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Editors: The Revd Dr Michael Brydon  
The Revd Jonathan Beswick

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62 Ballabrookie Way, Douglas, Isle of Man. IM1 4HB.

Email: [faithandworship@pbs.org.uk](mailto:faithandworship@pbs.org.uk)

They should be in typescript, preferably as email attachments.

For information about the Prayer Book Society and its publications, please contact:

The Prayer Book Society, The Studio, Copyhold Farm,  
Goring Heath, Reading, RG8 7RT  
Tel: 0118 984 2582

Email: [pbs.admin@pbs.org.uk](mailto:pbs.admin@pbs.org.uk) Website: [www.pbs.org.uk](http://www.pbs.org.uk)

President: The Lord Cormack, FSA

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Cover image: The Coronation Emblem: King Charles III, 2023

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## THE COLLECT FOR THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

**O**LORD, we beseech thee, let thy continual pity cleanse and defend thy Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without thy succour, preserve it evermore by thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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# Editorial

If we were still following the Julian Calendar, then the recent Coronation would have fallen on St George's Day. Some monarchs, such as Charles II, have deliberately chosen to be crowned on St George's Day. You can see how appropriate it is for a king to be thinking about a solidier saint like George, who stood up for right, as he too is girded with items such as spurs and a sword. King Charles, committed Prayer Book Anglican as he is, also has a great interest in Eastern Orthodoxy, which is still indebted to the Julian Calendar. We can be sure that His Majesty is fully aware that for the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who consecrated the 'Coronation Chrism', and other Eastern Christians, Coronation Day was a Feast of St George.

The King, with his enthusiasm for the Prayer Book, was also no doubt aware that its calendar for 6th May includes the exotically named Black Letter commemoration of St Johannes ante Portam Latinam (St John before the Latin Gate). Legend tells that the Emperor Nero, having dealt with St Peter and St Paul, also brought St John to the Latin Gate of Rome and sentenced the apostle to be boiled alive. But by miracle, the water refused to hurt John, whose sentence was commuted to banishment on the island of Patmos, where he penned the last book of the Bible which we know as The Revelation of St John the Divine. It is this biblical book with its vision of the tree of life (which lies behind the window in the Chapel Royal, St James' Palace) which influenced the design of the new Anointing screen.

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on the other side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Wheatley, in his early eighteenth-century commentary on the Prayer Book, also makes the point that the story of the near martyrdom at

1 The Revelation of St John the Divine 22:1-2.

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the Latin Gate is reminiscent of the Book of Daniel's account of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, whom King Nebuchadnezzar threw into the 'fiery furnace' for refusing to worship his graven image.<sup>2</sup> On that basis the story certainly serves as a reminder to all in authority to be mindful of the things of God and, as it says in the *Benedicite* at Morning Prayer, to join the three companions in praising and magnifying God for ever.

The praise of God motivated St Edward the Confessor to build the Abbey where the Coronation has been held since the eleventh century. Edward's legacy continues to dominate the ceremonies of the Coronation since, on 6th May, the King was preceded by St Edward's Staff, anointed in St Edward's Chair, crowned with St Edward's Crown, and left the Abbey in the Imperial State Crown, which contains what is known as St Edward's Sapphire.

The story of the sapphire is closely connected with St John the Evangelist. In the traditional story, it is recorded of Edward that 'John the Apostle of Love, was the saint whom he venerated with a familiar tenderness'. Therefore, when a beggar implored Edward, for the love of St John, to bestow alms on him, he drew off the ring containing the sapphire and presented it. Two pilgrims from the town of Ludlow shortly afterwards were in Syria, where the same beggar revealed himself to be St John the Evangelist and the special friend of King Edward. He returned the ring to Edward and told him that within six months he would be with him in paradise.<sup>3</sup> Since the ring, whatever the truths of the story, was associated with a King recognised to be a saint, it soon became revered as a sacred object and was probably used at later Coronations.

An inventory of Westminster Abbey, the then custodian of the Coronation regalia, taken in 1388 certainly describes a ring adorned with one sapphire as being in the custody of the abbot.<sup>4</sup> The Wilton Diptych, one of our greatest surviving medieval treasures, actually shows Edward the Confessor holding the sapphire ring. This devotional item was produced for Richard II who was deeply conscious of the importance of Edward the Confessor to the Coronation.

This reverence for the connection with Edward the Confessor was also shared by Charles II. Although the Coronation regalia had been

2 C. Wheatley, *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1858, p. 48.

3 A. P. Stanley, *Westminster Abbey*, London: John Murray, 1924, pp. 24–25.

4 D. Gordon, *The Wilton Diptych*, London: Yale University Press, 2015, p. 58.

broken up under the Commonwealth, he was adamant that it should all be recreated as if the destruction had never taken place. St Edward's ring was presumably broken up during the Commonwealth, but the sapphire somehow survived and came back to Charles II, who is probably responsible for its present octagonal rose-cut. It now rests in the cross at the top of the Imperial State Crown, which was worn by Charles III as he left the Abbey.<sup>5</sup>

This crown has had to be remodelled several times due to monarchs having different head sizes and because even crowns wear out. The Imperial State Crown was in such a poor state at the death of George V that the cross, holding St Edward's sapphire, fell off during the ceremonial procession of the King's coffin to Westminster Hall. The motion of the gun carriage jolted the cross out of position and it had to be rescued from the gutter.<sup>6</sup> It is a reminder that even earthly crowns wear out. By contrast, heavenly ones do not. When Moses and the elders went up Mount Sinai, they had a vision of the throne of God set upon a sapphire pavement, which is how that stone has come to be associated with the hope of heaven.

When St Edward's crown was placed on the head of Charles III, it was an important moment, which was marked by trumpets and the great guns being shot off at the Tower of London. The Crowning was followed in 1953 by a prayer that reminds us that the true crown, one that is available to all of us, is the heavenly one we all live in hope of:

God crown you with a crown of glory and righteousness, that having a right faith and manifold fruit of good works, you may obtain the crown of an everlasting kingdom by the gift of him whose kingdom endureth for ever.

The whole point of the Prayer Book is to enable all of us to have a 'right faith' which leads both to 'good works' on earth and that 'crown of an everlasting kingdom'. Percy Dearmer, that great liturgical scholar, very much regarded the Coronation Rite as being the most important of that 'floating collection of additional services' that, if not printed as part of the Prayer Book, are a 'very important factor in Anglican religion' since

5 G. Youngusband, *The Crown Jewels of England*, London: Cassell and Company, 1919, p. 20; A. Keay, *The Crown Jewels*, London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2012, p. 108.

6 Edward VIII, *A King's Story*, London: Cassell and Company, 1951, p. 267.

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they certainly fall under its heading of ‘other rites and ceremonies of the Church according to the Church of England’.<sup>7</sup> The clear past relationship between the Prayer Book and the Coronation Rite is a point thoroughly explored in the essay offered by Iain Milne, and we are indebted to the Archbishop of York for his own reflections upon the Coronation.

The Coronation Rite, like the Prayer Book, has deep roots, but is capable of speaking afresh to every century. The Revd Philip Corbett’s paper explores the evolution of music, and Richard Bimson looks at how the Prayer Book’s gentle mandate to maintain a bell has led to a distinctive piece of Anglican patrimony with magnificent change ringing accompanying national occasions. Rather like the Prayer Book, the Coronation can be viewed as being both Catholic and Reformed. Canon William Gulliford considers the survival of the Anointing, and my own paper looks at the importance of the Bible.

In our highly visual culture, which seems to prefer pictures over words, the Coronation offered something of a visual spectacular. Professor Ian Bradley, one of the Prayer Book Society’s Lenten lecturers, made the point that, for a generation brought up on medieval fantasies, such as *Game of Thrones*, much of the symbolism around swords, spurs and crowns is surprisingly accessible. The new Anointing screen, with its decorative scheme showing the descent of the Holy Ghost above the picture of the Commonwealth Tree, also showed how ‘tradition with a twist’ can speak powerfully.

Perhaps less obvious than such outward signs to the wider world was the move away from the use of the Prayer Book in the Coronation Rite, with no Litany and the abandonment of the Prayer Book Communion. One commentator has provocatively spoken of how it was ‘very much a Common Worship coronation, and the liturgical register reflected this for good and for ill, effectively marking the end of the 1662 Communion Office as the Church of England default public rite’.<sup>8</sup> Others have commented that the jettisoning of this patrimony was surprising since the Prayer Book has ‘the firmest legal foundation in the panoply of The Establishment, and is the one Rite which unites the varied traditions within the Church of England’.<sup>9</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury was routinely described as being responsible for the Rite, but it will be future

7 P. Dearmer, *Everyman’s History of the Prayer Book*, London: A. R. Mowbray & Co, 1912, pp. 20, 45–46.

8 R. Ward, ‘Coronation Commentary’, *New Directions*, June 2023, p. 4.

9 Unpublished paper by W. Gulliford, ‘An Initial Liturgical Discussion of the Coronation of King Charles III’, p. 7.

historians who will be able to comment authoritatively on the decision-making process and motivation behind omissions such as the Creed.

Members of the Prayer Book Society will have been delighted, however, that the *Te Deum* was still sung, the Bible presented was the Authorised Version, and the Rite retained something of the liturgical register of the Prayer Book. Unlike 1953, the Church of England is no longer united in its familiarity with the Prayer Book and numerous churches no longer use set forms of worship at all, so for many the Coronation will probably be accused of being too traditional.

There may be excellent reasons behind the very late release of the Coronation Rite, compared to 1953, but it did deprive the Church of England of the opportunity to teach more deeply about its purpose and theology; the majority of the contributors in this volume had to write without any serious knowledge of the 2023 Rite and to base their comments on what happened in 1953. The ambiguity over whether the Coronation would retain its Eucharistic context meant that the wider Church was not given the opportunity to teach about the Lord's Service and to share what a precious gift this dominical sacrament is. On the morning of the Coronation, the Archbishop of York spoke rather movingly to a radio audience about the Eucharistic context of the Coronation, which demonstrated that it would have been possible to do this highly effectively in the public context. Much has been made of the fact that the Anointing is the only part of the Coronation that has always been considered too sacred to record in any way. This is simply not true, since in 1953 the Archbishops of Canterbury and York were more concerned about the broadcasting of the Prayer of Consecration and the Reception of Holy Communion, which they considered too sacred to be shown. This year's attractively produced *Daily Prayers for the Coronation of King Charles III* made no reference to the Eucharistic context and it is a pity that, at the offertory, the King had been advised merely to touch the gifts of bread and wine in passing by. The symbolism was clearer in 1953 when Elizabeth II actually gave them into the Archbishop's hands.

But none of this negates how thrilling it was to see the King enter the Abbey Church to be crowned in a Rite that would have been recognisable to the long line of monarchs who preceded him. Whilst May's Coronation strove to speak to the now and to look to the future, it has undoubtedly reminded many of the importance of the sacred and of history. The King has helped to change perceptions of such things as the



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environment and the Coronation, which, at least in its liturgical register, reflected his own deep love of the Prayer Book and Church music, and may well help others to find truth, joy and hope in these things. Charles III has been rightly described as the Renaissance King in tribute to the breadth and depth of his interests. The Renaissance was characterised by the revival of ancient wisdom that opened the way to a renewed Christian humanism. The Prayer Book Society has its part to play in helping the Church to renew her confidence in both the Scriptures and the Spirit-filled tradition of the past, so we can better realise the petition of the Lord's Prayer to see God's will be done 'in earth as it is in heaven'.

The will of God is not always easy to follow, as the lives of those who first brought the Christian faith to the British Isles testify. The Gospels, brought by a reluctant St Augustine in 597 when he began the reconversion of the southern part of the British Isles, were present at the Coronation for the first time. It is extraordinary to consider how ancient they are and how they speak of the Christian heritage of the British Isles and its connection to the wider world. They are a reminder that we are part of 'one Catholick and Apostolick Church' and that the King and the rest of us are called to proclaim afresh in every generation the good news of Jesus Christ.

Following the enthroning and homage, the choir sang the *Confortare*, based on words from the First Book of the Kings, which was intended to remind King Charles to walk in the ways of God. They are good words for all of us too:

Be strong, and show thy worth: keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways.<sup>10</sup>

Michael Brydon

<sup>10</sup> 1 Kings 2:1–3.

# The Contributors

**The Most Revd and Right Hon. Stephen Cottrell** is the Lord Archbishop of York and Primate of England.

**Richard Bimson** is Church Warden of St Mary's, Wymeswold and the Chairman and Ringing Master of the Loughborough District Leicester Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers.

**The Revd Dr Michael Brydon** is Chaplain to the Bishop of Sodor and Man and Vicar of St Matthew's, Douglas.

**The Revd Philip Corbett** is Vicar of All Saints', Notting Hill & St Michael's, North Kensington.

**The Revd Canon William Gulliford** is Vicar of St Mark's, Regent's Park, and Director of Ordinands for the Diocese in Europe.

**Iain Milne** is a Trustee of the Prayer Book Society.

# Some Reflections on the Coronation

STEPHEN COTTRELL

Not all the water in the rough rude sea  
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;

*Richard II, Act 3 scene 2*

It was a moment Westminster Abbey had witnessed many times before: the Anointing and Crowning of a sovereign. In times past, it was a service shrouded in mystery, attended only by one strata of society, but this time, it was an act of worship that was beamed live around the world. Many millions of people in this country and beyond saw, and in some ways participated in, this most extraordinary event.

