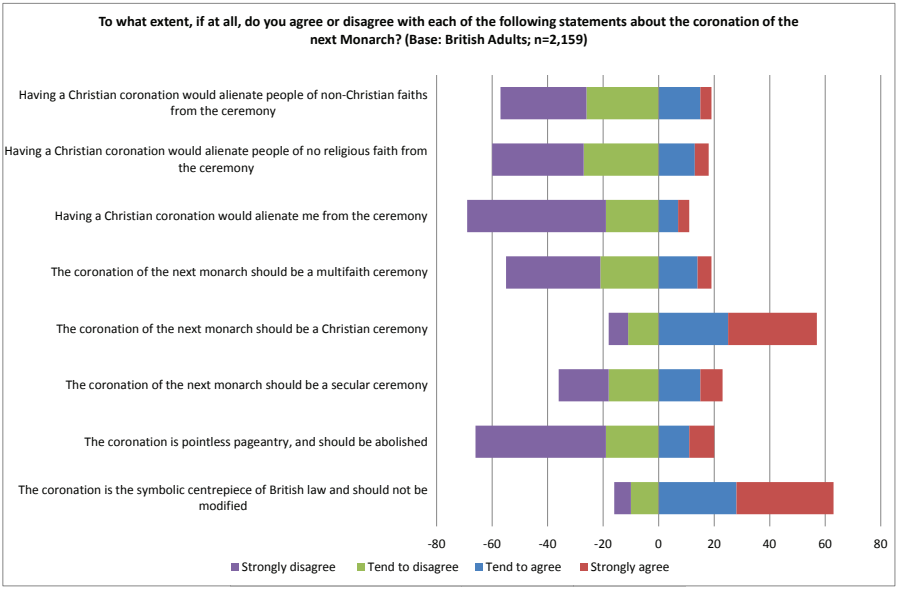
attitudes to the prospect of a Christian coronation

If that was the general attitude to the coronation, what did people think about the prospect of a Christian coronation?

Around one in five people (19%) thought that a Christian coronation would alienate people of non-Christian faiths from the ceremony (less than one in twenty – 4% – strongly agreed that it would) and even fewer (18%) agreed that it would alienate people of no religious faith. More strikingly, this view was confirmed by people of non-Christian faith and or no religious faith themselves. When asked whether they agreed that "Having a Christian coronation would alienate me from the ceremony", only 22% of people from a religious minority agreed that it would (9% agreeing strongly) and 18% of people of no religious faith said it would (only 6% agreeing strongly). The reverse was predictably true: 57% of people from a religious minority said they would not feel alienated by a Christian ceremony, and 56% of people of no religious faith said the same thing. Together these figures constitute a powerful refutation of the argument that a Christian coronation would alienate religious minorities or non-believers. Both the public as a whole, and people from those groups themselves, say clearly that they would not be so alienated.

Around one in five people (19%) thought that a Christian coronation would alienate people of non-Christian faiths from the ceremony and even fewer (18%) agreed that it would alienate people of no religious faith.

It is possible to burrow down a little deeper in these data. The public's view on the matter differs with age. Younger respondents were more likely to believe that a Christian coronation would alienate people of other faiths (e.g. 39% of 18-24s agreed that it would), although even here strength of opinion was not great (7% agreed strongly, the other 32% tending to agree), and was largely balanced by people who disagreed (37%). By contrast, in every other age group there was a sense, sometimes a strong sense, that a Christian coronation would not alienate those of other faiths. For example, 40% of 45-54s and 42% of people aged 65+ strongly disagreed that people of other faiths would be alienated. Once again, there was no significant difference by gender and very little by social group.



As before, non-white respondents were most likely to dissent from the mainstream opinion (30% agreeing that there would be some alienation of people of other faiths), as were people affiliated to or attending non-Christian religious groups (29% and 37% respectively). However, in all of these instances the proportion of people disagreeing about this alienation outweighed the proportion that agreed.[10]

It was a similar story for opinions concerning the possible alienation of those with no religious faith. Younger respondents were more likely to believe there would be alienation than older ones (32% of 18-24s agreed, for example, compared with 18% of 35-44s and 9% of people aged 65+), and those of a higher social grade slightly more than those of a lower one (e.g. 21% of ABs agreed compared with 16% of DEs). Interestingly, while those of no religious faith themselves were slightly more likely than the average to agree that a Christian ceremony would alienate those of no religious faith (25% vs. 18%), the number of this group who disagreed was 47%, or nearly double the proportion who thought otherwise.

The consensus of opinion is consistently, and sometimes very strongly, against the idea that a Christian coronation would alienate non-Christians.

People from ethnic and religious minorities were of a similar view, with 26% of non-white respondents and 26% of people of non-Christian religions feeling that people of no

religious faith would be alienated. Once again, however, even here the majority disagreed, feeling that people of no religious faith would not be alienated by a Christian ceremony, 45% in the case of non-white respondents and 53% in the case of non-Christian religious respondents.[11]

Overall, therefore, it is clear that the consensus of opinion is consistently, and sometimes very strongly, against the idea that a Christian coronation would alienate non-Christians. As one would expect, some groups feel more strongly about this than others, but even among those that are more ambivalent, the balance of opinion is clearly against the claim that the coronation's Christianity alienates others. How this translates into people's view of what the next coronation should look like is the question to which we now turn.

attitudes to the shape of the next coronation

We asked respondents what they favoured for the shape of the next coronation, specifically whether it should be a multi-faith ceremony, a Christian ceremony or a secular one. The overall public preference was loud and clear. Whilst 19% of people agreed that the ceremony should be multi-faith and 23% agreed that it should be secular, 57% agreed that it should be Christian. These figures were confirmed more powerfully still by the proportions of people who strongly agreed with the various options: 5% of people strongly agreed that the ceremony should be multi-faith and 8% strongly agreed that it should be secular, but 32% strongly agreed that it should be Christian.

Whilst 19% of people agreed that the ceremony should be multi-faith and 23% agreed that it should be secular, 57% agreed that it should be Christian.

Just as interesting is how the various groups broke down within those categories. Young (18-24), non-white, and non-Christian religious respondents were most likely to want a multi-faith ceremony, with 25%, 30% and 33% respectively agreeing that this should be the case, but practising non-Christian religious respondents were the only group who, on balance, actively preferred a multi-faith ceremony (48% agreeing vs. 23% disagreeing).[12]

When it came to a secular ceremony, younger respondents were slightly more in favour than the national average, and indeed slightly more in favour of a secular ceremony than they were against it (32% agreeing for a secular ceremony vs. 28% disagreeing, although the same number, 11%, agreed and disagreed strongly on the matter, suggesting that this isn't an overwhelming issue for them). All other age, gender and social grade groups were against a secular ceremony as was every geographical group.

Support for a Christian coronation among non-religious, nominally-non-Christian religious, and practising non-Christian religious people is consistently stronger than support for a secular coronation.

Of the other key groups we have been looking at, non-white respondents were on balance against a secular ceremony (24% vs. 31%) as, interestingly, were those respondents who did not belong to a religious group (26% vs. 29%). Non-Christian religious groups were of a similar view, with 29% for a secular ceremony and 35% against it, although practising non-Christian religious groups were more ambivalent, with 40% for a secular ceremony compared to 35% against it. This might seem like a crumb of support for those campaigning for a secular coronation, but even this is not as straightforward as it seems, as we can see if we turn to the final statement.

As already noted, an overwhelming majority of people (57%) favoured a Christian ceremony. This was the case across both genders and all social grades and age groups, even among the more usually critical younger age groups. It is also the case across every geographical area and almost every ethnic, nominal-religious and practising religious group.[13] More pointedly, support for a Christian coronation among non-religious, nominally-non-Christian religious, and practising non-Christian religious people is consistently stronger than support for a secular coronation. The precise figures are slightly complex but worth detailing in full given the subtlety and significance of this point. They are as follows:

- Non-religious agreement for a Christian coronation is 35% compared to 29% who disagree, generating a Mean score of 2.54.[14] Non-religious agreement for a secular coronation is 26% compared to 29% who disagree, generating a Mean score of 2.47. In other words, the non-religious marginally favour a Christian coronation over a secular one.

- Nominal non-Christian-religious support for a Christian coronation is 46% compared to 29% who disagree, generating a Mean score of 2.75. Nominal non-Christian-religious support for a secular coronation is 29% compared to 35% who disagree, generating a Mean score of 2.40. In other words, those who consider themselves to be part of a non-Christian religious group clearly favour a Christian coronation over a secular one.

- Finally, practising non-Christian-religious support for a Christian coronation is 51% compared to 32% who disagree, generating a Mean score of 2.78. Practising non-Christian-religious agreement for a secular coronation is 40% compared to 35% who disagree, generating a Mean score of 2.53. In other words, those who practice

their non-Christian religious faith clearly favour a Christian coronation over a secular one.[15]

As an aside, it is worth mentioning that Christian respondents, who have otherwise not been mentioned in this analysis, were, not surprisingly, clearly in favour of a Christian coronation, 17% of nominal Christians favouring a multi-faith coronation, 20% a secular coronation and 73% a Christian coronation.[16]

Putting aside this unsurprising fact, the clear message is that although there are subtleties, nuances and fine balances in the data, public opinion overall, and the opinion of non-religious, nominally non-Christian, and practising non-Christian religious groups in particular, is consistently stronger for a Christian coronation than for a multi-faith or secular one. In September 2006, Keith Porteous Wood of the National Secular Society wrote that if the Dean of Westminster Abbey "wants something to bring the country together, then the coronation should be secularised so that everyone — of all creeds and none — can be included."[17] The data analysed in this chapter show this view to be wrong.

conclusion

In the early stages of the Abdication Crisis in 1936, the *Church Times* predicted that the Church of England would end up as the whipping boy for its role in the crisis. To their surprise it didn't, and a year later *The Guardian* newspaper commented that the whole episode showed that "there is latent in England a surprisingly deep respect for fundamental Christian morality."[18]

The opinion of non-religious, nominally non-Christian, and practising non-Christian religious groups is consistently stronger for a Christian coronation than for a multi-faith or secular one.