But still, at His Majesty's request, the central moment of the Rite, the Anointing, was screened from view. The oil, richly scented, blessed by the Patriarch of Jerusalem in the Holy Sepulchre, signified God's blessing, God's setting apart of this man for a particular purpose and role. And once the King had been anointed, the screens were removed, Handel's extraordinary 'Zadok the Priest' reached its climax with its rich layering of *alleluias* and *amens*, the people were perhaps ready to rejoice and yet, in counterpoint to the sense of anticipation and strength that the music conveyed, we were confronted with quite a different image. That of an older man, kneeling in his shirtsleeves before the altar, with the Archbishop of Canterbury praying over him for wisdom and strength. That juxtaposition of strength and fragility will be one I will never forget. For in part it was a striking representation of our need to find our strength in God alone.

Because I'm a bit of a romantic, those words that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Richard II fluttered into my mind. Richard sees it as a statement of his power, his right, his authority. But in that moment, I couldn't help seeing it as a description of the power and bond that God creates with us when we respond to His call. That overwhelming

sense that we can place our trust in Him; that we can have confidence in His purposes. So I saw, as I see in Baptism and Confirmation, as I see at Ordination or when I hear the profession of a religious, another person laying aside themselves in order to respond to the call of God in their life. It was a profound moment of vocation being realised.

But that leads to another question. Just what is the vocation of the Sovereign in our nation today? Well, we might begin to find an answer to that in two moments unique to this Coronation. First, the words of welcome spoken by a child, in responding to which the King declared that, coming in the name of the King of kings, 'I come not to be served but to serve'. Then, having made the Coronation Oath and Promises, the King knelt before the altar and prayed:

God of compassion and mercy whose Son was sent not to be served but to serve, give grace that I may find in thy service perfect freedom and in that freedom knowledge of thy truth. Grant that I may be a blessing to all thy children, of every faith and belief, that together we may discover the ways of gentleness and be led into the paths of peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

And so, despite the pomp and majesty of the occasion, in these moments we see something profound at work: the sense that he who is King declares his resolve to pattern his life on that of the King of kings, who is the servant of all. Or, to put it another way, our King knows his need of God and his need to be first a disciple of Jesus Christ.

# Here Is Wisdom: The Coronation and the Bible

MICHAEL BRYDON

At the coronation of his late majesty, George the Second in 1727, HANDEL had the words sent to him, by the bishops, for the anthems; at which he murmured, and took offence, as he thought it implied his ignorance of the Holy Scriptures: 'I have read my Bible very well, and shall chuse for myself.'<sup>1</sup>

Charles Burney (1726–1814), the musical historian, records this wonderful anecdote in his account of the life of composer George Frederic Handel. There is some debate whether the story is to be trusted,<sup>2</sup> but it certainly preserves the important truth that without the Bible there could be no Coronation. The central Rite of the Coronation is the moment of Anointing, which has its roots in the scriptures of the Old Testament: the lessons are drawn from Scripture and the Rite of Holy Communion is mandated by the Bible. But there are two other ways in the which the Bible plays a particularly important part in the Coronation. First, it has been used since time immemorial for the taking of the Oath and, from 1689, there has been a formal presentation of the Bible. The Prayer Book would not exist without the Bible. Our English liturgy can be matched line by line with the Scriptures; it mandates the reading of all the Psalms every month, and Cranmer's original lectionary assumed that the Old Testament would be read through once a year and the New Testament three times a year. The presentation and use of the Bible at the Coronation should be a primary topic of interest for the Prayer Book Society.

## The Oath

When taking the Coronation Oath, it was customary to lay the hand on the Gospels. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records how William the Conqueror

1 C. Burney, 'Sketch of the Life of Handel' in *An Account of the Musical Performances at Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon*, London: T. Payne and Son, 1785 (pp. 1–38), p. 34.

2 D. Burrows, 'Handel and the 1727 Coronation' in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 118, No. 1612 (pp. 469–471), p. 469.

made his Oath upon 'Christ's book'.<sup>3</sup> The use of the Gospels made the point that this was not an empty ritual, but a sacred contract administered by the Archbishop with the assistance of the clergy in the presence of the lay magnates of the kingdom.<sup>4</sup> Prior to the Reformation there would also have been relics on the altar; the account of the Coronation of Henry the Younger in 1170 describes him as swearing with both hands upon the altar, on which was placed both the Gospels and relics of saints.<sup>5</sup>

In the late Medieval period, the Blessed Sacrament joined relics and the Gospels for the Oath.<sup>6</sup> Edward VI may have been a Protestant, but the political situation meant that he effectively had a Medieval Coronation, which included making 'a solemn oath upon the Sacrament laid upon the altar'. Nevertheless, for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, it was obvious that a new prominence was being given to the Bible, since Edward VI then laid his hand upon the Gospels, promising by 'those holy Evangelists by me bodily touched upon this holy altar'.<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth I similarly had a Medieval Coronation, but a new emphasis on the importance of the Scriptures was there for those with eyes to see. The City of London presented a copy of the New Testament, during the outside procession to the Abbey, which Elizabeth kissed.<sup>8</sup> The Coronation Oath was also revised so that she promised to rule 'according to the Laws of God, [and] the true profession of the Gospel established in this Kingdom'.<sup>9</sup> Some authorities suggest that John Whitgift, a future Archbishop of Canterbury, preached a sermon for Elizabeth I in which he stressed how she had 'testified openly at the Holy Altar' by laying her hands on the Bible.<sup>10</sup>

By the time James I was crowned, in 1603, not only was it the first Coronation to be in English, but the Gospels were unambiguously dominant at the taking of the Oath in accordance with the 'true profession of the gospell'.<sup>11</sup> At the 1689 Coronation of William and Mary, the

3 R. Strong, *Coronation. A History of Kingship*, London: Harper Collins, 2005, p. 42.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

6 J. Pemberton, *The Coronation Service with Introduction: Notes; Extracts from the Liber Regalis and Coronation Order of Charles I; Historical Accounts of Coronations, Etc.*, London: Skeffington & Son, 1911, p. 13.

7 C. Wordsworth (ed.), *The Manner of the Coronation of King Charles the First of England*, London: Harrison and Sons, 1892, p. 19.

8 Lambeth Palace, Davidson 278/219.

9 Strong, *Coronation*, p. 211.

10 Lambeth Palace, Fisher 123/130.

11 Wordsworth (ed.), *Charles I*, p. xliii.

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taking of the Oath, upon the Scriptures, also became a reminder that the monarch governed by law and that oaths made before God should not be violated.<sup>12</sup> The Oath, on the Bible, acquired a Protestant symbolism, and Queen Anne and the first three of her Hanoverian successors made an additional declaration, during the Coronation, against transubstantiation, the invocation of saints and ‘the sacrifice of the Mass’ as understood by ‘the Church of Rome’.<sup>13</sup>

The post-Reformation Coronation Rite, however, even with its increasingly Protestant emphasis, was happy to maintain the custom of kissing the Gospels as a sign of reverence for the Word of God. Church of England bishops also kissed the Bible when making their act of homage to the sovereign, upon appointment, but not necessarily one of the Gospels. Geoffrey Fisher, who was to crown the Queen in 1953, when making his homage as the new Bishop of London very nearly kissed the passage of the Old Testament where Job curses the day on which he was born!<sup>14</sup> Rather more care was taken in the Coronation to ensure that the Oath was taken upon the Evangelists. John Bradshaw, the Windsor Herald, recorded that Charles I kissed ‘the Booke’ after his Oath and Archbishop Laud’s annotation makes clear that this was on St John’s Gospel.<sup>15</sup> Archbishop Sancroft similarly records that James II took the Oath at the altar, ‘laying his hand upon the Evangelists’ and afterwards ‘kissing the Book’. William and Mary maintained this custom; it was listed in all subsequent printed rubrics, which meant that Elizabeth II had maintained an unbroken chain when she kissed St John’s Gospel in 1953.<sup>16</sup>

In the pre-Reformation Church, there doesn’t seem to have been a tradition of a specific Coronation Book of the Gospels being used, but we can assume that a suitably sumptuous volume was present on the altar. There was a tradition of royal sponsorship of giant Bibles, whose glorious miniatures tended to stress kingship, dynastic right and the triumph of

12 T. Long, *A Resolution of Certain Queries Concerning Submission to the Present Government*, London: R. Baldwin, 1689, pp. 8–9.

13 Strong, *Coronation*, p. 287; R. Strong, ‘I vow to thee my country’, *Country Life*, 29th May, 2013 (pp. 102–103), p. 103.

14 C. Smyth, *Cyril Forster Garbett, Archbishop of York*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1959, p. 449.

15 Wordsworth (ed.) *Charles I*, pp. lx, 24.

16 J. Wickham Legg, *Three Coronation Orders*, London: Harrison and Sons, 1900, p. 20; Wordsworth, *Charles I*, p. xxxv. The language of the rubric was modernised a little at the Coronation of George V to read ‘kiss the book’; previously it had read ‘kisseth the book’.

justice over treachery.<sup>17</sup> The Abbey would also have been in possession of some fine illuminated Books of the Gospels. It is true that the tenth-century Gospels, which belonged to King Athelstan, are sometimes known as the Coronation Gospels, but there is no clear evidence that they were intended for regular use in this way. The antiquarian Sir Robert Cotton did bring them to the Coronation of Charles, hoping that they would be included, but the royal barge rowed past its mooring point and the offer was spurned.<sup>18</sup> Some annotations by Archbishop Laud suggest that the Bible actually used by Charles I was ‘ye great one covered with golde which usuallye stands upon ye Altar at White-Hall’.<sup>19</sup>

## The Presentation of the Bible

The taking of the Oath upon sacred objects, which included the Bible, was fairly normal across Christendom. What is particular to the Coronation Rite of monarchs at Westminster was the actual presentation of the Bible. It is a comparatively recent innovation in the history of the Rite, since it was only introduced in 1689 for the Coronation of William and Mary. It was undoubtedly inserted at the behest of the Bishop of London, William Compton. Compton was the only English bishop, among the ‘Immortal Seven’ to sign the letter of welcome to William of Orange. Following the refusal of the Archbishop of Canterbury to perform the Coronation Rite, since he would not break his oath of allegiance to James II, Compton both prepared the service and presided at it. No contemporary account exists to explain his motives for wanting to introduce the presentation of the Scriptures after the Crowning, but his motivation is reasonably clear: this was intended to show that the monarch would ‘rule in accordance with the teachings of the Church of England’.<sup>20</sup>

Compton had been an opponent of James II and actively welcomed and supported the invitation to William of Orange to take the throne,

17 C. de Hamel, ‘Who Commissioned the Lambeth Bible?’ in *Lambeth Palace Annual Review*, 2013 (pp. 78–96), p. 94.

18 C. Breay and J. Story (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War*, London: British Library, 2018, pp. 204–205; Wordsworth (ed.), *Charles I*, p. 24; [www.bl.uk/collection-items/coronation-gospels](http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/coronation-gospels); Lambeth Palace, Temple 57/279.

19 Wordsworth (ed.), *Charles I*, p. 24.

20 G.T. Tresidder, ‘The English Coronation, 1660–1821: Elite Hegemony and Social Relations on a Ceremonial Occasion’, MA Thesis, McMaster University, 1989, p. 23; J. Wickham Legg (ed.), *Three Coronation Orders*, London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1900, pp. xxviii, 3.



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so he wanted to make it clear that William and Mary were on the side of the Reformed religion. First, he ensured that the Coronation was tied to the celebration of Holy Communion, albeit with precedent on his side, so it would be impossible for a Roman Catholic to be crowned. Secondly, he intended the presentation of the Bible to serve as another way of distancing the monarch from Roman Catholicism. Compton may have had at the back of his mind the formal delivery of the Bible to bishops after their consecration, which was accompanied by words reminding them that they were called to be a shepherd and to seek 'the never-fading crown of glory'. It is also plausible that he was inspired by a story of John Bale, the historian and controversialist, published in 1559, which described how Edward VI, the young reforming Josiah, on seeing three swords about to be processed before him 'asked yet for a fourth, the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, that is the Bible'. It is not difficult to see that it would suit Compton to identify William of Orange, who had come to maintain the Protestant settlement, with an earlier impeccable Protestant king of England.<sup>21</sup>

Bale's story is almost certainly not true, although Arthur Stanley, sometime Dean of Westminster, credited it as an historical event in his account of past Coronations.<sup>22</sup> It is true, however, that Archbishop Cranmer preached a sermon in which he likened the new king to the biblical King Josiah, who had not only recovered the Scriptures for his people but had put down superstition.<sup>23</sup> Henry VII, Edward VI's father, of course, had also been portrayed as a godly prince, both receiving and gifting the Scriptures to his peoples. The Great Bible of 1539 has a title page designed by the artist Hans Holbein. It shows Henry giving the Scriptures to his people. The king is so dominant that the Bible historian David Daniell comments that God 'had rather a squeeze to get into the top of the page above the King's head'.<sup>24</sup> Given that the whole point of the edition was to offer the Bible in English, we might also smile at the fact that Holbein's depiction of the volume handed to Cranmer, on its way down to the ordinary people, describes it as the 'verbum dei'.

Ironically, the clearest actual parallel to the presentation of the Bible relates to the inauguration of Oliver Cromwell in Westminster Hall on

21 Wickham Legg, *Three Coronation Orders*, pp. xx, xxviii.

22 A. P. Stanley, *Historical Memorials of Westminster Abbey*, London: Hazell, Watson & Viney Ltd, 1924, p. 79.

23 D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, London: Yale University Press, 1996, pp. 364–5.

24 M. Willes, *In the Shadow of St Paul's Cathedral. The Churchyard that Shaped London*, London: Yale University Press, 2022, p.44.

26th June 1657. Wickham Legg, the great scholar of the Coronation, points out that this was still in living memory in 1689. This ceremony included the presentation of a robe of purple velvet, a sword, a sceptre and 'a larg Bible richly guilt and boss'd'. However, Wickham Legg sagely comments that 'it may be thought that any borrowing from a ceremony of the commonwealth would have been carefully avoided by the advisers of William. Unwilling as they were to allow a king to rule according to his own pleasure, without law, yet they looked with horror on the time of the commonwealth.' There is certainly very little resemblance between the words of presentation used for Cromwell and those composed by Compton for the Coronation of William and Mary.<sup>25</sup>

The Speaker, in the name of Parliament, reminded Cromwell that the Bible was made up of the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament there was to be found 'Christ in Types, shadows and Figures' and in the New Testament was 'Christ revealed'. The Bible offered the 'Grounds of the true Christian Protestant Religion' and was 'a Book of Books' containing 'Precepts and Examples for Good Government'. There was then an astonishing reminder of how Alexander the Great had slept with the works of Aristotle under his pillow and other princes had done so with other works, but these were but 'Romances to this one Book', which should 'be had always in Remembrance'.<sup>26</sup>

Compton's choice of words is totally different in tone and style and is worth quoting in full:

Thus saith the Lord of old to his peculiar People by the hand of his servant Moses. When the King sitteth upon the Throne of the Kingdom; he shall write unto him a Copie of this Law in a Book, and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that He may learn to fear the Lord his God and to keep all the words of this Law to do them, and that he turn not aside to the right hand, nor to the left; to the end that He may prolong his days in his Kingdom, He, and his Children. And accordingly afterward, when they made Jehoash King, they not only anointed and Crowned him; but they gave him the Testimony also, that is the Book of the Law of God, to be the Rule of his whole life and Government.

25 Wickham Legg, *Three Coronation Orders*, pp. xxviii–xxix.

26 *Ibid*, p. xxix.

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To put you in mind of this Rule and that You may follow this Example, We present You with this Book, the most valuable thing that this World affords. Here is Wisdom; this is the Royal Law; these are the lively Oracles of God. Blessed is He that readeth and they, that hear the Words of this Book, that keep, and do the things contained in it. For these are the Words of Eternal life; able to make You wise and happy in this World, nay wise unto Salvation and so happy for evermore, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus, to whom be Glory for ever. Amen.

Professor Ratcliff, writing in 1953, comments that this 'long address' is typical of Compton, who was not a liturgical scholar, but who increased the length of the 1689 Coronation considerably by 'the addition of phrases borrowed from Scripture' and 'by turgid passages of his own composing'.<sup>27</sup> Whilst Ratcliff, an undoubted liturgical scholar, has a point, Compton still deserves some credit for rooting the presentation biblically and for some memorable, poetic and lasting phrasing in the second part. The first half provides a scriptural warrant for presenting the Bible at a Coronation by drawing upon the story of the Crowning of Jehoshaphat from the eleventh chapter of the Second Book of the Kings. The kingdom was illegally seized by the Queen Mother, Athaliah, following the death of her son, Ahaziah. Athaliah believed that she had murdered all royal rivals and allowed the worship of Baal to continue. The young Jehoshaphat had been hidden, however, along with his nurse and, seven years later, the priest Jehoiada engineered a military revolution, which not only removed Athaliah but also restored the country to the way of the Lord when the house of Baal was destroyed. It is not difficult to see that Compton was associating the wicked, idolatrous Athaliah with bad King James' false religion, and William and Mary, as restorers of true religion, with Jehoshaphat. One suspects that Compton saw himself in the light of the faithful Jehoiada, who had not been afraid to use military force to bring about a change which enjoyed divine approval. Compton had been a cornet of the Dragoons in his youth, and had clearly enjoyed helping Princess Anne escape from her father, with a drawn sword in one hand and pistols on his saddle.<sup>28</sup>

27 E. Ratcliff, *The Coronation Service of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II*, London: SPCK, 1953, p. 7.

28 G. Curtis, *The Life and Times of Queen Anne*, London: C. Tinling & Co Ltd, 1972, p. 62.

The second part of the presentation is a very strong exhortation to base this life upon the Bible, since it will prepare you for eternal life. It offers a threefold praise of the Scriptures for offering 'Wisdom', the 'Royal Law' and 'the lively Oracles of God'. 'Here is Wisdom' is a direct citation from the Revelation of St John the Divine (13:18) when it is praised for enabling us to be able to recognise everything opposed to God's ways. From the Reformation onwards, the Book of Revelation had been largely read by Protestants as a warning, against the Church of Rome, so the suggestion that wisdom could spot error would sit well with Compton's trenchant views in support of a Protestant settlement. But at the same time, it is important to remember that the Scriptures are full of positive references to the importance of wisdom. Rather beautifully, the Proverbs talk of how happy is 'the man that findeth wisdom'; since she 'is more precious than rubies' and her ways are 'ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace'.<sup>29</sup> Such a passage explains why Compton could praise the Bible as 'the most valuable thing that this World affords'.

The description of the Bible as 'the Royal Law' draws upon the General Epistle of James, which looks to the guidance of the King of kings and Lord of lords for the direction of life: 'If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.'<sup>30</sup>

It is the First Epistle General of Peter which stresses the centrality of the oracles of God. We are counselled to choose words wisely and to share them as if we are speaking the very oracles of God.<sup>31</sup> The oracles of God offered a source of unifying authority for all Protestants, and Compton had a long track record of wanting to reach out to the dissenters. He seems to have been genuinely supportive of revising the Prayer Book in ways that would enable most of them to return to the Church of England. His actions on the 1689 commission to reform the Prayer Book showed that he was both behind the Comprehension scheme and concerned to strengthen the Protestant interest.<sup>32</sup> One suspects that he would have been both comfortable with and would have approved of the way the Moderator of the Church of Scotland was included in the presentation of the Bible at the Coronation of 1953.

29 The Proverbs 3:13–18.

30 James 2:8.

31 1 Peter 4:11.

32 T. J. Fawcett, *The Liturgy of Comprehension 1689. An Abortive Attempt to Revise the Book of Common Prayer*, Southend-on-Sea: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1973, pp. 28, 45, 163.

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This sense that the Coronation helped to emphasise the Protestant identity of the monarch was emphasised again at the Coronation of Queen Anne. The Archbishop of York stressed that his sermon would be short, but effectively used it to praise Anne for her ‘concern for our Religion, our Laws, our Liberties, [and] for the continuance of the Crown in the Protestant Line’.<sup>33</sup> This emphasis was to remain important, under the Hanoverians, who were always conscious of the threat from the ‘King over the water’ until the death of Henry IX, Cardinal York, in 1807.<sup>34</sup> By George IV’s Coronation, however, this particular challenge had passed and the presentation was shortened by dropping the first fourteen lines of Compton’s preface. It was shortened again in 1902 for Edward VII when the second part was reduced to the opening sentence.<sup>35</sup> This had more to do with the practical need to shorten the service, rather than theology, since Edward VII had been unwell. It was also true that Archbishop Temple was struggling with his sight, which made a special large-print scroll ‘necessary’ so he could say the words while holding the Bible, before giving it.<sup>36</sup>

### Who Makes the Bible?

Given the importance of the presentation of the Bible in 1689, it is frustrating that no information has yet been unearthed about where it came from and whether it still exists. Sir Roy Strong describes it as ‘a specially printed and richly decorated volume’. The official illustration of the Coronation procession certainly confirms that it was highly ornamented, but I can’t locate any evidence for it being specially printed.<sup>37</sup> Sadly the Bible is not listed in any of the known lists of requirements for the Coronation, so may simply have been provided by the Chapel Royal. Compton could easily have borrowed a sumptuous Bible from the King’s Chapel in Whitehall, which is where a special Morning Prayer took place on the day of the Coronation.<sup>38</sup> There was precedent for this since Archbishop Laud’s borrowing of one for the

33 J. Sharp, *A Sermon Preach’d at the Coronation of Queen Anne*, London: Henry Hills, 1702, p. 11.

34 D. Seward, *The King Over the Water. A Complete History of the Jacobites*, Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2019, pp. 331–335.

35 Ratcliff, *Elizabeth II*, p. 20; Wickham Legg, *Three Coronation Orders*, p. 152.

36 Davidson 278/219.

37 Strong, *Coronation*, p. 338. See Jan Luyken’s print of the outside procession to the Abbey at <https://tinyurl.com/9v3wc7vu>.

38 Pemberton, *Coronation Service*, p. 132; Wickham Legg, *Three Coronation Orders*, p. 10.

Oath of Charles I shows that there was a tradition of fine Bibles being produced for the exclusive use of the monarch in the Chapel Royal. We definitely know that ‘ye great Bible cover’d with gold’ which was used for Charles II’s Oath was borrowed from ‘the Altar in ye King’s Chapell at Whitehall’.<sup>39</sup> That Bible no longer exists, but an extraordinary, large two-volume Bible of 1701 does survive, which is thought to have received its magnificent embroidered cover showing four cherubim around the initials, A R (Anne Regina) as part of the refitting of the Chapel Royal for Queen Anne’s Coronation. The Bible cover also includes the motto of the Worshipful Company of Broderers, ‘omnia de super’ (all things are from above), which is the reason for thinking it might have been used at the Coronation. William West, a past master of the Broderers’ Company, is known to be responsible for all the embroideries supplied for the Rite.<sup>40</sup>

The first Coronation Bible we can locate, however, with no ambiguity about its provenance, is that used for George III, which is in the Royal Collection.<sup>41</sup> A note loosely inserted states that Richard Osbaldson, the Bishop of Carlisle, laid it before the King for the taking of the Oath. It is a very impressive volume bound in crimson velvet with gilt clasps, furniture and arms. What is interesting is that it is a dual volume, since it also includes the Prayer Book. It was not specially printed for George III’s Coronation, in 1761, but was a 1747 edition produced by Thomas Basset for the Oxford University Press.<sup>42</sup> This confirms that an existing royal Bible was used each time, probably from the Chapel Royal, although it would have been specially rebound. When George III’s granddaughter, Queen Victoria, had her Coronation in 1837, an edition from 1827, published by the Clarendon Press, was used, but it was rebound by Calkin and Budd of Pall Mall.<sup>43</sup>

39 Davidson 280/194, *The Times* 29th March, 1911, cites the Bodleian Manuscript of James II’s Coronation. Whilst this Bible has disappeared, the Royal Collection possesses what is almost certainly another contemporary Bible of Charles II’s from Whitehall. It has a magnificent binding in coloured silks with the royal arms on the front. Rather confusingly it is sometimes known as the Coronation Bible, but this only stems from the tradition that it was a gift, ten months prior to the Rite, by Charles to the Parliamentary lawyer, Bulstrode Whitelocke.

40 This Bible is now in the possession of the Getty Family Library in Bucks. See <https://broderers.co.uk/article/large-bible-1701-applied-embroideries>.

41 [www.rct.uk/collection/1048191/coronation-bible-of-king-george-iii](http://www.rct.uk/collection/1048191/coronation-bible-of-king-george-iii). It is only in the Royal Collection because of a presentation to the then Prince of Wales by Prince Jefri Bolkiah of Brunei in 1996.

42 Letter to the author of 24th January, 2023 from Andrew Brown, Assistant Curator (Books and Manuscripts) in the Royal Collection.

43 *The Holy Bible*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1827.