This is a sentiment that one might adopt for current public opinion concerning the next coronation. The British public is far less Christian (however that may be defined) than it was in 1936, but just as commentators in the *Church Times* and *The Guardian* were surprised by the "deep respect for fundamental Christian morality" that there was in 1930s Britain, so many today may be surprised by the deep respect for the monarchy, coronation and its fundamental Christian form and content.

Naturally in a country as plural and diverse as 21st century Britain, the strength and depth of that respect will vary, but it is surely remarkable that, with very few exceptions, both genders, every age bracket, every social grade, and every ethnic and religious group tends

to favour not only the institution of the monarchy, but the Christian ceremony that has been central to that institution throughout its long history.

It is to that history we now turn, as we move from the practical defence of the Christian coronation, based on the nation's social and religious beliefs and opinions, towards a principled defence based, first, on the coronation's history and its innate flexibility, and then, secondly, on its symbolic political power and relevance.

chapter 2 – references

1 To be precise, the booster sample raised the number of religious minority respondents to 250, or 11.6% of the total sample size, somewhat higher than the 7.9% that would naturally have emerged according to the 2011 Census figures. The sub-sample of 250 religious minority respondents was broken down as follows: 73 Muslim, 32 Hindu, 42 Jewish, 8 Sikh, 25 Buddhist, 70 Other. Please note that these data were weighted as standard to be representative of all British adults aged 18+ by age, gender, region and socio-economic grade, and were not weighted to be representative of individual religious groups. Please also note that the base size for each religious minority group is not sufficient for robust comment – these results are indicative rather than representative of religious minority groups.

2 Specifically asking them to agree or disagree with a series of eight statements, on a standard four point scale: (4) Strongly agree, (3) Tend to agree, (2) Tend to disagree, (1) Strongly disagree.

3 "Do you think Britain should remain a monarchy with a Queen or King as the head of state or should it become a republic without a Royal Family?"

4 "How often, if at all, do you participate in a religious service as a worshipper, excluding formal ceremonies such as weddings and funerals?"

5 Statements were randomised so as to avoid questionnaire bias.

6 Patrick Hennessy, 'Confidence in British monarchy at all-time high, poll shows', *The Telegraph*, 27 July 2013 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/theroyalfamily/10206708/Confidence-in-British-monarchy-at-all-time-high-poll-shows.html

7 Tom Clark, 'Queen enjoys record support in Guardian/ICM poll', *The Guardian*, 24 May 2012 http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/may/24/queen-diamond-jubilee-record-support?intcmp=122

8 Please note the small base size (n=47) for practising Muslims. Results are indicative as opposed to representative of this audience.

9 The exceptions here are people of Asian ethnicity (42% vs. 38%) and practising Muslims (43% vs. 34%) who were just in favour of abolishing the coronation. There was also a balance against the coronation among people of Chinese ethnicity (n=14) and practising Hindus (n=12) but these groups were too small to be reliable.

10 The single exception was Muslims who participated in a religious service once a month or more, where 47% agreed and 31% disagreed. However, at this level we are operating with single digit respondent numbers which are too low to draw safe conclusions from.

11 Once again, the single exception here was regularly practising Muslim respondents, 47% of whom agreed that people of no religious faith would be alienated by a Christian ceremony, as compared with 31% who disagreed. The same caveats apply here as above, however.

12 The strongest opinion was actually among practising Muslims, at 50% agreeing for a multi-faith ceremony vs. 12% disagreeing, though NB caveats above.

13 The single exception is those of "Mixed" ethnicity who are on balance marginally against a Christian coronation, but as this comprises a sample size of 30 it cannot be taken as robust or definitive.

14 The Mean was calculated by multiplying the percentages of each answer by the standard scores (4) Strongly agree, (3) Tend to agree, (2) Tend to disagree, (1) Strongly disagree, and then dividing by the total number of respondents who answered. Thus, a mean score of 4 means that every single respondent strongly agreed, a mean score of 1 means that every single respondent strongly disagreed, and a mean score of 2.5 means that on average the total sample was divided between the two. In reality, most mean scores will come somewhere between 2 and 3.

15 It may legitimately be assumed, however, that at least some of these respondents are slightly unclear about definitions, given the on-balance approval of both a Christian and a secular coronation.

16 It is worth noting that these figures are complicated somewhat when it comes to practising Christians. Perhaps predictably, an increased proportion (81%) favoured a Christian coronation. However, less predictably, an increased proportion (24%) favoured a multi-faith coronation, and a slightly increased proportion (21%) favoured a secular coronation.

17 National Secular Society, 'Next Coronation To Be "All-Inclusive" - Except For Non-Believers, Of Course' 29 September 2006 http://www.secularism.org.uk/nextcoronationtobeall-inclusive-.html

18 *The Guardian*, 8 January 1937, quoted in Matthew Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England: Liberal Anglican Theories of the State Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 189.

3

an adaptable coronation

Wrapped up within the criticism that the coronation alienates those not of the Christian faith is the criticism that the coronation is too antique and outdated for the modern world. The British coronation is, it is argued, a relic or museum piece. Such a criticism, however, presupposes that the coronation has not been and/or cannot be adapted and updated. This, in effect, is the argument this chapter refutes; being historical does not mean being outdated, still less inflexible.

If the coronation is traditional, it is very much a living tradition.

While undoubtedly ancient in origin, the coronation rite, as it has come down to us in the 21st century, is the cumulative product of over a thousand years of national history. If the coronation is traditional, it is very much a living tradition. It exhibits at once its Anglo-Saxon origins, its later medieval and post-reformation guises and its successive modern re-imaginings. Over the centuries its content and perceived meaning have changed in ways that have been sometimes subtle and sometimes dramatic, but it has retained certain fundamental features. As such, it can be characterised neither as a relic of the past nor as an 'invented tradition', for it has never belonged to one historical era alone.[1] In the light of this history, the idea of modifying the coronation has very good precedent.

anglo-saxon origins

The term 'coronation' is anachronistic when applied to the earliest manifestations of the ceremony, for initially it was the clergy's anointing of the monarch's person with holy oils which formed the sole focal point of such a rite. The first reference to the anointing or consecration of an English king occurs in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's entry for 787, which records that "Ecgfrith [was] consecrated as king."[2] Ecgfrith was the son and heir apparent of Offa, King of Mercia, and, by having his son consecrated in advance of their succession to his throne, Offa was following the example of Charlemagne, who had had his sons consecrated by Pope Hadrian IV in 781.[3]

Though the immediate impetus for the introduction of the rite was presumably fear of the frequent succession crises that dogged Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the influence of continental notions of royal legitimacy (the diplomatic and ecclesiastical commerce between Offa and Charlemagne was considerable), the ceremony ultimately derived from more ancient models: namely, the Old Testament practice of priests anointing the kings of Israel, and pre-Christian Germanic inauguration rituals. The influence of the latter persisted even as the former became dominant. The earliest surviving English consecration *ordo* has the "bishops with the nobles" presenting the king with a sceptre and the king being crowned with a "helmet", which seem to have been vestiges of secular elections of Germanic warlords by their retinue.[4]

The chronicler's reference to Ecgfrith's consecration is an isolated one, for it is not until the 10th century that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records another such occasion. This was the consecration of Aethelstan at Kingston-upon-Thames in 924, at which he was confirmed as ruler of a unified English kingdom of 'Saxons, Mercians and Northumbrians'. The *ordo* which scholars have suggested was first drawn up for Aethelstan is the origin of the present-day rite and contains many elements which have become permanent features of the ceremony.[5]

It was under Aethelstan's nephew Edgar, who claimed dominion over all of Britain, that the consecration rite would attain an enduring significance. Edgar gathered a circle of reforming monks such as Dunstan and Aethelwold around him at court, and allied himself with their attempts to oust corrupt clerks from the English Church's hierarchy and establish a uniform Benedictine rule throughout England. In return, the monks venerated Edgar as a Christ-like guardian of the Church, and it is noteworthy that the king waited until the age of thirty – the age at which Christ began his ministry – to be crowned. His especially elaborate coronation took place at Bath in 973. Under Edgar, the consecration became an expression of a cult of sacral kingship involving the idea that the monarch was specially chosen by God, which reflected the relatively harmonious relations which obtained between kings and clergy in this period. Thus Anglo-Saxon consecrations were, in theory at least, an expression of a divinely-ordered consensus between monarch, church and people.[6]

the later medieval period

William I may have altered many things in England, but the coronation rite remained largely the same under him and his immediate successors, a conspicuous component of the thin veneer of continuity with which he overlaid his conquest.[7] Ironically, it was at William's coronation in Westminster Abbey (which now became the permanent site of

coronations) that the French practice of asking the people whether they consented to the king's accession at the beginning of the service, the 'recognition', appears to have been introduced. According to one Norman chronicler, this resulted in an attack on the inhabitants of London, for the acclamations of the people inside the Abbey were misinterpreted as the start of a revolt by anxious Norman soldiers outside.[8]

Something of the theological import of these early ceremonies can be discovered in the tracts of 'the Anglo-Norman Anonymous', an unidentified cleric writing around 1100. This writer asserted that consecration made the king

> a *twin person*, one descending from nature, the other from grace. … Concerning one personality, he was, by nature, an individual man: concerning his other personality, he was, by grace, a *Christus*, that is, a God-man.

This uncompromising doctrine of the semi-divine nature of kingship was both a survival from the England of Edgar and an eloquent tool against the contemporary Papacy which, under Pope Gregory VII and his successors, began to claim feudal rights over the secular rulers of Christendom.[9]

The resulting conflict had a significant effect on coronations, the meaning of which was subtly transformed. What had been a ceremony that unambiguously magnified royal power was appropriated by reform-minded clergy with the intention of prescribing limits on that power. A revised *ordo* – in essence an order of service – that was in use by the 12th century had the people 'confirm' their monarch's 'election', and demoted the king somewhat by having him anointed not with chrism, the ritual oil used for consecrating bishops (as previously) but with the lower-status oil of catechumens.[10]

What had been a ceremony that unambiguously magnified royal power was appropriated by reform-minded clergy with the intention of prescribing limits on that power.

A major revision of the liturgy occurred in 1308 for the coronation of Edward II. The service was made more English in character through the restoration of many Anglo-Saxon prayers which had fallen out of use, and the coronation oath was adapted to take an interrogatory form. Significantly, the use of chrism was restored, and the king was now to be anointed in five places.[11]

Ten years after his coronation, Edward II acquired some anointing oil which was believed to have been given to St. Thomas of Canterbury by the Virgin Mary. In 1399, Richard II rediscovered this oil in the Tower of London after being crowned and asked the Archbishop of Canterbury whether he could be re-anointed with it. The Archbishop

refused, and it was first used at the coronation of Henry IV, who seized the throne from Richard in the same year. The Virgin Mary was alleged to have told St. Thomas that the oil was for future kings of England who would "be good and champions of the Church", a prophecy of which Henry IV made much use.[12] Hence, during the 15th century, the coronation obtained a more miraculous aura than ever before and became tied to the cult of St. Thomas. Yet this did not remove the elective, constitutional element of the rite enshrined in the oath and recognition.

During the fifteenth century, the coronation obtained a more miraculous aura than ever before and became tied to the cult of St. Thomas.

reformation and revolution

The English Reformation had a significant effect on the development of the coronation, though it only brought about a partial transformation of the rite. Indeed, the first Protestant coronation, Edward VI's in 1547, was remarkable for how much of the pre-Reformation liturgy it retained. There were, however, important changes. Edward was crowned with three crowns to symbolise his parity with the Pope as Head of the Church of England (popes traditionally received a triple-crowning) and the contemporary idea of England as an 'empire'.[13] In addition, Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, delivered a sermon which drastically re-interpreted the ceremony:

> The solemn rites of coronation have their ends and utility; yet neither direct force or necessity... The oil, if added, is but a ceremony: if it be wanting, that king is yet a perfect monarch notwithstanding, and God's anointed, as well as if he was inoiled.[14]

The ceremony was no longer what made a king. Queen Mary restored the use of the Roman Catholic Mass at her coronation, but its days were numbered: Elizabeth I allegedly withdrew when this practice was repeated at her coronation, an indication of her determination to restore Protestantism.[15]

Most of the coronation liturgy was translated into English for the coronation of James I in 1603, in line with the Protestant insistence on services in the vernacular. The translation was largely faithful to the medieval service, even if the Roman Catholic Mass was now a Protestant 'Lord's Supper'.[16] It was this conservatism with regard to coronation orders that allowed Charles I's coronation, and in particular Archbishop Laud's part in it as deputy for the Dean of Westminster, to become an easy target for Parliamentarians. At Laud's trial in 1644, he was accused by William Prynne of introducing '*Popish Innovations*...out of the *Roman Pontificall* [sic]'.[17]

The Parliamentarians themselves may have destroyed most of the ancient coronation regalia, but Oliver Cromwell could hardly resist the lure of a pseudo-coronation when he was installed as Lord Protector in 1657. The ceremony was held in Westminster Hall, during which Cromwell sat in King Edward's Chair and was presented with a purple robe, Bible, sword, and sceptre before taking an oath.[18]

Although the coronation ceremony was revived in its traditional form for Charles II after his restoration in 1660, it was to undergo enormous changes during the remainder of the 17th century. In 1685, James II ordered the service to be abridged and stipulated that the communion, which he and his queen could not participate in as Roman Catholics, should be omitted. Accordingly, William Sancroft, the Archbishop of Canterbury, made considerable changes to the service.[19]

Even more substantial changes were heralded by the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, however. An attempt was made by Henry Compton, Bishop of London, to bring the rite into line with the ideals of Protestantism and limited monarchy for the coronation of William and Mary. In the Recognition, the words "Rightful Inheritor of the Crown of this Realm" were replaced by the words "undoubted King and Queen", thus displacing the notion of indefeasible hereditary right in favour of a providential understanding of royal accession.

The coronation ritual was inserted into the Anglican Communion liturgy from *The Book of Common Prayer*, thus finally divorcing it from Roman Catholic forms. A presentation of a Bible to the monarchs was introduced, symbolising the Protestant belief in the supremacy of Scripture. A new coronation oath obliged the monarch to uphold "the Protestant Reformed Religion Established by Law", although the anointing, to which earlier Stuart monarchs had attached such significance, was untouched. Ultimately, Compton's revision of the liturgy has formed the basis of every ceremony since 1689.[20]

By the eighteenth century, the coronation service was becoming a distinctively Anglican rite as opposed to a disjointed mixture of medieval Catholic and post-Reformation Protestant elements.

the eighteenth century

By the 18th century, the coronation service was becoming a distinctively Anglican rite as opposed to a disjointed mixture of medieval Catholic and post-Reformation Protestant elements. At first sight, the 18th century might have seemed an unpropitious time for the coronation, given the prevailing rationalism and constitutionalism of the time. Indeed, it has long been assumed by historians that the ceremony degenerated into a shallow and

badly-performed pageant-cum-concert, shorn of its religious and political significance.[21] In fact, the religious and political significance of the rite was undiminished, even if it was manifested in novel ways.[22]

The 'Glorious Revolution' and Hanoverian Accession did not, as has often been claimed, sweep away medieval notions of sacral kingship.[23] Neither did the undertakings made by the monarchs at their coronations become empty forms of words. From Queen Anne's coronation onwards, monarchs had to declare that they believed certain Roman Catholic doctrines to be "superstitious and idolatrous", in solemn affirmation of the Protestant succession instituted by Parliament in the Act of Settlement. Moreover, it was the coronation oath to preserve the Protestant constitution and the weight that George III and George IV attached to it that would present the most substantial obstacle to the removal of civil disabilities from Catholics.

Anglican clergy came to understand the rite primarily not as a miraculous anointing from above, but rather as the ratification of a divinely-sanctioned compact between the monarch and his or her people.

Yet the 18th century did usher in important changes in how the coronation was perceived. Anglican clergy, influenced by Enlightenment thought and constitutional theory, came to understand the rite primarily not as a miraculous anointing from above, but rather as the ratification of a divinely-sanctioned compact between the monarch and his or her people that had been part and parcel of the English constitution since Anglo-Saxon times. This development made the oath and the homage of the peers the focal point of the ceremony, and militated against any clerical sanction for absolutism.

The indirect, providential understanding of the event suggested by Compton's removal of references to hereditary succession from the liturgy in 1689 was also further amplified. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the extensive alterations which Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury, made to the coronation prayers for George III's coronation. References to monarchs being "sanctif[ied]" and "bless[ed]" were replaced by prayers for God to "direct and support" them and "[l]ook down upon" them.[24]

The virulent anti-Catholicism which obtained in Georgian Britain also had an impact on the ceremony. Among Secker's changes was an attempt to excise references to the Roman Catholic belief in justification by works.[25] The paradox is that, despite this, pre-Reformation ritual practices were as conspicuous as ever.[26] The willingness of Georgian clerics to retain elements of pre-Reformation ritual stemmed from a profound reverence for precedent which often trumped theological consistency. Secker was diligent in studying a variety of old coronation orders when preparing the liturgy of 1761. Nevertheless, he saw the coronation as an evolving entity susceptible of improvement. He wrote:

> The Offices after the Reformation were taken, with some necessary changes, from those before, translating the prayers from the Latin… At the Revolution great Alterations were made, much for the better: & the Delivery of the Bible was added.[27]

Secker's words reflected the complex combination of continuities and transformations which had always marked the history of the coronation rite.

the nineteenth century

The 19th century witnessed three coronations in quick succession: George IV's in 1821, William IV's in 1831 and Victoria's in 1838. Each was instrumental in shaping the development of the rite. The broad trend towards a 'Protestantisation' of the liturgy and a 'Catholicisation' of the ritual already observable in 1761 was evident also upon these occasions. The anointing was curtailed, items were omitted from the regalia, various prayers were shortened and modified and the liturgy was more frequently said than sung. A very telling change to a prayer was made by Archbishop William Howley in 1831; a petition that the monarch would "represent our Lord Jesus Christ in this life" was replaced with a petition for him or her to "faithfully serve our Lord Jesus Christ in this life".[28] This implied the absence of a direct divine commission, which accorded with the providential understanding of the ceremony developed in the 18th century.