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It is not surprising that the University Presses were producing the Bibles, since Oxford had been printing the Bible with privilege—that is by royal grant—since the 1630s and Cambridge had printed a Bible as early as 1629. But the fact the University Presses were printing the Bible used at the Coronation didn't mean that Oxford and Cambridge Universities assumed it was their right to present the Bible. The two ancient English universities only acquired the foundation to their subsequent formal right of presentation at the Coronation of Edward VII. Originally, the Bible was going to be presented by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Randall Davidson, the Bishop of Winchester, who was assisting Archbishop Temple, privately pointed out that it needed to be a normal lectern Bible, which included the Apocrypha.<sup>44</sup> Temple duly wrote to the Society to emphasise that it had to be an 'entire Bible such as is officially used by the Church of England'. He also made clear that the matter had been submitted to Edward VII, who was equally firm that it should be 'the full Volume including the Apocrypha'.<sup>45</sup> The Society was not allowed to include the Apocrypha, according to its own rules, so their President, the Marquis of Northampton, wrote that they were 'compelled to relinquish very unwillingly the provision of the Coronation Bible'.<sup>46</sup> The whole episode is an interesting reminder that a normal Church of England Bible should include the Apocrypha. The Prayer Book lectionary assumes readings from the Apocrypha, and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion state that it should be read for 'example of life and instruction of manners', but that no doctrine should be solely based upon these books.<sup>47</sup>

This insistence on including the Apocrypha raised a few eyebrows amongst the more Protestant of the King's subjects. One of the more vituperative letters to the Archbishop was from a 'very humble labouring man' of Belfast, who denounced his actions as 'highly immoral' since they now made the Apocrypha for the 'first time' an essential part of the Bible: he was guilty of making Christ's 'house of prayers' a 'den of smokers'. Not surprisingly, Temple has written 'Nil', no response, on the letter.<sup>48</sup>

44 Temple 1469/135.

45 Temple 1469/136.

46 Temple 1469/140.

47 E. J. Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1946, p. 179.

48 Temple 57/286.

Davidson, having established the point that the Apocrypha must be included, wrote to the Archbishop to say that he did not know who had provided the Bible at previous Coronations, but he believed he had heard that 'the University Press claimed the right to supply it'.<sup>49</sup> Others petitioned the Archbishop to use those in use at Queen Victoria's Coronation as 'an important link in the continuity of our glorious constitution', and one well-wisher even offered his own Bible from 1790.<sup>50</sup> Temple took up Davidson's suggestion, however, and approached the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>51</sup>

These rose to the challenge and produced a magnificent Bible with a fine binding in red polished levant Morocco leather and the royal arms on the front, and the arms of Edward the Confessor and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge on the back. There were roses, shamrocks and thistles to symbolise the three kingdoms.<sup>52</sup> Both Presses were anxious to be seen as equal partners in its production and their two representatives jointly presented it to the Archbishop on 20th June 1902, and then stayed on for luncheon.<sup>53</sup>

The same procedure was adopted for the Coronation of George V, but not without an initial tussle. Cambridge felt that, as Oxford had actually produced the Bible in 1902, they ought to be allowed to provide it this time round.<sup>54</sup> The initial letter from the Cambridge University Press was slightly ambiguous and one can see why the Archbishop understood it as suggesting that the presentation might reasonably alternate between the two universities.<sup>55</sup> Oxford didn't take that lying down and insisted that the precedent was for a joint presentation, and that it was also their right to provide the Bible since they alone were able to print books at 'their own press and upon paper at their own mill and to bind them in their own workshops'.<sup>56</sup> The vice-chancellor of Oxford waded into the argument and insisted that, whilst he did not wish to 'be thought unfriendly to the sister university', it was a matter of historical fact that an Oxford Bible had been used for the last two Coronations.<sup>57</sup> Archbishop

49 Temple 57/280.

50 Temple 57/282; 57/284–285.

51 Temple 57/284–285.

52 *The Sphere*, 9th August, 1902, p. 140.

53 Temple 57/288–289; 57/290–292.

54 Davidson 280/65.

55 Davidson 280/68; 280/69.

56 Davidson 280/73–74.

57 Davidson 280/75–77.



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Davidson had to write a whole series of diplomatic letters, and in the end it was agreed that it would be a joint presentation, but Cambridge would provide the Bible, including the Apocrypha, which would be bound by Oxford.<sup>58</sup> Uniquely among the Bibles used, this one has a book mark incorporating both the royal arms and cypher, but which university produced that is impossible to say!<sup>59</sup>

One might have thought that Randall Davidson, who, as Bishop of Winchester and then as Archbishop of Canterbury, was actively involved in both the 1902 and 1911 arguments about the production of the Bible, might have wanted to forestall future debates by producing a permanent one to go with the regalia in the Tower of London. In fact, he commented that he hoped they would never move to using the same Bible at future ceremonies, since it was a good thing to have it produced by a body like the University Press. Rather surprisingly, maybe even worryingly from the perspective of the Prayer Book Society, he also thought that ‘as time goes on there may be other Versions or more suitable editions’ than the one used in 1902.<sup>60</sup>

There were no realistic alternatives to the Authorised Version in 1953 and it was clearly assumed by the two University Presses that they produced the Bible. Oxford simply began the work as early as February 1952, the month Elizabeth II acceded to the throne. This wasn’t necessarily clear to the rest of the world, since the Lord Chamberlain wrote to Archbishop Fisher to check whether the matter was in hand or whether he needed to do something. Fisher responded that, whilst he wasn’t aware of any official request, he knew that Oxford University Press was working on it, since he had received a letter from them enquiring if the Bible’s binding needed to fit in with a particular colour scheme.<sup>61</sup> Archbishop Fisher was suitably headmasterly in his response to the Press, and insisted that the Bible should be ‘bound in red’ regardless of the colour of the cope worn by the bishop carrying it.<sup>62</sup> Lynton Lamb, the accomplished engraver and artist, certainly designed a fine scarlet levant Morocco cover, with a cream-coloured lozenge containing the royal arms. His intention was to attract the eye with a striking contrast, given that the Bible would itself

58 Davidson 280/79; 280/80; 280/83; 280/91.

59 Lambeth Palace: Coronation Bible of George V, E185, 1911.

60 Davidson 278/369.

61 Fisher 123/134; Fisher 154/249.

62 Fisher 123/152.

be the focus of a pivotal moment of the Rite.<sup>63</sup> Since 1989, a replica Bible has been used during the Act of Homage made to the sovereign by all new diocesan bishops, which serves as a gentle reminder that it is the 'most valuable thing that this world affords' for them also.<sup>64</sup> What is more surprising is that the binding of the book, in which the winners of the Norwich Union Grand Prix (the world's longest, continually held, international mile race, held annually at London's Crystal Palace) inscribe their names, is also a copy.<sup>65</sup>

## Who Carries the Bible?

When Compton first introduced the presentation of the Bible, there was obviously no precedent for who carried it in procession. Unsurprisingly, Compton decided that the Dean of Westminster, who had the established right to pass the regalia from the altar to the Archbishop, would also do the same with the Bible, but when it came to the 'Great Procession' he gave this right to himself.<sup>66</sup>

The privilege of carrying the Bible never became tied, however, to any particular bishopric. Worcester carried it for Queen Anne, Salisbury for George I, Coventry and Lichfield for George II, Carlisle for George III, Ely for George IV, Exeter for William IV and Winchester for Victoria. It was not until 1902 when the Bishop of London carried it again for Edward VII.<sup>67</sup> Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there does not seem to be any precedent for how the bishop was selected other than royal or archepiscopal favour. It is only from the Coronation of George V, in 1911, that it has normally been carried by whichever bishop is Clerk of the Closet, an episcopal official who heads up the College of Chaplains of the Ecclesiastical Household.

William Boyd Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon, who carried it for George V, was much in favour with the King, and the Archbishop had already marked him for this honour.<sup>68</sup> Boyd Carpenter actually believed it was his right to carry the Bible, as Clerk of the Closet, and wrote to the

63 P. J. Carefoote, 'The Coronation Bible' in *The Halycon: The Newsletter of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library*, No. 37, 2006 (pp. 1–2), p. 2.

64 E. Bickersteth and R. W. Dunning, *Clerks of the Closet in the Royal Household*, Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1991, pp. 87–8.

65 Carefoote, 'The Coronation Bible', p. 2.

66 Wickham Legg, *Three Coronations*, pp. 27, 94, 95.

67 See *London Gazette*, numbers: 3804, 5270, 6614, 10142, 17732, 18848, 19632, 27489, 28535.

68 Davidson 280/46.

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Archbishop that he intended to make a submission to the Court of Claims.<sup>69</sup> Archbishop Davidson tactfully responded that he was not aware of any ‘specific right’, but he believed that ‘the possibility of future holders of the office being thus honoured’ was highly likely, so it would be safer not to risk a rejection by the Court of Claims.<sup>70</sup>

A custom was established since Archbishop Lang was anxious that Thomas Banks Strong, Bishop of Oxford and Clerk of the Closet, should carry the Bible for George VI’s Coronation. Strong had to decline, however, on the advice of his doctor, who said that he was not well enough to carry the Bible and might easily fall. So the honour went to Bertram Pollock, Bishop of Norwich, who was the most senior bishop after London, Durham and Winchester.<sup>71</sup> The Bible was carried by another Bishop of Norwich, Percy Mark Herbert, in 1953, but Archbishop Fisher stressed that this was not a right of his episcopal see, but because he too was the Clerk of the Closet.<sup>72</sup>

We don’t know much about the practicalities of the carrying of the Bible for the first two centuries. Bowyer Sparks, the Bishop of Ely, was probably the only one to have to navigate a carpet scattered with flowers by George IV’s Herb Strewer. One suspects they must have become squashed and slippery, but that is not conveyed by the official picture, probably showing the procession between Westminster Hall and Westminster Abbey, where Sparks glides over the carpet looking like an eighteenth-century bishop in his clerical wig, with his black rochet sweeping the floor and his black-gloved hands holding the Bible in the horizontal position.<sup>73</sup>

It is not until the twentieth century that the records become more detailed. In 1902, the Dean fussed about what the Bible was to be carried on and was anxious that the Lord Chamberlain might need to be reminded to provide a cushion.<sup>74</sup> The cushion was to cause problems for Boyd Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon, in 1911. He was a devoted royal servant and was determined to play his part, but did find carrying the

69 Davidson 280/63.

70 Davidson 280/71–72.

71 Lambeth Palace, Lang 21/281, 297, 303.

72 Fisher 123/152; Fisher 154/234.

73 Sir George Nayler, *The Coronation of His Most Sacred Majesty King George the Fourth*, London: Henry George Bohun, 1837; A. Bruce, J. Calder and M. Cator, *Keepers of the Kingdom. The Ancient Offices of Britain*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999, p. 183.

74 Temple 57:292–293.

Bible on 'the somewhat solid and weighty cushion' a challenge. He recalled how 'I picked up my burden... stepped forward, flanked by the Bishops of London and Winchester, both happier than I with the lighter burdens of paten and chalice'. The Bishop of Ripon's 'muscles began to twitch and cry out against the imposition. But I said to myself: "the matter must be seen through and there must be no failure"'. There is a rather fine, painted illustration of all three Bishops, wearing magnificent copes, in the official printed historical record. The 'solid and weighty' cushion is absent, but Boyd Carpenter is shown wearing gloves, which he may have done both out of respect and to give himself a better grip.<sup>75</sup>

The gloves never became compulsory, but it had become a firm precedent for whoever carried the Bible to be prepared to wear a cope. Archbishop Lang clearly thought that Bishop Pollock might be reluctant about this and stressed that, if he accepted the role, he must wear one. The wearing of a cope was acceptable to Pollock, providing it was all right to sit down in it, since although he had 'no difficulty in walking' he couldn't stand for any length of time. Garter King of Arms happily confirmed that, once the Bishop of Norwich had processed and placed the Bible on the altar, he could sit down for the rest of the Coronation.<sup>76</sup>

Wearing a cope turned out to be the least of Pollock's problems as, shortly before the Coronation, he discovered that he couldn't physically carry the magnificent Great Bible produced by Oxford University Press. Sir Humphrey Milford, publisher to the University of Oxford and head of the London operations of Oxford University Press, clearly thought that Pollock was being unduly defeatist, and he had a special sling made for him to carry it in. It was very much a bespoke yoke, since it was made to suit Pollock's height of five feet, ten and three-quarter inches.<sup>77</sup> It was all to no avail; Lang subsequently wrote to Milford that, even with the aid of the sling, it had not proved possible for Pollock to manage it 'during a long and slow procession', and he regretted that more 'consideration had not been given to the physical infirmities of those needing to carry' the Great Bible.<sup>78</sup> In his private diary, his chaplain, Alan Don, was less diplomatic and commented that the provision of this 'enormous volume'

75 Bickersteth, *Clerks of the Closet*, pp. 71–2; H. F. Burke, *The Historical Record of the Coronation of Their Majesties King George the Fifth and Queen Mary*, London: McCorquodale & Co Ltd, 1911, p. 70.

76 Lang 21/303, 304, 308, 320.

77 Lang 22/71, 74, 75, 81–82.

78 Lang 22/75.

was ‘really stupid’, since there was no way the Bishop of Norwich could carry it.<sup>79</sup> In the end, a second, smaller Bible had to be rushed through, and it was this smaller one, bound in crimson Morocco leather, which was carried by Pollock.

It was also lighter, because the Apocrypha was wrongly left out. As we have already heard, this was a non-negotiable point at the Coronation of Edward VII and led to the formal involvement of the University Presses. Alan Don, then a chaplain to Lang, noted the absence of the Apocrypha in 1937 and commented that this mistake needed to be rectified by the next Coronation, which it duly was.<sup>80</sup> Unlike Bishop Pollock or Archbishop Lang, nobody had trouble carrying the 1953 Bible, because it had been printed on India paper, since it was believed that standard issue paper would prove too bulky to be used gracefully. India paper had ‘the light texture of onion skin’ so could be ‘easily manoeuvred between the throne and the altar’.<sup>81</sup>

## The Spiritual Significance

The Bible should be processed between the chalice and the paten for the Communion Service, then placed with them on the altar, which can obviously be interpreted as making the point that the Lord is known to us in both the Scriptures and the Sacrament. It is a living illustration of the story of the road to Emmaus, where the Lord makes Himself known to the disciples ‘in all the scriptures the things concerning himself’ before ‘he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them’.<sup>82</sup> The importance of this public linking of Word and Sacrament is hinted at in Archbishop Wake’s post-Coronation annotation of the Rite for George II. Wake was frustrated that although the Bible was carried, the ‘neglect of the officers’ meant that the accompanying bishops failed to bear the chalice and paten, although the bishops ‘who should have born them [still] walked in their places’.<sup>83</sup> The Rite for Queen Victoria was really the first one to be widely circulated in an affordable edition, which allowed many clergy to draw upon the importance given to the Bible in

79 R. Beaken (ed.), *Faithful Witness. The Confidential Diaries of Alan Don, Chaplain to the King, the Archbishop and the Speaker, 1931–1946*, London: SPCK, 2020, p. 222.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 228–229.