At the same time, the externals of the rite were increasingly pre-Reformation in character, in line with the antiquarian spirit of the age. The clergy continued to wear ornate copes, while temporary furnishings such as the altar frame and Archbishop's chair were made in a neo-Gothic style. The music, which had played a more prominent role since Handel's time, came to resemble contemporary Catholic liturgical music, and by 1838 the medieval Gospel acclamation, 'Glory be to thee, O Lord', absent from *The Book of Common Prayer*, had been added to the communion service. This balance reflected the contemporary self-perception of the Church of England as a venerable institution promoting reformed doctrines which were the product of its accumulated wisdom.

George IV's coronation is best remembered for the elaborate Elizabethan costumes of the lay participants and the incident of Queen Caroline being refused admission to Westminster Abbey, but to many contemporaries, the ceremony represented something more profound. One newspaper said of it,

> There was a holy feeling in it, not derivable from its mere splendour. The MONARCH was seen by his people receiving the splendid ensigns of power and dominion in the House of GOD, and in the midst of their prayers and blessings.[29]

The lavish and extravagant nature of the coronation, however, resulted in considerable retrenchment in 1831. William IV initially desired no coronation, but the Duke of Wellington and others placed pressure on him to have one. In the event, the ceremony went ahead on a limited budget (it was popularly known as the 'Half-Crownation'), with the customary coronation banquet surviving from medieval times dispensed with, making the occasion a more exclusively religious ceremony.

The way in which Victoria's coronation in 1838 was presented by the clergy represented a shift in the understanding of the rite. A sacramental understanding of it had gained ground during the early 19th century. The anointing came to be seen in more direct terms, the investiture with regalia was afforded a greater symbolic significance and the communion became a focal point as never before.[30] The constitutional compact was still believed in, but it was now once more hallowed by a setting apart of the monarch's person through anointing.

The increasing boldness in the clergy's claims for the importance of the rite was set against the backdrop of a powerful critique of the coronation which first gained prominence in this period. The historian Edward Gibbon had condemned the coronation as a ceremony "diffused and maintained by the superstition and vanity of modern Europe" in 1788, and those with a radical perspective in particular promoted this criticism of coronations as meaningless anachronisms in the early 19th century.[31] One nonconformist preacher in 1821 contrasted the Old Testament coronation of Rehoboam, conducted with "no *bishops* … in a quiet, religious manner, and with as little expence [sic] as possible", with the "silly, childish, contemptible ceremonies that are practised in modern times."[32] William Hazlitt opined in 1823, "What does it amount to? A show – a theatrical spectacle! What does it prove? That a king is crowned, that a king is dead!"[33] Such critiques provoked an equally vigorous response from Anglican clergy in their sermons to commemorate coronation days, in which the religious and political symbolism of the service was stridently explicated. But the debate has continued, in one form or another, up to the present day.

the twentieth century

The length of Queen Victoria's reign meant that, by the beginning of the 20th century, the coronation service had fallen out of memory. However, the rise of liturgical scholarship during the latter part of the 19th century and the consequent publication of the texts of earlier coronation rites resulted in there being no lack of interest in it. The leading lights in the rediscovery of the coronation's history were a father and son, John and Leopold Wickham Legg. They became part of an influential body of opinion which sought to

dictate what was liturgically 'correct' at 20th century coronations on the basis of an imagined ecclesiological golden age.

Though the influence of Anglo-Catholic ritual on the coronation became considerable, revivalists were not entirely heeded at first. Retention and modification, as opposed to restoration, continued to be the keynote of coronation liturgies. At the coronation of Edward VII in 1902, considerable abridgements had to be made due to the fragile health of the King. Though the older traditions of a triple anointing and the blessing of the regalia were restored, the ancient custom of preaching a sermon disappeared and the unprecedented decision to assign the coronation of Queen Alexandra to the Archbishop of York as opposed to the Archbishop of Canterbury was much censured.[34]

The prospect of a coronation was at the heart of the constitutional crisis which ended with the abdication of King Edward VIII in 1936.[35] Cosmo Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury of the day, wrote that "as the months passed and his relations with Mrs Simpson became more notorious the thought of my having to consecrate *him* as King weighed on me as a heavy burden." He remarked to one of his chaplains, "Think of pouring all those sacred words into a *vacuum*!"[36]

The consequent abdication was the only time in history that the English Church effectively deposed a monarch. That this feat was achieved in the 20th century reflected the increasingly exalted view of kingship promoted by the clergy, a view that would reach its apogee when the devout Anglican George VI came to the throne. The coronation of 1937, which took place on the same day of Edward VIII's intended ceremony, was exceptionally genuine, in the sense that the Archbishop who crowned George and Elizabeth, his queen, had played a decisive role in securing their accession.[37] George VI wrote to Lang after it, "An ordeal it was, but I felt I was being helped all the time by Someone Else..."[38]

By the mid-twentieth century, notions of sacral monarchy were surprisingly resilient, given the onset of secularisation.

The providential language employed in state rhetoric throughout the Second World War added to a sense of a national religious destiny, and, by the mid-20th century, notions of sacral monarchy were surprisingly resilient, given the onset of secularisation.[39] The coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 was both a cause and a symptom of this phenomenon. As the coronation was broadcast on television (minus the sacred moment of the anointing), it resulted in the intricacies of the service being relayed to a larger audience than ever before. Although there had been calls to modernise the service dramatically, the ceremony they witnessed was, in many respects, a self-conscious attempt to restore the later medieval coronation rite. Liturgical scholarship had already made some inroads in this direction, but its influence was never more evident than in 1953.

Under the guidance of Professor Edward Ratcliff, the liturgy was systematically shorn of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century additions. Prayers were restored to their pre-Reformation form (Ratcliff deplored "the pompous compositions of 1689"), traditional anthems were put back in the communion service, armills or bracelets were returned to the regalia and the presentation of the Bible made less prominent by moving it from after the crowning to earlier in the service.

There were also some important innovations. A congregational hymn ('All People that on Earth do Dwell') was sung for the first time, something which was perceived as a gesture towards a 'democratic age'. Additionally, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland presented the Queen with the Bible, breaking the centuries-old Church of England monopoly on the service. Nevertheless, the overall effect of the ceremony was strikingly conservative.[40]

conclusion

The two major themes which the above sketch of the coronation rite's history has attempted to convey are its capacity for adjustment in response to religious, political and social change, and the extraordinary degree to which its core elements have not changed. Attachment on a national scale to the ideas of sacral kingship, miraculous oil, an ancient constitution and Anglo-Catholicism which have all, at various periods, coloured perceptions of coronations might have proved transient, but the occasion has consistently represented an invocation of a divine blessing upon the nation and its rulers, an undertaking on the part of the monarch and his or her people to uphold the common good, and the symbolic beginning of a new era in national history. These major continuities have been made possible by the coronation's successive concessions – but not surrenders – to the demands of the Reformation, the Glorious Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Anglo-Catholic movement.

Each coronation has been an attempt to formulate an adequate response to the weight of history, the concerns of the present and the promise of the future.

The pageantry that has accompanied these occasions has given them a highly conspicuous visual aspect, but this has never overshadowed their religious and symbolic significance. This much is clear from responses to Queen Victoria's coronation, which has often been portrayed as occurring during an era when the rite's meaning was lost amid incompetent theatricality. To W.E. Gladstone, it was a

> most majestic office, of which it may with truth be said, that the gorgeous trappings, and even the magnificent pile within which it is performed, are far

> less imposing than the grandeur of its language, and the profound and affecting truth of its idea.[41]

It is because many have continued, like Gladstone, to look beyond the pomp and see the rite as a vehicle for ideas that it has been modified and thereby preserved.

For now, the history of the coronation has been suspended. One of the most distinctive features of the rite is its long periods of hibernation, an inevitable corollary of the course of each monarch's reign. The intervals between hibernations have, as shown above, witnessed myriad developments, some of which have occurred in quick succession and some of which are the product of the slow progress of centuries. Yet, in important respects, it has remained constant. Each coronation has been an attempt to formulate an adequate response to the weight of history, the concerns of the present and the promise of the future.

chapter 3 – references

1 The discussion which follows draws principally upon L.G. Wickham Legg (ed.), *English Coronation Records* (Westminster, 1901); P. Schramm (tr. L.G. Wickham Legg), *A History of the English Coronation* (Oxford, 1937); R. Strong, *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy* (London, 2005); and N.A. Dixon, 'The Church of England and the Coronation Rite, 1761-1838' (University of Oxford BA Thesis, 2014).

2 M. Swanton (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London, 2000), pp. 52-5.

3 Schramm, *A History*, op. cit., p. 15.

4 L.G. Wickham Legg, *Records*, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

5 For example: a royal oath, an investiture with assorted regalia (including a crown) solely by the clergy, accompanied by their admonitions, prayers which would survive intact into the 17th century, anthems such as 'Zadok the Priest', a parallel rite to consecrate the queen, and a concluding mass. See Swanton, op. cit., p. 105; L.G. Wickham Legg, op. cit., pp. 14-29; C.E. Hohler, 'Some Service Books of the Later Saxon Church' in D. Parsons (ed.), *Tenth-Century Studies* (Chichester, 1975), pp. 67-9.

6 R. Deshman, *The Benedictional of Aethelwold* (Princeton, 1995), pp. 209-14.

7 G. Garnett, *Conquered England: Kingship, Succession and Tenure 1066-1166* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 1-4, 358.