81 Carefoote, ‘The Coronation Bible’, p. 1.

82 Luke 24: 27, 30; Wickham Legg, *Three Coronation Orders*, pp. 97, 115, 137.

83 Lambeth MS 1079b. The blame actually lies with the Dean and Chapter, who failed to carry the chalice and paten over to Westminster Hall. (See Tresidder, ‘Coronation’, p. 48.)

their own preaching. The Revd John Gurney, preaching in Lutterworth Church, was especially taken with the words accompanying the delivery of the Bible to the monarch, stating that ‘if that is the book for princes to rule by, it is the book for subjects to serve by’.<sup>84</sup> Queen Victoria was later to be associated with a popular, but unfounded story, that when asked the secret of England’s greatness by a diplomatic delegation, she had simply handed the ambassador a beautifully bound copy of the Bible. ‘Tell the Prince,’ the Queen commented, ‘that is the Secret of England’s Greatness.’ The imagined scene has been memorably recorded by the painter Thomas Jones Barker and is on display in the National Portrait Gallery.

The sense that the Bible signified that this was a Christian nation under a Christian monarchy was underlined again at the Coronation of Edward VII. *The Times* described it as ‘a fitting and significant sequel to that culminating act in the consecration of a Christian Monarch’.<sup>85</sup> At the subsequent twentieth-century Coronations, it is clear that the opportunity was taken each time to reiterate the importance of the Bible. Bishop Pollock of Norwich, for example, commended the SPCK’s Children’s Service for George VI’s Coronation, but asked that it ‘be supplemented by some allusion to the Bible, which is presented to the crowned King as the “most valuable thing this world affords”’.<sup>86</sup> At the diocesan conference, he also used the Coronation as an opportunity to push for a revival of family prayers and Bible reading.<sup>87</sup>

The association of the monarchy with the Bible became more pronounced in the Second World War. George VI endorsed the Active Service Edition of the New Testament with a personal message. He commended the Bible as ‘a wholesome and strengthening influence in our national life’ and encouraged its recipients ‘to turn with renewed faith to this Divine source of comfort and inspiration’.<sup>88</sup> There was an assumption that post-war Britain was going to be built on the values of the Bible, as shown by a statement by Queen Elizabeth in 1951. She spoke of how ‘the King and I long to see the Bible back where it ought to be, as a guide and comfort in the houses and lives of our

84 N. Dixon, ‘The Church of England and the Coronation Rite’ in *Church History*, 2021 (pp. 98–116), pp. 106–107.

85 *The Times*, 11th August, 1902.

86 *The Norwich Diocesan Gazette*, Vol. XLIII, April, 1937, No. 508, p. 38.

87 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

88 *New Testament, Active Service Edition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939.

people. From our own experience we know what the Bible can mean for personal life.’<sup>89</sup>

## Who Owned the Bible?

King George and Queen Elizabeth wanted people to know where their Bibles were and to use them. It is perhaps ironic, given the Bible’s importance in the Coronation Service, that, with the exception of the Bibles used for George III and possibly Queen Anne, the whereabouts of all the pre-Victorian Coronation Bibles cannot be confirmed. Because nobody ever considered producing one to be kept permanently with the regalia, it was possible for it to be given as a gift, and the questions of ownership began to arise after the Coronation. Since the Bible was presented to the monarch, and to begin with probably came from the Chapel Royal, one might reasonably have expected it to be kept in royal custodianship, but that does not seem to be the case. With the exception of the regalia, most items associated with the Coronation were swiftly claimed afterwards as perquisites by those involved. With royal approval, from George I onwards, we know that whichever bishop carried the Bible in procession was able to claim it.<sup>90</sup>

George III, for example, granted Richard Osbaldson, Bishop of Carlisle, the Bible, and it subsequently passed through Osbaldson’s family at Hunmaby in Yorkshire before becoming part of the library of Lord Amherst of Hackney at Didlington in Norfolk. Amherst appears to have used the Bible to record the autographs of royal visitors to his home, beginning with Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, in 1872. This reverent treatment shows that the Coronation Bible was much prized by those who received it, which explains why there were occasional tussles for ownership.<sup>91</sup>

The Dean of Westminster was distinctly ungracious about the Bible going to the Bishop of Ely after the Coronation of George IV. John Ireland, the Dean, ‘refused to deliver’ it and claimed that he ‘considered it his property as it had been placed on the Altar’. Bishop Sparks retorted with

89 W. E. Shewell-Cooper, *The Royal Gardeners. King George VI and his Queen*, London: Cassell & Company Ltd, 1952, Dedication.

90 The National Archives, Kew, HO 44/10/81 ff274–278.

91 Letter to the author of 24th January, 2023 from Andrew Brown, Assistant Curator (Books and Manuscripts) in the Royal Collection. The Bible only arrived in the Royal Collection in 1996 when it was presented by Prince Jefri Bolkihah of Brunei to the Prince of Wales. See also [rct.uk/collection/1048191/coronation-bible-of-king-georgeIII](http://rct.uk/collection/1048191/coronation-bible-of-king-georgeIII).

heavy irony that 'it is obvious to remark that upon the same grounds he might have laid claim to all the Regalia, which were also deposited upon the Altar'. More reasonably, the Abbey seems to have known of a two-volume Bible, inscribed as having been used at the Coronation of George III, which had been owned by Zachary Pearce, a former Dean of Westminster, before it was presented to Trinity College, Cambridge. But this was not the Bible which had been carried in procession and the two separate volumes had probably simply been used for the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel.<sup>92</sup> A similar row was to take place after Queen Victoria's Coronation, when the Abbey again felt overlooked in the matter of the Bible.<sup>93</sup>

Occasionally, life was made more complicated by the existence of more than one Coronation Bible. Compton clearly worked on the assumption that the Bible to be presented would also be the one on which the Oath is taken. The rubric for the Coronation of William and Mary clearly states that 'the Great Bible' which 'was before carried in the Procession' was to be used for the Oath.<sup>94</sup> But later Coronations didn't always follow this, as in the case of Queen Victoria; even if the rubrics of the service imply only one Bible.<sup>95</sup> In 1874, the Dean and Chapter of Norwich Cathedral had been pleased to receive a Bible, formerly in the possession of Bishop Edward Stanley, in which he had inscribed that 'upon which Her Majesty QUEEN VICTORIA took the usual Oaths at her Coronation'. Stanley recalled that it had been given to him because he was Clerk of the Closet. Norwich Cathedral was naturally proud of this treasure, and it was displayed on the newly restored medieval lectern, until they discovered that the son of the late Bishop Sumner of Winchester also claimed to have the Coronation Bible. Bishop Sumner is listed as carrying the Bible in procession and the fact it was authenticated by Queen Victoria's signature might have been seen to clinch the matter.

Bishop Stanley was no longer living, so Stephen Tucker, the Somerset Herald, was deputed to consider the matter and to see if he could explain the existence of two rival Bibles. He produced the summary of his research on 24th July 1886. Tucker admitted to being initially

92 Kew, HO 44/10/81 ff274–278.

93 N. Dixon, 'The Church of England and the Coronation Rite, 1761–1838', in *Church History*, 2021 (pp. 98–116), p. 110.

94 Wickham Legg, *Three Coronation Orders*, p. 20.

95 *The Form and Order of the Service that is to be Performed and the Ceremonies that are to be Observed in the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Victoria*, London: George Eyre and Andrew Spottiswoode, 1838, p. 28.



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dubious about the Norwich Bible and wondered if the inscription really was in the late Bishop Stanley's hand. He writes that 'Mrs Vaughan, his daughter, was adamant that it was & found examples of similar writing in capitals for the instruction of his children', which a handwriting expert confirmed were by the same hand. This prompted Somerset to inspect the accounts of the Office of Works and, in spite of being told that he would find nothing, he was rewarded 'by finding the payment for both Bibles'. Furthermore, he managed to track down a female relative of the binder of both Bibles, who remembered having new bonnets made 'of the pieces of the two coloured velvets in which the Bibles were severally bound'.

The reason there were two Bibles was simply because the Norwich one, still the largest thing in the cathedral library, was too heavy to carry, but the Winchester one was easily portable. Queen Victoria took the Oath on the smaller Winchester Bible, but rose to sign it on the larger Norwich Bible. Somerset commented that Stanley had erred in writing 'took' when he should have written 'signed'. Quite why this procedure was adopted for Queen Victoria is not clear, but the Queen Empress was later happy to confirm that this was her clear recollection. Only one Bible was used for Edward VII, although for the same practical reason of weight, two Bibles were ultimately provided for George VI's Coronation.<sup>96</sup>

Queen Victoria's Coronation was the last one in which those who had carried the Bible received it. Archbishop Temple was content for King Edward VII to claim it, following the 1902 Coronation, and presumably to present it to the Bishop of Winchester, who had carried it, if he so wished.<sup>97</sup> But Temple hoped that a new precedent could be established where it was given to some permanent body. He was anxious to avoid the way previous Coronation Bibles had been given into private ownership and ended up 'as it were by haphazard to wander the world'.<sup>98</sup> Randall Davidson, the Bishop of Winchester, who had done so much to assist with the 1902 Coronation, agreed with the Archbishop over the 'indignity' of letting such an important Bible end up 'kicking about' for

96 A privately printed paper of Stephen Tucker, *Somerset Herald*, 24th July, 1886, Norwich Cathedral Library. See also Davidson 278/255 and 278/257; *The Gospel Magazine and Theological Review*, 1st July, 1874, p. 89.

97 *The Sphere*, 9th August, 1902, p. 140.

98 G. Bell, *Randall Davidson*, Vol. I, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935, p. 371.

the next fifty years, and said he would seek the King's wishes.<sup>99</sup> Temple initially favoured the Bible going to Westminster Abbey or the library at Windsor, but ultimately it came to be agreed that the Bible would belong to the Archbishop of Canterbury and go to Lambeth Palace Library.<sup>100</sup> To avoid any confusion that the Abbey might own the Bible, it became the firm custom, zealously maintained by subsequent archbishops, for it to be delivered to Lambeth Palace, prior to the Coronation, whence it was brought to Westminster.<sup>101</sup>

It was not always so easy, however, to recover the Bible after the Coronation. The saga surrounding the Great Coronation Bible of George VI reads a bit like a 1930s detective story. Bishop Pollock's inability to carry the Great Bible and its hasty replacement by a smaller volume was a severe blow to the Oxford University Press. Sir Humphrey, who had dealt with Lambeth Palace over it, was clearly very disappointed that the Great Bible was not to be carried and he not unreasonably pointed out that it was the same size as the Great Bibles produced for Edward VII and George V, and that the Press could hardly have produced something 'less magnificent' for George VI.<sup>102</sup> Lang was suitably effusive about the 'expedition' (sic) with which the smaller Bible was produced, but must have caused further disappointment when on the day he also abandoned using the Great Bible for the King's Oath, or the formal presentation, in favour of the smaller one. Quite possibly Lang was not feeling physically strong enough to lift it safely either; after rehearsals he had commented on the difficulty of conveying the magnificent, but 'very heavy' book, to the King. He may also have felt, in line with the rubrics, that the one carried in procession ought to be used for everything. In the end the Great Bible was present on the High Altar for the 1937 Coronation but was not formally used in any way.<sup>103</sup>

As a way of smoothing ruffled feathers, Lang decided that, whilst the small Bible would come to Lambeth Palace, the Great Bible would be presented on long-term loan to the Abbey. This was likely to please Sir Humphrey, who, not knowing of the precedent that it would go to Lambeth Palace, had clearly hoped that it might stay at the Abbey. He

99 Davidson 278/369.

100 Bell, *Randall Davidson*, Vol. I, p. 371.

101 Lang 22/25.

102 Lang 22/81, 82.

103 Lang 22/75, 141, 144.

had insisted on consulting the Dean in the run-up to the ceremony to confirm Lambeth Palace's claim to custodianship. The Dean graciously accepted that the Bible belonged to the Archbishop, but in a quip retorted that 'though His Grace was right this time it must not be considered a precedent'<sup>104</sup>

Following George VI's Coronation, the Abbey duly handed over the small Bible, but Lang's plan to make a Christmas present of the Great Bible to the Abbey swiftly unravelled because it had disappeared. The Sub-Dean, Canon Storr, wrote to say that the Abbey Office thought the Bishop of Norwich had gone home with it.<sup>105</sup> Given that Pollock couldn't carry it in procession, it should have seemed unlikely that he had lugged it back to Norfolk, but Lang still wrote on 20th December to ask if he had removed it under the misapprehension that it was his.<sup>106</sup> The postal service was good in those days, and Pollock wrote back two days later to say that, although he had initially believed it would be his perquisite, the Archbishop had subsequently made it clear that it would belong to him. This had disappointed his plan to present it to Norwich Cathedral to be kept alongside the Bible used at the Coronation of Queen Victoria. After this preamble, Pollock then unambiguously spelt out that 'I have no idea what happened to this... huge book'. Neither could he shed any light on the 'sub-dean's information' but stressed that it was 'certainly not founded upon fact'. He then magnanimously wished the Archbishop 'a happy and holy Christmas'.<sup>107</sup>