8 Schramm, op. cit. (Oxford, 1937), pp. 27-8.

9 E.H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1997), pp. 42-61.

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11 Ibid., pp. 75-7, 131, 204.

12 Ibid., pp. 137-8; L.G. Wickham Legg, op. cit., pp. 69-76, 170-1.

13 A. Hunt, *The Drama of Coronation: Medieval Ceremony in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 77-98.

14 Ibid., p. 86.

15 Ibid., pp. 151-5.

16 J. Wickham Legg (ed.), *The Coronation Order of King James I* (London, 1902), pp. 1-50.

17 Ibid., pp. lxxxix-xc.

18 T. Burton, *Diary*, ed. JT Rutt (4 vols, London, 1828), ii, 511-5.

19 L.G. Wickham Legg, op. cit., pp. 287-316.

20 For the alterations of 1688, see ibid., pp. 317-42; G.A. Tresidder, 'The English Coronation, 1660-1821: Elite Hegemony and Social Relations on a Ceremonial Occasion' (McMaster University MA Thesis, 1989), pp. 22-4.

21 See e.g. L.G. Tanner, 'Coronations in the Abbey' in E. Carpenter (ed.), *A House of Kings: The Official History of Westminster Abbey* (London, 1966), p. 413; D. Cannadine, 'The Context,

Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition, c. 1820-1977"' in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 101-64.

22 The material on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is adapted from my 2014 University of Oxford BA thesis, 'The Church of England and the Coronation Rite, 1761-1838'.

23 Preaching at George II's coronation in 1727, John Potter, the Bishop of Oxford, said that the monarch was "of divine appointment", as reflected "as well as in our intire [sic] submission to his Authority, as in the reverence we pay to his Sacred Person." [J. Potter, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Coronation* (London, 1727), p. 30.] The semi-official court handbook *Magnæ Britanniæ Notitia* stated that a king was "anointed with oil as the priests were at first, and afterwards the Kings of Israel, to intimate that his person is sacred and spiritual" up to the final edition of 1755 [J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1660-1832* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 97].

24 Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1082, p. 40, 48; *The Form and Order of…the Coronation of Their Majesties King George III. and Queen Charlotte* (London, 1761), p. 40, 48.

25 For example, a prayer which spoke of the monarch being "Rich in Faith and abounding in good works" was replaced by one in which he or she was "sealed with that spirit of Promise, which is the Earnest of an heavenly Inheritance". [Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1082, p. 45; *The Form and Order of…the Coronation of Their Majesties King George III and Queen Charlotte* (London, 1761), p. 45.] The Deputy Earl Marshal was directed in 1761 to invite to the ceremony "all the Peers except such as are Roman Catholicks" or otherwise disqualified. [College of Arms, 'Coronation of George III 1761' (3 vols of papers), i, 10.]

26 Secker remarked of his anointing of George III, "I dipped my Thumb in the Spoon: finding it so appointed in the old Office of Coronation in Selden's Titles of Honour, & in other Offices of the Church of Rome, where anointing is used." Furthermore, he had a rich new cope, a medieval vestment which had become effectively obsolete in the Church of England, made for the occasion and "carefully laid by for my Successors", expressing the hope that "it will not be worn again in this Century." [Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1130, f. 174, 178.]

27 Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1130, f. 172.

28 Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1083b, p. 41; *The Form and Order of…the Coronation of Their Majesties King William IV. and Queen Adelaide* (London, 1831), p. 34.

29 *John Bull*, 23 July 1821, p. 256.

30 Nowhere was this transformation more apparent than in the sermons of Charles Blomfield, Bishop of London, who preached at the coronation in both 1831 and 1838. Whereas he spoke of William IV's crowning as "the formal ratification" of a "contract between king and people", he said of Victoria's coronation, "the diadem, which encircles the brow of royalty, may be placed there by human hands, and after the letter of human compacts: but it bespeaks a majesty of a more exalted transcendent kind than any human agency can confer." [C.J. Blomfield, *A Sermon Preached at the Coronation of Their Most Excellent Majesties King William IV and Queen Adelaide* (London, 1831), pp. 7-8; C.J. Blomfield, *A Sermon Preached at the Coronation of Her Most Excellent Majesty Queen Victoria* (London, 1838), pp. 6-7.]

31 E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (6 vols, London, 1776-88), v, pp. 119-20.

32 W.H. Stephenson, *A Sermon Preached…on…the Day of the Coronation* (Newcastle, 1821), p. 13.

33 W. Hazlitt, *Literary Remains*, eds. W. Hazlitt et al. (2 vols, London, 1836), ii, 463.

34 Strong, op. cit., pp. 469-79. John Wickham Legg thundered that the medieval historian Bishop William Stubbs would have been "deeply vexed at the marred rites which the officials of our time have thought good enough for the Coronation of Edward VII and at the indifference to historical considerations displayed by those whose duty, it may be thought, was to maintain and defend them," a criticism that was hardly met at George V's coronation in 1911, besides the re-introduction of a few medieval prayers [Ibid., pp. 479-80].

35 See R. Beaken, *Cosmo Lang: Archbishop in War and Crisis* (London, 2012), pp. 86-142.

36 Ibid., p. 97.

37 *The Times* was overcome with pious zeal: "As the golden canopy was held over King Edward's chair, and the Archbishop went in under it to the King, bearing the consecrated oil, as into a tabernacle, it seemed that these two men were alone with God, performing an act greater than they knew, more solemn than any person present could hope to understand." [E.C. Ratcliff (ed.), *The Coronation Service of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II* (London, 1953), p. 19.]

38 Beaken, *Cosmo Lang*, op. cit., pp. 134-5.

39 Mass Observation surveys found that, in 1956, 34% of Britons believed that the monarch was specially chosen by God, a figure which had only dropped to 30% by 1964. [L.H. Harris, *Long to Reign over us? The Status of the Royal Family in the Sixties* (London, 1966), p. 43.]

40 For Elizabeth II's coronation, see Ratcliff, op. cit., pp. 19-23; E. Carpenter, *Archbishop Fisher: His Life and Times* (Norwich, 1991), pp. 245-267; M. Range, *Music and Ceremonial at British Coronations: From James I to Elizabeth II* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 248-50.

41 W.E. Gladstone, *The State in its Relations with the Church* (2 vols, London, 1841), ii, 8.

4

a symbolic coronation

If, as outlined in chapter 1, the major criticism levelled against a Christian coronation is that it is exclusive and therefore alienating, a subset of this is that it is exclusive *because* it is either incomprehensible or possibly meaningless. The series of rituals that comprise the ceremony are supposedly so archaic that they have lost their significance and relevance over time to all but the tiniest minority of ecclesiastical and constitutional historians.

It is easy to see where this objection comes from. The coronation ceremony does assume considerable familiarity with Christian symbols and rituals, although that is in no small measure down to the way in which the most recent coronation adopted a deliberately backward-looking stance. As discussed in the previous chapter, the coronation is actually a highly flexible ceremony and has often been modernised to reflect the concerns of the day, even when those concerns were more conservative, as they were in 1953.

The fact that the coronation's symbolism has come from a number of sources – the Old Testament, the early Church, medieval Roman Catholic liturgy, the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, and the circumstantial revisions of successive Archbishops of Canterbury – could also be taken to indicate that the service itself was a hotchpotch, a constitutional potpourri of aesthetic value but with little coherence or meaning.

For all its theatre and colour, the coronation concerns things which are still widely valued: political responsibility, accountability and justice.

Yet the coronation rite is far from devoid of meaningful ideas, and it is these that we examine in this chapter. In particular, it is important to grasp what the coronation says about the nature of politics, society and religion in order to accord it a fair evaluation in any debate. For all its theatre and colour, the coronation concerns things which are still widely valued: political responsibility, accountability and justice.

The point of reference for this discussion is the order used for the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953, the latest revision of the ceremony, although, as emphasised throughout this essay, the next coronation will not and should not be a carbon copy of this ceremony.

the responsibilities of rulership

The nature of the divine commission symbolised in the anointing of the monarch has more to do with responsibilities than rights.

At first glance, the coronation might be thought to be an elaborate endorsement of the 17th century doctrine of 'the divine right of kings'. This assumption equates the vocational calling of a monarch to office, a fundamental assumption behind coronations, with the conferring of absolute power upon him or her. In fact, as we have seen, the era in which this doctrine was formulated contributed little to the development of the coronation rite, and the small changes it did make were largely undone in 1688. Hence the nature of the divine commission symbolised in the anointing of the monarch has more to do with responsibilities than rights.

This is in line with the teachings concerning kingship found throughout the Old Testament, where the wisdom and goodness of a ruler is declared to be of the highest importance. On the Sunday after George III's coronation, the clergyman William Rider preached that "we are far from acknowledging in Kings a *Divine Right* of doing *amiss*, or that GOD…would commission any Person to deprive Men of their Liberties."[1] The anointing is intended to represent the solemn setting-apart of the monarch for a divinely-sanctioned task, for which the assistance of the Holy Spirit is implored in the hymn 'Come, Holy Ghost, our Souls Inspire'. The Archbishop prays for the monarch to "govern and preserve the people committed to your charge in wealth, peace and godliness."[2]

The theme of responsibility is carried forward in the admonitions to the monarch which accompany her investiture with regalia. The sword is "for the terror and punishment of evildoers, and for the protection of those that do well". The monarch is told to

> do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the holy Church of God, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform what is amiss, and confirm what is in good order.

She is also reminded that she is answerable to a power greater than herself, when the orb is given: "Receive this Orb set under the Cross, and remember that the whole world is subject to the Power and Empire of Christ our Redeemer." As the rod is given, the monarch's responsibility to guarantee justice and mercy is asserted:

> Be so merciful that you be not too remiss; so execute justice that you forget not mercy. Punish the wicked, protect and cherish the just, and lead your people in the way wherein they should go.

After the crown is placed on the monarch's head, she is exhorted thus: "Be strong and of a good courage: keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways."[3] No symbols of power are bestowed without a clear reminder of the weighty responsibilities with which they come.

The coronation has long been used as an opportunity to affirm virtues believed to be necessary for good governance. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that when Edward the Confessor was crowned in 1043, "Archbishop Eadsige consecrated him, and fully instructed him before all the people, and fully admonished him as to his own need and that of the people."[4] At times, such admonitions have been made with strongly-implied criticisms of monarchs. The preacher at George IV's coronation in 1821, Archbishop Venables-Vernon of York, had been a strident opponent of the King's divorce bill in the House of Lords.[5] At the coronation, he repeated his views, stating:

No symbols of power are bestowed without a clear reminder of the weighty responsibilities with which they come.

> [If] those who surround the Throne…are worthless and wicked, the influence of their example will extend itself in every direction, and profligacy, originating in this source, will be rapidly diffused though all the gradations of Society… How, indeed, shall the laws of man be enforced in a Community where the Laws of God are set at defiance?[6]

A contemporary clergyman remarked of this sermon, "Happy that prince, whose subject fears not thus to instruct him: happy that Nation, whose Sovereign is willing so to be instructed."[7] Although such candour is the exception rather than the rule, the point stands that a significant feature of the coronation has been its tendency to hold the monarch to account by emphasising his or her responsibilities towards the nation and people.

A significant feature of the coronation has been its tendency to hold the monarch to account by emphasising his or her responsibilities towards the nation and people.

the responsibilities of the people

The placing of responsibilities on the shoulders of the *people* is also an important aspect of the rite. In the Benediction, the Archbishop prays for

> faithful Parliaments and quiet Realms; sure defence against all enemies; fruitful lands and a prosperous industry; wise counsellors and upright magistrates;

leaders of integrity in learning and labour; a devout, learned and useful clergy; honest, peaceable, and dutiful citizens.[8]

The coronation does not explicitly allow for a right of resistance to authority. But it also asserts that obedience is not something that can be taken for granted.

To what extent does the coronation impose an *unquestioning* obedience on the people? Before the *Book of Common Prayer* litany was omitted from the service, there was a prayer for deliverance from "all sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion".[9] The coronation does not explicitly allow for a right of resistance to authority. But it also asserts that obedience is not something that can be taken for granted, and that it is dependent, in some measure, upon the monarch fulfilling his or her responsibilities. The National Anthem, which has been sung at coronations since the 19th century, reflects this:

> May she defend our laws,
> And ever give us cause
> To sing with heart and voice
> God save the Queen.[10]

In addition, the Recognition at the beginning of the service, in which the Archbishop asks the people whether they are "willing" to "do...homage and service" to the monarch, suggests that authority should be consensual, even if the people's assent is formulaic.[11]

The prominence of the monarch's oath and the homage of the peers allowed the clergy, especially during the Georgian era, to present it as a reciprocal agreement between monarch and people, imposing sacred obligations upon both. Charles Le Grice, for instance, preached on the day of George IV's coronation:

> The solemn ceremony of this day is not the pageant of a Monarch receiving the homage of his vassals; it is not the triumph of Despotic power […] The poorest subject is a party to the covenant which the King now makes; and if the solemn ceremony…be in any part honourable, and glorious, and triumphant, it is the glory, and honour, and triumph of the subject rather than of the King.[12]

The guaranteeing of popular freedoms by an impersonal state has, in recent centuries, been perceived as a major feature of coronations. In his 1821 sermon, Le Grice went on to present the coronation as "the triumph of…the Law, which gives to the subject, all the liberty that he can possess consistently with the very being of society." Twentieth-century commentators saw the coronation in similarly abstract terms. Cyril Garbett, Archbishop of York, wrote in 1947 that "[a]ll through the service the Archbishop blessing and exhorting

the King is also hallowing the State."[13] According to sociologists Edward Shils and Michael Young, in their classic study of the 1953 coronation, the coronation oath was an acknowledgement on the part of the sovereign "that the moral standards embodied in the laws and customs are superior to his own personal will."[14] The present Archbishop of Canterbury has recently characterised the resulting balance between government and people as "a model of liberty under authority".[15]

the constitution

According to the early nineteenth-century politician and diarist J.W. Croker, "Westminster Abbey [is] part of the British constitution."[16] At the very least, the Abbey is the occasional setting for a vivid reflection of the constitutional status quo. Coronations are gatherings of those elements which make up Britain's unwritten constitution: the monarch, the two Houses of Parliament, the judiciary, the Church of England and, latterly, the Church of Scotland. The primacy of Parliament (and, by extension, the House of Commons) in legislating for the nation among these constitutional elements was, from 1689 until 1911, acknowledged in the ceremony by the inclusion of an undertaking on the part of the monarch to govern "according the Statutes in Parliament agreed on" in his or her oath.[17] In 1937 and 1953, the oath was revised to include Commonwealth territories, and the reference to Parliament omitted, though the original form of the oath remains the legal one under the terms of the Coronation Oath Act 1688, which is still in force today. In theory, therefore, the coronation recognises the limitations on the monarchy at the heart of the constitution.

Although the rite long predates the existence of established churches in Britain, it has, since the 16th century, expressed the monarch's status as Supreme Governor of the Church of England and 'Defender of the Faith'. In phraseology from 1688, the monarch swears to "maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law," to "maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline and government thereof," and to "preserve unto the Bishops and Clergy of England, and to the Church there committed to their charge, all such rights and privileges, as by law do or shall appertain to them or any of them."[18] It was this aspect of the coronation oath which made George III and George IV conscientiously opposed to Catholic Emancipation.

When the monarch is presented with a ring by the Archbishop, she is exhorted to "continue steadfastly as the Defender of Christ's Religion".[19] The coronation thus envisages a constitutional responsibility on the part of the monarch to promote Christianity in general and Anglicanism in particular. The monarch's membership of the Church is symbolised

in his or her reception of Anglican Communion, which was the legal test for Church membership from the 17th century, when this component of the service was introduced, until the 19th century.

the Church's role

The clergy who play such a prominent part in coronations do so as a matter of ancient right and custom. It has been conventional for the Archbishop of Canterbury to crown the monarch since Anglo-Saxon times, and this was recognised as a right by Pope Alexander III in the late 12th century. The Bishops of Durham and Bath have stood on either side of the monarch for the duration of the ceremony since at least the time of Richard I. The Dean and Chapter of Westminster inherited from the pre-Reformation Abbey of Westminster the right to be custodians of the regalia and instructors of the monarch in the coronation ceremonial.[20] Such rights predate the advent of an established Church, and hark back to a time when the English Church made bolder claims regarding its jurisdiction. Gladstone was not alone in seeing the Church as the representative of the nation at large, writing of the Archbishop of Canterbury's part in the ceremony:

> Thus does the chief of the first estate of the realm, surrounded by its members, recognise and confirm, on the part of the whole body of the realm, the sovereign function of the head over that realm and over himself.[21]

Of 1953 Shils and Young wrote that the Church "served the vague religiosity of the mass of the British people without raising issues of ecclesiastical jurisdiction or formal representation."[22] However, the issue of religious pluralism was not skirted over in the manner suggested. The inclusion of the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, as already mentioned, ended the Anglican monopoly on the service, and furnishes a possible precedent for the inclusion of non-Anglican, and perhaps even non-Christian, elements in the service. Although the ecumenical movement has sought to underplay the theological differences between different Protestant churches, there can be little doubt that Anglicanism and Scottish Presbyterianism are, at a theoretical level, incompatible systems. The Church of Scotland's doctrinal standard is the Westminster Confession of 1646, a document drawn up in direct opposition to Anglican doctrine. Thus, in principle, the ideal of unified religious belief among those conducting the coronation has already been abandoned.

conclusion

What, then, can we say that the coronation, in its most recent manifestation, symbolises? In basic terms, it places responsibilities upon the monarch to govern justly and virtuously. It places upon the people the responsibility to be obedient to legitimate political authority and to uphold the common good. It recognises limited monarchy and parliamentary sovereignty as the constitutional *status quo*. And it places the established Church of England under the monarch's special protection. At the same time, it does not wholly exclude those who dissent from Anglicanism, acknowledging, at least in principle, the reality of divergent religious beliefs in the ceremony. The extent to which this, combined with the flexibility of the service as discussed in the previous chapter, can furnish the nation with a traditional, representative and accessible ceremony in the 21st century is the subject of our concluding chapter.

The coronation places responsibilities upon the monarch to govern justly and virtuously.

chapter 4 – references

1 W. Rider, *The Expediency of the Coronation Oath* (London, 1761), p. 18.

2 E.C. Ratcliff (ed.), *The Coronation Service of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II* (London, 1953), pp. 42, 44.

3 Ibid., pp. 46-9.

4 M. Swanton (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London, 2000), pp. 162-3.

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5

the next coronation

We begin by recapping the argument of this essay so far.

Given that it is now over sixty years since the last coronation in Britain, the case for changing the ceremony is overwhelming. Although there is a broad consensus among the public that the coronation is the symbolic centrepiece of British law and should not be modified (63% agreeing with that statement), this essay contends that we should not seek to preserve the 1953 coronation without *any* modification, if only because the ceremony then lasted about three hours.