Lang waited until 27th December before writing again to the Sub-Dean to check once more that it was not 'somewhere about the Abbey'.<sup>108</sup> The Sub-Dean blamed the Head Verger for misinformation about the Bishop of Norwich and suggested that it might be with the Office of Works and would make enquiries.<sup>109</sup> By now Lang was clearly becoming concerned that the Great Bible was being so difficult to track down, since it was hard to believe that so 'beautiful and so bulky' a thing should have been lost.<sup>110</sup>

104 Lang 22/10, 25, 27, 28.

105 Lang 22/141, 142.

106 Lang 22/143, 144.

107 Lang 22/145, 146.

108 Lang 22/146.

109 Lang 22/148.

110 Lang 22/149.

The Office of Works didn't have the Great Bible, but said it was at Buckingham Palace. However, the Office was unable to say how they thought it had found its way there.<sup>111</sup> Lang, clearly acutely aware that if the Palace possessed it, it might scotch the presentation to the Abbey, wrote a tactful letter to Sir Alexander Hardinge, the King's Private Secretary. Lang asked if Hardinge would 'kindly make enquiries about this and tell me whether there is any reason why it shall not be given to the Abbey as I proposed to the late Dean'.<sup>112</sup> Hardinge responded that he knew nothing about the whereabouts of the Bible but would ask the King when he saw him at Sandringham. George VI was duly asked: it was reported back that 'His Majesty says that he has never seen it, and cannot imagine why it should have been sent to Buckingham Palace'. Neither could the King imagine why the Office of Works was claiming that the Palace had possession of it. One has some sympathy for Lang when his frustration finally boiled over: 'If it is neither at the Abbey, nor at Buckingham Palace, where on earth is it?'<sup>113</sup>

Just when the Great Bible seemed to have been lost, however, it turned up at Buckingham Palace. Sir Alexander Hardinge apologetically explained how it had come 'in by a back door from the Office of Works' and the Inspector of the Palace had put it under lock and key without anyone knowing 'anything about it'. Furthermore, the King approved of the suggestion that it be placed at the Abbey on loan.<sup>114</sup> A duly delighted Lang was subsequently able to present the Great Bible to the Abbey to be used in their services, which is where it remains on permanent loan from the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>115</sup>

That should have been the end of the saga of the Coronation Bible, but in May 1938, a letter from Paul de Labilliere, the new Dean of the Abbey, arrived, announcing that he had just discovered another Coronation Bible in one of the Deanery cupboards. 'It is obviously new,' he wrote and is 'most sumptuously bound'. He knew it was a Coronation Bible, because it contained 'a slip of paper on which is written "The Bishop of Norwich"'. One can imagine Lang's chaplains rubbing their eyes with disbelief that a third Bible, which nobody knew anything about, had now

111 Lang 22/150.

112 Lang 22/151.

113 Lang 22/153–155.

114 Lang 22/158.

115 Lang 22/158–165.

appeared. They must have also been horrified by the Dean's suggestion that it be passed to the Bishop of Norwich. Thankfully, Lang was able to resolve this mystery rather more swiftly than the initial disappearance of the Great Bible. The Archbishop reassured his staff that this was not a third Coronation Bible; he had seen the book before, since it was 'the one used by the Bishop of Norwich at Rehearsals, before the proper book arrived'.<sup>116</sup>

It is to Lang's credit, of course, that he took the celebration of both Word and Sacrament so very seriously at the Coronation. Archbishop Fisher was equally assiduous at the Coronation of 1953, and in the final part of this paper, it is worth considering the two thoughtful changes to the Rite, which were made with regard to the Bible.

### **The Changes of 1953**

The first big change was the involvement of the Church of Scotland in the presentation of the Bible. Given that the monarch becomes a Presbyterian on crossing the border, the Church of Scotland has long felt that it should have a formal role in the Coronation Service. Whilst Archbishop Lang had been supportive of representative figures joining the procession, he had strongly felt that there was no place for the ministers of other Churches in what was essentially an Anglican Communion Service.<sup>117</sup> The removal of the Stone of Scone from the Coronation Chair by Scottish Nationalists on Christmas Day 1950, however, had flagged up that it might be wise to review this approach, and it was no doubt also felt that the diplomatic way the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland had behaved meant that something needed to be done for them.<sup>118</sup> There were discussions behind the scenes as early as 1951 when Alan Don, by then Dean of the Abbey, suggested to Fisher that the Moderator might be involved by handing the 'cushion with the crown upon it' to the Archbishop.<sup>119</sup>

Following the death of George VI, Don stressed again the need to do something to include Scotland, since it was already being discussed in papers such as *The Times*. He was genuinely worried that it might reignite agitation for the return of the Stone of Scone and advised that some

<sup>116</sup> Lang 22/166.

<sup>117</sup> Fisher 80/275–276.

<sup>118</sup> W. Rodmell, *The Coronation Chair and Stone of Scone*, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013, pp. 186–199.

<sup>119</sup> Fisher 80/275–276.

sort of involvement needed to be agreed early on rather than ‘appearing reluctantly to make a concession later’.<sup>120</sup> Something must be done so the Moderator of the Church of Scotland was not ‘merely a spectator’ but ‘in some sense a participant in the actual ceremony itself’.<sup>121</sup> Fisher agreed that something should be done, but felt that conveying the crown went too far; he preferred another suggestion of Don’s that the Moderator might be involved in the presentation of the Bible. The Bible, Fisher commented, is ‘the common possession of the two Churches’.<sup>122</sup> Consequently, Fisher informally sounded out James Randall Philip, Procurator of the Church of Scotland, about some sort of involvement with the presentation of the Bible as early as May 1952.<sup>123</sup> Both the Archbishop’s overture and Don’s gracious willingness to surrender a right of the Dean of Westminster were gratefully received, and the Moderator was privately invited to present the Bible on 10th November 1952.<sup>124</sup> In the following months, discrete cordial conversations continued and it is impressive how the matter was kept under wraps until everyone who needed to be consulted was in agreement.

There was a lot to reflect upon. For example, it was suggested to Fisher that he might wish to support the Church of Scotland sharing the presentation with the Methodists and the Baptists, but he was always clear that the Church of Scotland enjoyed a unique position.<sup>125</sup> When the Earl Marshal expressed anxiety that giving the Moderator a role might open a door which others might want to press, Fisher swiftly settled the matter by pointing out that ‘in the whole Empire and Commonwealth there were only two Churches which the Sovereign was under pledge to maintain, the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, and therefore nobody else could claim to go through this door’.<sup>126</sup> There were also the sensitivities of the Episcopal Church of Scotland to be considered, although the Primus was highly understanding of the need to involve the Moderator and commended the Archbishop for the suitable way this had been done.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Fisher 123/43.

<sup>121</sup> Fisher 123/34–35.

<sup>122</sup> Fisher 123/37.

<sup>123</sup> Fisher 123/45.

<sup>124</sup> Fisher 123/46–47; Fisher 154/192.

<sup>125</sup> Fisher 123/129.

<sup>126</sup> Fisher 123/11.

<sup>127</sup> Fisher 124/152; 124/156.

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The actual mechanics of how the Moderator would present the Bible were not straightforward. Those who argued that if ‘the thing is to be done at all it should be done generously’ were, undoubtedly correct, but working out a dignified ceremonial took some time.<sup>128</sup> The draft rubric which described the Moderator attending the Archbishop was swiftly changed when it was pointed out that it connoted ‘inferiority’ and might give offence in Scotland.<sup>129</sup> It was also initially assumed that the Moderator would receive the Bible from the Dean and then hand it to the Archbishop.<sup>130</sup> The Procurator of the Church of Scotland diplomatically pointed out to the Archbishop that this ‘might not be sufficiently impressive and might enable militant nationalists to say that it was a mere piece of lackey service and really an insult to Scotland’. Fisher did not initially care for the suggestion that the words of presentation be said by the Moderator, whilst he presented the Bible, since it would destroy the uniformity of voice, which went with the presentation of all objects; even worse, it might ‘indicate that the Archbishop did not care much about the Bible and was quite ready to let somebody else say the words about that’. Fisher later decided that he was being ungenerous in not allowing the Moderator to ‘open his mouth at all’ and once royal approval had been given over the telephone, the words of the presentation were shared.<sup>131</sup> He was also happy, once he had secured the support of the Queen and Dean, to allow the Moderator to put the Bible into the hands of the Queen and to receive it back.<sup>132</sup> This ‘courtesy and consideration’ gave the ‘liveliest satisfaction’ to the Church of Scotland and Fisher was no doubt equally content when he could finally write to the Moderator that ‘we have been instrumental in achieving a right thing in the right manner’.<sup>133</sup> After the Coronation, he went even further and spoke of how ‘the association of the Church of Scotland in the presentation of the Bible added to the glory’.<sup>134</sup>

The second change regarding the presentation of the Bible was its new position. Since the 1689 introduction, it had been presented after all the other regalia, but in 1953 it was moved to just after the taking of the

128 Fisher 123/129.

129 Fisher 123/216–217.

130 Fisher 123/235.

131 Fisher 124/35; 124/47–48; 124/62.

132 Fisher 123/15.

133 Fisher 123/314; Fisher 123/326.

134 Fisher 124/219.

Oath. Fisher had an exalted view of the monarchy and hence of the Rite of Coronation, so devoted considerable care to ensuring that it was both faithful to tradition and that the spiritual aspects were brought out.<sup>135</sup> It was his decision to convene a Coronation Service Committee of experts to look at possible alterations to the 1937 Rite. The Committee consisted of the knowledgeable Alan Don, Dean of Westminster, and four other liturgical and historical scholars. Professor Ratcliff, the Ely Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge, Professor Norman Sykes, Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge, Professor Claude Jenkins, who had detailed knowledge of the 1911 Coronation, and Mr Wickham Legg, who had not only edited editions of earlier Coronation Rites, but had been present at that of Edward VII.<sup>136</sup> Experts don't always agree, and it was assumed that their first meeting would be a long one on account of this, but there was a general agreement that the overall character of the Rite should not be tampered with. This did not mean, however, that they did not work hard to make adaptations where they felt the meaning and symbolism would be clearer, such as with regard to the presentation of the Bible.

Professor Jenkins, mindful of the old story that Edward VI had referred to the Bible as the 'Sword of the Spirit', thought it might be moved to just after the investiture with the 'Sword of Justice'.<sup>137</sup> Others felt that it needed totally separating from the rest of the regalia. Professor Ratcliff felt that the presentation of the Bible, along with 'the delivery of the other ensigns of royalty', was both 'awkward' and unconnected, since the Bible was not 'an ensign of royalty' in the way that the crown was. Would it not be better, Ratcliff, suggested, to transfer the presentation to part of the service with which there was a clear connection, such as the taking of the Oath? This would also, he argued, enhance the importance of the presentation of the Scriptures. 'Should there be any protest at such a change of place on the part of "the Protestant underworld" (as the late Bishop Henson termed it), the answer is obvious; the first thing presented to the Queen at her Coronation is the Bible.'<sup>138</sup>

Ratcliff's suggestion was popular with both Garter King of Arms

135 A. Chandler and D. Hein, *Archbishop Fisher, 1945–1961. Church, State and World*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2012, p. 116.

136 W. Purcell, *Fisher of Lambeth. A Portrait from Life*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969, p. 239.

137 Fisher 123/133.

138 Fisher 123/88.



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and the Earl Marshal, who thought it an improvement.<sup>139</sup> In the printed version of the Rite, the importance of the new position of the presentation was also enhanced at the request of the Coronation Service Committee by giving it a distinct heading. Fisher enthusiastically wrote to the Moderator of the Church of Scotland that the Bible now ‘comes not as an emblem of majesty but as the foundation upon which the whole ceremony of the Coronation rests’.<sup>140</sup>

The choice of words surrounding the presentation of the Bible was also scrutinised. Fisher was not in favour of the suggestion that a threefold ‘Here’ was inserted, so it now read, ‘Here is Wisdom; Here is the Royal Law; Here are the lively Oracles of God.’ With an ear for language, he rightly said to leave the ‘noble’ old words alone.<sup>141</sup> However, the initial words of the presentation were expanded by restoring a gently revised version of Bishop Compton’s words of 1689 to make it clear that the Bible was presented to keep the Queen ‘ever mindful of the Law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian princes’.<sup>142</sup> Professor Ratcliff thought that this would also forestall ‘ultra-Protestant’ objections to the moving of the presentation, and Professor Sykes felt that the reference to the ‘government of Christian princes’ made it clear that the Bible was presented not ‘as a book of private devotion’ but as ‘the rule for public government’ in a Christian Commonwealth.<sup>143</sup> It seems rather a pity that the idea that the Queen might have given a response was not taken up. Professor Jenkins’ suggested borrowing of some appropriate words from Elizabeth I, ‘Sirs we know it, and we thank you’, would have worked well.<sup>144</sup>

Even if the Late Queen didn’t respond in the words of her illustrious predecessor, she certainly understood the spiritual and theological significance of the Rite. Archbishop Fisher provided her with a ‘little black book’, which, over four weeks, combed through every detail of the service. This work was created by Miss Margaret Potts of St Julian’s and Mother Clare of St Clare’s, and was produced with remarkable speed.<sup>145</sup> The devotion for the giving of the Bible certainly underlines its importance to the whole Rite:

139 Fisher 123/8; Fisher 154/154–155.

140 Fisher 154/192; *The Music with the Form and Order of Service to be Performed at the Coronation of Her Most Excellent Majesty Queen Elizabeth II*, London: Novello and Company Limited, 1953, p. 15.