That recognised, there is a big difference between changing it and changing it *completely*. Over recent years, some commentators have argued that because the nation has changed so significantly since 1953, the coronation should be completely different. In particular, they contend, it needs to be shorn of those elements that are allegedly exclusive or antiquated or irrelevant – usually, in the mind of critics, the Christian elements – and turned into something altogether more secular and more in fashion with the times.

The genius of the coronation has been precisely in its combination of tradition and modernity.

Criticism of the coronation is not, it will be clear by now, a new thing. As chapter three reported, some of the most severe criticisms could be from Christian sources (and for biblical reasons). Nor is modernisation foreign to the ceremony; quite the contrary, in fact. The coronation of English, latterly British, monarchs has been continually 'modernised' over the centuries to reflect the concerns of the time, even when on occasion that modernisation has been to reintroduce long-dormant prayers or rituals. Nowhere has this been more significant than in the 20th century, of which historian Roy Strong has commented "no other period…reveals so much of its extraordinary ability to adapt and change to meet every circumstance."[1] If the objective for the next coronation is to "harmonise ancient tradition with modern constitutional usage", there is good and immediate precedent. The strength of the coronation has been precisely in its combination of tradition and modernity.

It is that combination which this essay advocates as the guiding principle for the next coronation, a ceremony that should retain its core elements, including its Christian ones, whilst introducing others that represent and honour the details of contemporary British life. It is not the intention of this essay to draft the next coronation in any detail. However, this chapter does offer, by way of an overall conclusion, a series of reflections and ideas on the proposed shape of the next coronation.

a Christian coronation

The thrust of the argument of this essay has been that the next coronation can and should retain its Anglican character and content. Christianity has been central to the ceremony since the earliest days and the Church of England is, of course, the established church. This essay has argued that this Christian foundation helps elevate the ceremony above the activities and arguments of day-to-day politics. It symbolises the fact that the moral legitimacy of government is primarily derived from its faithfulness to principles of virtue, justice and the rule of law, which integrate and reflect popular conceptions of the public good, rather than simply from its replication of a fractured, fluctuating and malleable public will. It symbolically enacts these seminal commitments to lawfulness, justice and judgement that are relevant to and recognised by contemporary Britons, even if the language and symbolism can be obscure. It offers a powerful sense of continuity with national history, helping to link present to past in such a way as to help sustain a coherent and stable narrative of who we are. It is the preferred option for a clear majority of Britons. It is not a peripheral, decorative element of (what passes for) our constitution so much as the conceptual foundation of it.

The alternative, a secular coronation, would not unite the nation, as secularists claim, but would rather be liable to be highly divisive, promising a vast, constitutional controversy that could make House of Lords reform look straightforward. It would also be political, in the wrong sense of that word, opening up a testing ground for various party and partisan loyalties each trying to get its way with the event. It is not favoured by any substantial section of society – including the non-religious themselves!

More generally, it is important to recognise that the idea of secularism as an all-encompassing, inclusive, value-neutral ideology, to which all reasonable people would unquestioningly adhere is a myth. Secularism, despite what its advocates claim, is not neutral but carries with it various, often concealed, concepts of the good. Many of these concepts need not prove contentious but some, not least the *de facto* impression that spiritual commitment is an irrelevance best omitted from all public discourse, clearly are – except, of course, to people who already agree on the matter. Certainly that is not a

view that the current monarch (or indeed the next) would countersign, as the Queen's occasional remarks about her own Christian faith indicate.

As noted, sociologists recognise that the Christianity of the last coronation well served "the vague religiosity" of the majority of the British people. It is undoubtedly true that that "vague religiosity" is even vaguer today than it was sixty-two years ago, but data show that a majority of British people are still nominally Christian, a greater number nominally belong to a major world religion, and a greater number still believe in some form of higher power or spiritual dimension. Very few people are securely atheistic in the sense in which the New Atheists have so powerfully articulated it in recent years. In the light of this, "vague spirituality" may be a better phrase than "vague religiosity" to describe the British people.

This shift in public belief, from vague religiosity to vague spirituality, would matter for the future of the coronation if people felt that the ceremony excluded or alienated them, in the way they clearly didn't in 1953. A principled defence of the coronation is not enough if there are strong pragmatic or circumstantial objections. However, as we saw in chapter 2, this is not the case, and with very few exceptions, both genders, and every age group, social grade and ethnic and religious group favours a Christian coronation over a secular or multi-faith one.

Along the same lines, it would also matter if the presiding church were *unwilling* to play 'host' to people's "vague spirituality". There are certainly voices within the Christian community that are uncomfortable with this role, feeling that a Christian Church ought to have harder and more distinct edges to it, and that the established Church's sense of 'hospitality' comes at the cost of its evangelical confidence. Those voices seem to be in the minority, however.

Overall, while it is essential that voices of dissent and criticism are heard and respected in this debate, we believe that the argument for the modified Christian coronation for the next monarch is a powerful one.

a modern coronation

The idea of modernising the coronation will understandably terrify many people – the clear majority of the British public it seems – presenting a vision of a Millennium Dome-style event, decided by committees and focus groups on the basis of fashion and trends, rather than anything more stable, traditional or indeed meaningful. For that reason it is important to be clear what this does and doesn't mean.

Modernising the coronation doesn't mean throwing out the entire ceremony or re-inventing the character or even necessarily updating the language which, even critics usually agree, has a weight that more contemporary language often (though not always) lacks. One of the strengths of the coronation is its antiquity, and the manner in which it links present to past so as to underline a sense of continuity and stability in the realm. If this is something we don't notice it is because we take it for granted.

Yet, adapt we must as the coronation that doesn't modernise is one that ossifies and eventually dies. There are, of course, different ways of modernising. Although the Millennium Dome was criticised and seen as an example of how contemporary re-articulation of national past and national values can be bland or uninspiring, Danny Boyle's direction of the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games showed how it can be done movingly and well. Modernising something needn't mean destroying or trivialising it.

The modernisation of the 20th century coronation resulted, ironically, in a self-conscious attempt to restore the later medieval coronation rite. In a similar vein, the most recent coronation was a deliberate attempt, by means of pageantry and tradition, to reassert national confidence and strength on the global stage after the exhaustion of the Second World War and the unravelling of empire. In these regards, modernisation was a peculiarly backward looking affair.

While the data analysed for this essay clearly suggest that respect for history, custom and tradition is strong among the British public, it seems unlikely that this kind of retrospective modernisation would be appropriate today. What might be appropriate is a degree of simplification and explanation of the political commitments that stand near the heart of the ceremony.

The coronation service is long and, as it stands, expects a high level of religious literacy, one of the great casualties of the last 60 years. The next coronation would do well to be shorter: the three or so hours of 1953 is surely twice as long as any contemporary coronation could or should be. It could also be a smaller affair. The 8,250 guests of 1953 seems somewhat excessive (not least given the actual size of the Abbey) and a congregation closer to that of the recent Royal Wedding (c. 2,000 people) seems appropriate. Moreover, it should be a congregation that consciously seeks to invite and represent the full range of civil society organisations and groups across the country, alongside (or instead of some of?) the dignitaries who have historically attended the ceremony.

The service should be simpler and have built into its structure language that can elucidate on the commitments made throughout the ceremony. This would be particularly important for the anointing, "the [point of] deepest significance during the ceremony"[2]

but one that is liable to mystify many people. The fact that the coronation is framed by the same act of communion (a highly personal affair within a ceremony that might otherwise feel somewhat impersonal) that takes place, week-in week-out, in city, town and village churches across the country, and to which all are invited, is also important though again this is liable to be lost in a more secular age and will need explanation.

The connection with people's 'vague spirituality' also offers an opportunity for music to play a critical part in the ceremony. Music played a significantly greater role in 20th century coronations than it had in those before, including the commissioning of wholly new pieces (nine in 1953) and Vaughan Williams arranging music for the hymn 'All People that on Earth do Dwell' so that it could be sung by the whole congregation.

Both kinds of music – that performed for and that sung by the congregation – are important, albeit in different ways. The latter offers a symbolic role for the participation of the congregation inside – and the public outside? – the Abbey during the service. The former has the power to affect and move people in ways that are often (by definition) impossible to articulate. If the ceremony intends to serve as host to people's 'vague spirituality', religious music surely has a powerful role to play. Moreover, given the richness and popularity of contemporary Christian composers such as Arvo Pärt, James MacMillan and the recently deceased John Tavener, whose *Song for Athene* was memorably performed at Princess Diana's funeral in 1997, there is real potential in this.

A similar point might be made of the words used in the service. Simplifying language for the sake of it is a double-edged sword, risking sacrificing weight for the sake of clarity. Nonetheless, the language of the ceremony, or elements of it, have been simplified over the years and a less verbose ceremony certainly has something to recommend it. In this regard, the sermon might also have a role to play. This reappeared in the 1911 coronation, having been dropped in 1902, but was dropped again in 1937 and 1953. As observed, the coronation service is a long one and we should be careful before advocating further additions. However, the re-introduction of a homily might present an opportunity to articulate the meaning and symbolism of the coronation, to the monarch, the congregation and the wider audience.