141 Fisher 123/200; Fisher 154/224.

142 Fisher 123/276; Fisher 154/288.

143 Fisher 123/276; Fisher 154/315; Fisher 123/332.

144 Fisher 123/129.

145 E. Carpenter, *Archbishop Fisher – His Life and Times*, Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1991, pp. 258–259.

This covenant between myself and my people is concluded and sealed by the giving of the Bible. The Bible is called “the Word of God” because it is the record, made by inspired men, of the Word which has been spoken by God to man first through his people Israel, then through Jesus Christ the Son of God, “the Word made flesh”, and up to this day through the Holy Spirit in the Church. Because it reveals God, it is given as “the most valuable thing that this world affords”.

It is given to me to keep me “ever mindful of the Law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes”—and of Christian Nations no less. On the Bible and on the Word of God, the compact between my people and myself rests and is ratified by God. On these foundations, truly laid, rests the high office to which now I am to be consecrated.<sup>146</sup>

## Conclusion

In 1953, most of the population shared a belief in the importance of the Bible and many commemorative Coronation Bibles were produced and distributed. A special prayer was also produced in preparation for the Coronation to show that the whole service was rooted in the Scriptures, which are ‘the only Rule by which Christians may live and Princes reign’.<sup>147</sup> The memory of the presentation of the Bible in 1953 continues to have a strong resonance and is routinely quoted in support of the importance of the Scriptures. The only biography Elizabeth II ever endorsed was *The Servant Queen*, which was produced to mark her ninetieth birthday. It pointed out that, although a single diamond in just one of the sceptres was worth at least £400 million, it was the Bible which was described as ‘the most valuable thing this world affords’, since it shows us what God is like by revealing His love and His commitment to us.<sup>148</sup> The presentation of the Bible was mentioned again in Platinum Jubilee publications, and was referred to by a speaker in the Loyal Address debate of the July 2022 meeting of the General Synod of the Church of England, and the words of the presentation are recalled in the recently published

146 A. Gilmore, ‘Queen Elizabeth’s Little Black Book’, *The Church Times*, 31st May, 2013, p. 22.

147 *The Order for Divine Service for 31 May 1953 Being the Sunday Preceding Her Majesty’s Coronation*, Oxford: Her Majesty’s Printers, 1953, p. 11.

148 M. Green and C. Butcher, *The Servant Queen*, CPO, 2016, pp. 16–17.

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book, *Lively Oracles of God*, which offers a discussion on the relationship between the Bible and liturgy.<sup>149</sup>

The traditional Coronation Gospel tells the familiar story of the Pharisees and the Herodians attempting to entrap Our Lord by asking whether it was lawful 'to give tribute to Caesar, or not'. Our Lord responded by asking for a penny and enquiring whose 'image and superscription' were upon it. They responded that it was Caesar's, so He told them to 'render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's: and unto God the things that are God's'. The pennies in circulation during Elizabeth II's reign were better than Caesar's since they made it clear that she ruled by the grace of God. In both her public and private life she behaved impeccably as a constitutional monarch, rendering unto the state all that it asked. But she drew her strength and rule of life from Almighty God, as mandated by her very public acceptance of the 'Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life'.

Elizabeth II loved and knew the Collects of the Prayer Book, as does Charles III. The presentation of the Bible at the Coronation is a public illustration of the hope expressed by the Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent. This prayer, written by Cranmer, was intended for the whole nation and encapsulates the Coronation's hope that the Bible will undergird all that we do.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

149 C. Butcher, *Our Faithful Queen*, Belmont Press Ltd, 2022; G. Jeanes and B. Nichols (eds.), *Lively Oracles of God: Perspectives on the Bible and Liturgy*, Liturgical Press, 2022; 12th July 2022, Meeting of the General Synod. The truncation of the February 2023 Synodical debate around the Loyal Address to Charles III sadly prevented those who wished to reiterate the importance of the Bible from doing so.

# The Scripture Readings in the Coronation Rite: 973–1953

WILLIAM GULLIFORD

## **Leviticus 26:6–9**

And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you.

## **1 Peter 2:13–19**

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

## **Matthew 22:15–22**

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou?

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Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

The lections for the Coronation have remained largely unchanged from the first recorded Rites. The earliest has as the First Lesson Leviticus 26:6–9, which thereafter was replaced in the next recension by 1 Peter 2:13–19. The Gospel has been Matthew 22:15–22 without variation.

It might be noted that 1 Peter 2:13–19 and Matthew 22:15–22 are also the set readings for the Accession Service (from now on to be celebrated, during the reign of King Charles III, on 8th September annually, in commemoration implicitly of the death of his mother, and explicitly his Accession).

The reading from Leviticus 26:6–9 is God's promise of blessing to Israel in response to its strict obedience to the Levitical code. Keeping the Sabbath, reverence of the Sanctuary and observation of the Law will all mean peace in the land. Israel's enemies will be overcome and there is assurance that, however small, the people will always vanquish overpowering odds. The reading concludes: the covenant will be established, just as the nation will increase fruitfully. Any nation renewing its hope at the outset of a new reign would welcome seeing itself as if a New Israel, recommitting itself to its promises and hearing God's blessing of peace and future prosperity.

From the time of the *Liber Regalis*, and the Coronation of Edward III, the first reading has been 1 Peter 2:13–19, or sometimes finishing at verse 17, 'Honour the king'. The tone of this reading, alongside Matthew's account of Jesus' injunction to 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's', reads strangely today. Hearing this apparent double-whammy of requirement to submit to temporal rule might seem coercive in the modern age.

First, we might need to underline that these two New Testament texts issue from a time fraught with primitive Christian suffering and

persecution. Peter and Matthew were victims themselves of the savage treatment of leading Christians in the first century. These readings are more subtle than a quiescent acceptance of the validity of secular authority, come what may.

Quite what the relationship between these two texts at the time of their composition was is hard to say, but they seem to share an underlying grasp that Jesus' call to 'Render to Caesar' in Matthew 22:15 ff (and parallels Mark 12:13–17; Luke 20:19–26) has more than a dose of irony implied in it. There have been scholars who have proposed that Jesus was linked, through the surnames of two of the Twelve, with first-century anti-Roman insurgency. Judas Iscariot may have been one of the notorious *sicarii*—first-century brigands known for their indiscriminate knife attacks. Simon the Zealot was almost certainly connected with another brand of active freedom-fighting. How far we can suggest Jesus was directly associated with either terrorist cell, when His message of peace and non-violence characterised His ministry (and note particularly Jesus' arrest), is hard to say, but there was ferment on every front at the time of Our Lord's ministry.

We know that a Roman denarius in the first century bore the Latin inscription *Tiberius Caesar Divi Augusti Filius Augustus Pontifex Maximus* (Tiberius Caesar, august son of the divine Augustus, high priest).

In Matthew's account, Jesus is goaded by the Herodians to declare either for the freedom movement generally, or the loathed *status quo* of cooperation with the Romans, in their hated 'head tax'. In answer, Jesus does not declare as particularly cooperative with Rome. His unwillingness to stand against the payment of taxes may reflect the general position of Christians in the later first century (cf Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–17 and Matthew 17:24–27). Possibly, in this exchange, Matthew was more interested in Jesus' adroitness in avoiding being trapped by his hostile questioners, the Herodians—of all people! Likewise, perhaps Matthew's aim is to underline most firmly that Jesus' challenge is to concentrate properly on the things of God, rather than anything of Caesar's.

Tertullian raises our sights further:

'Render unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.' What will be 'the things which are God's'? Such things as are like Caesar's denarius—that is to say, His image and similitude. That, therefore, which He commands to be 'rendered unto God', the Creator, is man, who has been stamped with His image, likeness, name, and substance. Let Marcion's god look after his

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own mint. Christ bids the denarius of man's imprint to be rendered to His Caesar (His Caesar, I say), not the Caesar of a strange god. The truth however must be confessed, this god has not a denarius to call his own! In every question the just and proper rule is that the meaning of the answer ought to be adapted to the proposed inquiry.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus' 'Caesar' is God. Tertullian can see Jesus rendering to His Father humanity, which bears the truly divine image. All human rule must sit under the ultimate rule of God.

### **Postscript: The Readings Used in May 2023**

The decision to change the Epistle (which has been used since the Coronation of Edward III) to Colossians 1:9–17, and the Gospel (which has been used without change since 973) to Luke 4:16–21, made for a significant departure from the biblical core of the inherited Rite. We know that lectionaries are not there for the preacher's convenience; the lectionary's choices challenge and edify the Church. The consistency of the use of the Rite's readings keeps each sacring in conversation with all those that precede them. The Archbishop's choice of readings is not the question here. The readings themselves chosen for this time were apposite. But the streamlining of *theme*, *readings* and *sermon* meant for something altogether tidier and more compact than the biblical tradition opens for us; and it was a departure from a tradition which was well-established long before these choices were made.

The Epistle was read by the Prime Minister rather than one of the bishops presenting the Chalice and Paten (the established practice), and this showed recognition of the fact that, at many more recent royal services, the Prime Minister has taken this role. The fact that it was read (very well) by a practising Hindu is worthy of note and it underlined the several interfaith elements in the service, where those of other faiths were asked to do something notably Christian. It might be said to have been one further dislocation of the Church's role in the proceedings.

### **The Bible and Its Use in the Service**

These are small points, but the first is that usually the Oath is sworn with the Bible open at the start of the Gospel of St John and the King

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian 38:7–9.

would normally reverence the open page of the Gospel. This does not seem to have been remembered and could be seen to be a sad loss.

The use of the Augustine Gospels was suggestive of the ancient character of Christianity in these islands. It was an attractive addition to the ceremonial and the Gospel procession, but it is unclear that it added anything of substance in terms of the consecratory character of the Rite; the lack of direct connection with the Coronation Rite made it an interesting but unexplained addition.



# What Does the Book of Common Prayer Have To Do with the Coronation?

IAIN MILNE

**A**cross its familiar services, the Book of Common Prayer teaches us the profound importance of prayer for the sovereign—for the sake of the bodily and spiritual health of the King himself, of the Church of which he is Governor, and of his kingdoms and their people. The Coronation Rite has never been formally included in the Prayer Book. However, its history and message is much more closely bound up with the Prayer Book than this might suggest.

The Coronation Service of medieval English kings retained a core traceable back to the pre-Conquest rulers of the House of Wessex. The *Liber Regalis*, a fourteenth-century volume still held by the Chapter of Westminster, records how these elements were intended to be enacted at a high medieval English Coronation. This beautiful manuscript continued in practical use well after most other public Latin liturgy had been set aside outside of college chapels. The details of the Coronations of Henry VIII's children are complicated and, in some respects uncertain, but it is believed that the service was first held primarily in English for the 1603 Coronation of James VI of Scots as James I of England.

It was not inevitable that the Coronation Rite and its Anglo-Saxon era symbols and prayers should survive the Reformation. Its retention was possible because the Prayer Book established the English Protestant tradition as one which distilled down but fundamentally retained that which was most essential in its medieval inheritance, and also strongly encouraged prayer for the monarch, the Church, and the wider community. James and his religious counsellors could have tried to change direction, but by choosing to approach the service in the Prayer Book's spirit, they laid the foundations of abiding precedent. Scottish kings were also anointed with the oil of godly wisdom from the fourteenth century, and James had not only been anointed as King of Scots as an infant (by John Knox) but had insisted on his wife Anne's Anointing and Coronation in 1590. When James came south, he brought with him ideas about Christian monarchy which were compatible with both English Prayer Book and Coronation ideas.

Whereas the chief authors of the texts found in the Prayer Book are known—principally, Thomas Cranmer and Miles Coverdale—it is not known with certainty who was involved in preparing the order of service in 1603 and, in particular, translating key elements of the *Liber Regalis*. However, it seems very likely that they included many of those who were involved in the Hampton Court Conference leading to the 1604 Prayer Book, and the preparation of the Authorised (King James) Bible. Lancelot Andrewes, who was Dean of Westminster, is very likely to have been involved. Because its changes were not radical, the 1604 Prayer Book is often forgotten. However, its very confidence in the value of Elizabethan worshipping conservatism was crucial to shaping the terms of debate which led ultimately to the Church of England adopting and maintaining the 1662 Prayer Book.

Subsequent revisers of the Coronation Service were also committed to the Prayer Book liturgical and linguistic tradition. King James' son (Charles I) and grandson (James VII/II) both had, in William Laud and William Sancroft, Archbishops who played an important role in maintaining and shaping both the Coronation Service and the Prayer Book, whilst the most substantial further changes until the modern era were instigated by Henry Compton, Bishop of London, who strengthened the conventional centrality of the Prayer Book in the Coronation of William III and Mary II. Their Coronation was preceded by Choral Matins, as nothing could more illustrate the Dutch Calvinist King's commitment to the established religion of England than an extra public dose of the Prayer Book.