There are other ways in which the ceremony might be modernised. In 1953, Clement Attlee, supported by James Chuter Ede and Herbert Morrison, proposed that the Speaker of the House of Commons rendered homage to the monarch, following the peers, as a symbol of "the common man".[3] This was rejected but, as Roy Strong has suggested, is well worth considering today, not least for a culture with a somewhat ambiguous relationship with its political system. In a similar vein, there is an argument, hinted at above, that the next coronation should reinstate the oath to parliament, reaffirming the primacy of Parliament in legislating for the nation, which was present from 1689 until 1911, but revised in 1937

and 1953 to include Commonwealth territories without any commensurate reference to Parliament itself.

The use of media and communication technology is also invariably significant, having been a major theme in all the 20th century's coronations, with the number of TV licences doubling as a result of the decision to televise the 1953 event. Strong has suggested that this might be a way of enabling "participation beyond the confines of the Abbey's walls":

> With screens and modern visual links there is no reason why the *recognitio* and other parts of the service could not be actions in which people gathered in the public squares of the great urban centres of the country could take part.[4]

While choreographing this might be something of a logistical challenge, it is precisely the kind of imaginative modernisation that the coronation can adopt.

an inclusive coronation

Inevitably, it is the presence and role of other faith groups in the coronation service that attracts most public attention. One of the most significant social changes since 1953 is the shift to religious plurality, and although this looms larger in the public and media imagination than it does in actual demographic figures – the non-Christian religious population of Britain stands at around 4.5 million, somewhat less than 10 per cent of the population – it is important to recognise this in the ceremony. Here there are important precedents and examples on which we might draw.

So long was it since the previous coronation, of Victoria, that Edward VII's coronation in 1902 treated the Queen's Diamond Jubilee as more of a precedent than the previous coronation. This offers a possible model for the next coronation, given the high profile and widely regarded success of the Queen Elizabeth's own Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012.

By way of context, it is important to note that the presence and role of non-Anglican Christian traditions has been expanding within the coronation, albeit very slowly, over the years. In 1902, representatives of non-Anglican churches were invited to the service for the first time, alongside a variety of new attendees, including mayors of London boroughs and representatives of legal and medical professions. In 1953, a role was assigned to the Moderator of the Church of Scotland who presented to the monarch a copy of the Bible.

Whether the ceremony itself has a more ecumenical emphasis will invariably be a contentious point, as it

is by definition conducted by, in and according to the form of the established Church. However, if a more ecumenical service is unworkable, there are precedents that deserve some attention. So long was it since the previous coronation, of Victoria, that Edward VII's coronation in 1902 treated the Queen's Diamond Jubilee as more of a precedent than the previous coronation. This offers a possible model for the next coronation, given the high profile and widely regarded success of the Queen Elizabeth's own Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012.

These began in February with an event at Lambeth Palace, hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, with representatives of the major faith traditions in the UK. Each of these was gathered around a sacred object selected by them for display at the celebration "as an object of particular significance to the faith or practice of their community, or their life in the United Kingdom."[5] The Queen described the religious traditions represented as "sources of a rich cultural heritage [that] have given rise to beautiful sacred objects and holy texts."[6] The Queen's following words are worth quoting at length:

> The concept of our established Church is occasionally misunderstood and, I believe, commonly under-appreciated. Its role is not to defend Anglicanism to the exclusion of other religions. Instead, the Church has a duty to protect the free practice of all faiths in this country.
>
> It certainly provides an identity and spiritual dimension for its own many adherents. But also, gently and assuredly, the Church of England has created an environment for other faith communities and indeed people of no faith to live freely. Woven into the fabric of this country, the Church has helped to build a better society – more and more in active co-operation for the common good with those of other faiths.
>
> This occasion is thus an opportunity to reflect on the importance of faith in creating and sustaining communities all over the United Kingdom. Faith plays a key role in the identity of many millions of people, providing not only a system of belief but also a sense of belonging. It can act as a spur for social action. Indeed, religious groups have a proud track record of helping those in the greatest need, including the sick, the elderly, the lonely and the disadvantaged. They remind us of the responsibilities we have beyond ourselves.
>
> … [T]he presence of your fellow distinguished religious leaders and the objects on display demonstrate how each of these traditions has contributed distinctively to the history and development of the United Kingdom…. I wish to send our good wishes, through you, to each of your communities, in the hope that – with the assurance of the protection of our established Church – you will

> continue to flourish and display strength and vision in your relations with each other and the rest of society.[7]

This is the tone and message that should be embodied in the next coronation – one of recognition and respect. Representatives of the major faith traditions – and indeed non-faith groups – should play a role in the service, perhaps by presenting the monarch with a text or object they judge as significant or sacred. This should not involve people in doing or saying things that they do not believe, but rather could be an opportunity for a powerful demonstration of loyalty to the crown and thereby to the *political values enacted and embodied in the service*.

There are, of course, practical and logistical challenges to this. Some faith groups might be reluctant to have their scriptures publically handled and, in any case, the monarch could hardly be expected to keep hold of nearly a dozen texts, let alone objects. Moreover, there are questions as to which groups should be involved as, although there are nine faith groups formally recognised in Britain, there is an argument that the Black Majority Churches, which represent one of the fastest growing Christian groups in the country, as well, obviously, as being a distinct ethnic group, and which Prince Charles has himself actively engaged with,[9] should have a role to play. Clearly, then, there are important practical considerations that demand careful assessment. Nevertheless, the principle of faith group representatives participating in the service is one worth exploring.

This is not, of course, an unprecedented suggestion. Indeed, Church of England bishops have periodically thought out loud about including other faiths within the new service for some time. Rumours that they were "privately considering" changes to the ritual, including the involvement of other religious leaders, the rewriting of the oath, and the abandonment of the Eucharist have abounded for at least twenty years.[10]

Interviewed by David Frost in 2002, the then Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey was clear that, were it to have happened on his watch, he "would have wanted to make [the coronation] profoundly Christian, but also very accessible to other faiths, in which they will be included and honoured and valued."[11] A few years earlier Richard Harries, when he was Bishop of Oxford, had made a similar point, arguing that other religious leaders "need to be much more than guests, they need to be clearly at the centre of things."[12] In 2006, when Dean-elect of Westminster Abbey, John Hall remarked that the traditional coronation service needed to be revised to reflect society's changes since 1953 and let other faiths play a role in the service.[13]

Since then, "senior church leaders" have said openly that other faiths should be "recognised" within the coronation service, which would at the same time retain its Anglican character and not simply become a multi-faith ceremony (sometimes it seems

as if the distinction between a multi-faith event and an Anglican ceremony which recognises and involves other faiths is not entirely understood by those that report on it).[14] Most recently, in 2014, Richard Harries provoked panicky reactions in some sections of the media by suggesting that the next coronation should include a(n appropriate) reading from the Qu'ran.[15]

In this context, it is important to comment on the participation of non-religious groups as, were non-Christian religions to play some role in the ceremony, the question of the alleged exclusion of non-religious people would rightly become an acute one. It is our belief that there is no *a priori* reason why a similar role within the coronation service could not be played by a representative of non-religious groups in Britain. Indeed, given the frequent complaint of such groups that they are excluded from great ceremonies of state, there is good reason to encourage such a role. The problem, however, comes in the practicalities. Do the non-religious in Britain constitute a coherent 'group'? Who can be said to represent them? Do they hold any text or object as sacred or sufficiently and unifyingly symbolic? Would they be willing to participate in a Christian service, albeit one that so explicitly welcomed their presence and participation? If such pragmatic objections could be satisfactorily answered by the non-religious groups of the country, there is no reason to exclude them from participating and making a similar show of respect to the new monarch and the political 'constitution' he represents. The onus here, therefore, should be on non-religious groups to provide satisfactory answers to such questions.

Whether or not such an answer can be provided, the participation of non-Christian religions in the coronation is clearly an idea whose time has come. To be clear, the idea proposed in this essay is not that there should be a reading from another faith's sacred text in the service, still less that the service should become a multi-faith event, but that, as per the precedent of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, representatives of Britain's other faith communities should not only be visibly present but might also participate in the service.

This is unlikely to impress some pundits. Nevertheless, as a former Dean of Westminster Abbey rightly observed, "although the basic ceremony [of the coronation] is deeply rooted in tradition, each coronation has included alterations and developments that reflect the political state of the nation, changes in liturgical understanding and other factors."[16] This is especially so today, after such a large gap since the last coronation. Ultimately, the challenge is to respect and celebrate what the coronation says about our historic commitment to political responsibility, rooted in the Christian faith that has shaped the nation for 1,300 years, without stymying its ability to reflect who we are today.

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Who wants a Christian Coronation?

Nick Spencer and Nicholas Dixon

Over recent years, various commentators and campaigners have begun to speculate on the shape of the next coronation, with a number arguing that, because Britain is a less Christian nation than it was in 1953, the coronation should be secular.

This report examines those arguments, drawing on the first extensive study of what the British people think about the coronation. Interviewing over 2,000 respondents – including a substantial sample of non-religious respondents and an additional booster sample for religious minority groups, who play such a key role in this debate – it reveals just what the British public think about and want from the next coronation. Do they think it is meaningful or meaningless? Do they feel alienated or excluded by it? And do they think it should be Christian, secular or multifaith?

Combining the findings from this research with arguments from the coronation's history – paying particular attention to how it has changed over the centuries and what it actually symbolises – the report argues that the next coronation should retain its Christian basis and foundation, but should be modified within this existing framework in order to reflect the changed nature of society.

Nicholas Dixon is a doctoral student at the University of Cambridge, examining the influence of the Church of England on politics and society in the late Georgian period. His University of Oxford BA dissertation on the religious dimension of coronations between 1761 and 1838 was awarded the Gladstone Memorial Essay Prize in 2014.

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