Since that time, the Coronation has been firmly established as a service in the Prayer Book tradition. There are many elements of the worshipping culture of the Prayer Book which have been fixed features of Coronations and deserve more attention than space permits—such as the idiom, the theological ideas of the prayers, and the emphasis on psalmody. But it is seen most strongly in the large quantity of wording in Coronation Services taken directly from the Prayer Book. These words prevent a ceremony, which could have declined into national pomp and dynastic pageantry, from forgetting its context in a wider Church touching all levels of society, and orient the Coronation as a service honouring and glorifying the King of kings and seeking His mercy and blessing in a manner rooted sincerely in biblical precedent.

Until the early twentieth century, after the introit came the entirety of the Prayer Book Litany. This was curtailed first due to Edward VII's

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appendicitis. However, the Litany survived—as the 1953 order of service stated, ‘The LITANY shall be sung as the Dean and Prebendaries and the choir of Westminster proceed from the Altar to the west door of the Church.’ With its prayers for King, Church, nation, and all mankind, it would be very fitting if the Litany was used in the days and hours preceding the Coronation not only as a preface to the Coronation proper at the Abbey but in ordinary parish churches and prayerful homes.

The introit, always taken from Psalm 122—‘I was glad’—has not always consisted of the same words, but they have always been taken from the Coverdale translation. The Epistle (1 Peter 2:11) and the Gospel (Matthew 22:15) have, on the other hand, always been taken from the King James translation. In this, the Coronation exactly follows the pattern set by the Prayer Book’s 1662 revisers. Widespread familiarity with Coverdale’s psalm translation and scriptural words read every year in the Prayer Book’s Sunday Communion lectionary reinforced the understanding that the spiritual health of kings and queens and of nations is of the same stuff as the daily bread of the country’s parish churches. Each Coronation, some listeners will have heard with Peter’s words the sound of sermons from the third Sunday after Easter, and others will have heard with Matthew’s the Collect for the twenty-third Sunday after Trinity: ‘be ready, we beseech thee, to hear the devout prayers of thy Church’.

After the Litany, introit, and requisite political oaths, comes Prayer Book Holy Communion. The service is set with Coronation ceremonies like a crown set with precious stones. It has been used at every Coronation since 1603, except that of the Roman Catholic James VII and II. From the Collect for Purity (reminding us, and especially the sovereign, of the need to approach the awesome mysteries of the Lord, who sees all, with a clean heart, ready to receive in obedience), through to the words of offering, consecration, and thanksgiving shared with the humblest parishioners in the land, only two gentle abbreviations were introduced at George V’s Coronation in 1911: the opening preparatory Lord’s Prayer was assumed already said, and the *Kyrie Eleison*—in the English of the Prayer Book offices—replaced the Ten Commandments.

Additionally, we have two hymns of the Christian Church retained in honoured use by the Prayer Book. First, the *Veni Creator Spiritus*—‘Come Holy Ghost’—has always been sung at the beginning of the Anointing just as it is appointed in the Prayer Book for all ordinations

and consecrations of bishops, priests, and deacons. The parallel between dedicated, sacral lives marked out by a community for a sacred office is clearly intentional (as also seen in the traditional garments in which the monarch is dressed during the service). Secondly, whilst its location has moved, the *Te Deum* has always featured in the Coronation and for four centuries this has been in the translation used in Morning Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer. Since the emergency changes made for Edward VII, it has been found fitting to place this hymn of praise and acknowledgement of lordship at the conclusion of the service.

Unlike medieval Coronations, held on prominent holy days, this year's Coronation date, 6th May, seems to have been chosen primarily for practical reasons as the best day to proclaim this good news to the world. But the Prayer Book did retain, against much pressure to the contrary, a Christian calendar bearing witness to the history of the Church and lives of her saints. In the Prayer Book, 6th May is honourably marked *St John ante Portam Latinam*. St John's faithfulness in a world of spiritual darkness and his marvellous deliverance at the Latin Gate can speak to our times. And romantically, given His Majesty's known affection for the Eastern Orthodox tradition, in the Julian calendar used by some Orthodox Christians, it will be St George's Day, whose Gregorian place is also kept in the Prayer Book.

At the time of writing, it remains to be seen how faithfully Prayer Book in spirit will be the Coronation allotted our King. However, given the service's roots, the influence of the Prayer Book—and through it, the sincere love of God's holy Word and all that flows from it—will doubtlessly be felt. In individual and corporate prayer, through greater and more confident use of the Litany, by Bible reading and reflection on kingship, responsibility, and the religious commitment of nations, by participation in the thanksgiving and honour due to God, and in myriad other ways, it can and should shape the Church's prayer at this significant time. The Prayer Book has assuredly not lost its power to honour God and to set a Christian light before any English speaker. Let us confidently use the good salt of the Prayer Book in this Coronation year to inspire Christians to love and serve their Lord and their neighbour as we are commanded by 'the only ruler of Princes', who reigns in heaven for evermore.

# The King Shall Rejoice: Music and the Prayer Book at the Coronation

PHILIP CORBETT

I can still remember the thrill of listening to a recording of the 1953 Coronation for the first time. I fell in love with the grandeur and beauty of the music, thrilled at the *Vivats* lustily sung by the Westminster School scholars and was drawn in by the almost hypnotic opening of ‘Zadok the Priest’. But perhaps the moment that thrilled me the most (and here I reveal myself to be something of an eccentric) was the intonation of the *Gloria*, after the reception of Holy Communion and the prayers that follow. The Archbishop says with joy in his voice, and perhaps a slight tremor: ‘Glory be to God on high’ and then, with a great whoosh, we are carried along by the song of angels in the glory of Prayer Book language to that setting written by Stanford for the Coronation in 1911. The glory of the English Choral tradition and the glory of the English Prayer Book brought together in a wonderful way. How utterly glorious and it is to be hoped that the music for this next Coronation will be as glorious and evocative of the splendour of monarchy. In this talk, I will give an overview of how liturgy and music have been intertwined at the Coronation with what I hope will be some interesting first-hand accounts of the service.

So, how will this survey be structured? Well, we need a starting point so we will begin with James I. Elizabeth I had the last Coronation conducted under the Rites of the Roman Catholic Church, the Queen entering the Abbey being censured by the Archbishop of York as the choir sang *Salve Feste Dies*—hail festal day. The service was entirely in Latin and included the Roman Catholic Mass. It is not the last time Latin was used at the Coronation Service: George I spoke no English, so he used Latin oaths as Parliament preferred that to letting him speak in his native German.

So, our survey will begin with James I and come down to the present day. There won’t be time to look at each Coronation in detail, but I hope we can give something of a flavour. I say we will begin with James I,

but very little record survives of the music at his Coronation. This was the first Coronation to use the new Anglican services, but it led to some scandal as Queen Anne refused to receive Holy Communion, claiming she had already once changed denominations from being a Lutheran to being Presbyterian, and she was not going to change again—many rather felt it was because she had Catholic sympathies and that was why she would not receive Holy Communion. It must however have been a great joy to James I that the text on which the sermon was preached was ‘Let every soul be subject to the highest powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be ordained of God’ (Romans 13:1). No detailed description of the music used at the Coronation has survived. The procession on foot between Westminster Hall and Westminster Abbey was probably accompanied by the anthem, ‘O Lord, Grant the King a Long Life’, the text taken from Psalm 61, set to music either by Thomas Weelkes or Thomas Tomkins. The processional anthem inside the Abbey was ‘Behold, Our Lord and Protector’; after the Recognition, ‘Let Thy Hand Be Strengthened’; during the Anointing, *Veni Creator* and ‘Zadok the Priest’; and after the Crowning, ‘Be Strong and of Good Courage’ and ‘The King Shall Rejoice’, both combined into one piece. It is unclear who wrote the music for these, but it is thought Thomas Tomkins and William Byrd were among the composers.

Charles I’s Coronation was something of a disaster. He was crowned on the Prayer Book Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which he thought would be a pretty compliment to pay his sixteen-year-old wife, Henrietta Maria, but many looked upon it as a sign of his sympathies with her Catholic faith. Henrietta Maria would simply watch the procession from an upper room as Charles, dressed in white as there was no purple or red velvet available, went to hear the sermon on the text ‘Be thou faithful and I will give thee a crown of glory’. Again, not much is known about the music at the Coronation of Charles I, although a little more is known about that of his son.

We come now to the Crowning of the ‘Merry Monarch’. The Coronation, like that of Elizabeth I, was accompanied by great rejoicing. People were so glad after the oppression of the Commonwealth that they rejoiced at the return of the King. We are lucky in having Samuel Pepys’ account of the Coronation. In it, Pepys reminds us that people probably didn’t hear much of the service or the music:

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At last comes in the Dean and Prebends of Westminster, with the Bishops (many of them in cloth of gold copes), and after them the Nobility, all in their Parliament robes, which was a most magnificent sight. Then the Duke, and the King with a sceptre (carried by my Lord Sandwich) and sword and moad before him, and the crown too.

The King in his robes, bareheaded, which was very fine. And after all had placed themselves, there was a sermon and the service. And then in the quire at the high altar he passed all the ceremonies of the coronation—which, to my very great grief, I and most in the Abbey could not see. The crown being put upon his head, a great shout begun. And he came forth to the throne, and there passed more ceremonies: as, taking the oath, and having things read to him by the Bishop, and his lords (who put on their caps as soon as the King put on his crown) and Bishops came and kneeled before him.

And three times the King at Arms went to the three open places on the scaffold and proclaimed that if any one could show any reason why Ch. Steward should not be King of England, that now he should come and speak.

And a general pardon also was read by the Lord Chancellor; and meddalls flung up and down by my Lord Cornwallis—of silver, but I could not come by any.

But so great a noise that I could make but little of the musique; and indeed, it was lost to everybody. But I had so great a lust to ... [here the editor omits the fact he wished to go to the lavatory] that I went out a little while before the King had done all his ceremonies, and went round the Abby to Westminster Hall, all the way within rayles, and ten thousand people, with the ground covered with blue cloth—and scaffolds all the way. Into the hall I got, where it was very fine with hangings and scaffolds, one upon another, full of brave ladies. And my wife in one little one, on the right hand.

So we can see that even at Coronations people were badly behaved. They chatted, they ate their food, they got bored by the liturgy, and perhaps didn't pay much attention to the music. Not quite how we expect the Coronation of our own King to be conducted. If people started to get their sandwiches out midway through, people might object!

With James II and Mary of Modena, we are once again thrown into controversy. James was anointed using oil consecrated by a Catholic bishop in France, and he was anointed and crowned in a private Roman Catholic ceremony before submitting himself to the service of the Church of England. This Coronation Service was abbreviated as the King ordered the Archbishop to omit the Communion Service. There is an indication the Archbishop wavers as he writes and crosses out several times ‘if the communion now follows’ in drafts of the order of service. The Bishop of Ely in his sermon tried to indicate that the King needed to care for his Protestant subjects. He reminded the King that the Emperor Constantius Chlorus, though not himself a Christian, had held in honour those Christians who remained true to their religion and treated with scorn those who sought to earn his favour by apostasy. In other words, don’t persecute the Church of England. These doctrinal tensions were mitigated perhaps by the impressive music, with anthems sung by two choirs, the Choir of Westminster Abbey and the Children and Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal. Every anthem had been composed by a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal and every composer was present except for one, Henry Lawes, who had died in 1662. By now, English Church music had reacquired its fine and thriving tradition. This was the first post-Reformation Coronation where the music truly was a highlight:

- At the entrance—‘I Was Glad’—Henry Purcell
- At the Recognition—‘Let Thy Hand Be Strengthened’—John Blow
- Before the Anointing—‘Come Holy Ghost’—William Turner and ‘Zadok the Priest’—Henry Lawes
- After Anointing—‘Behold Lord Our defender’—John Blow
- After the Crowning—‘The King Shall Rejoice’—William Turner
- After the Blessing of the King—*Te Deum*—William Child

Up until the mid-eighteenth century, this is where the *Te Deum* appeared. It was only later that it was moved to the end of the Coronation—and with some controversy, as people tended to think that once the *Te Deum* began, the ceremony had ended, and they started chatting to their neighbours and wandering off. Whereas after the Blessing, the *Te Deum* is a true sign of thanksgiving for the Crowning of the King.



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- At the Homage—‘God Spake Sometime in Visions’—John Blow
- After the Queen’s Crowning—‘My Heart Is Inditing’—William Purcell

The texts and much of the music we so love today were included in the service.

The Coronations of William and Mary, and of Anne, were somewhat ill-fated and not very well executed. Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury, duly crowned and anointed Queen Anne and then, somewhat tactlessly, prayed that she would leave ‘a numerous posterity to rule these kingdoms after you by succession in all ages’. That of course was not to happen. When the great day came, the Queen was too lame and unwieldy to walk. Yeomen of the guard carried her to Westminster Abbey in an open chair under a canopy, with six yards of train trailing behind to be managed by the Duchess of Somerset and other ladies. At the door, Queen Anne disembarked from the chair and walked in. According to Celia Fiennes, who was watching, she wore crimson velvet over a golden robe richly embroidered with jewels and a petticoat with bands of gold and silver lace between rows of diamonds, while more diamonds blazed in her hair. She was crowned Queen of England, Scotland, Ireland and France at about four o’clock in the afternoon by Thomas Tenison, with a specially made crown flaming with additional huge diamonds. The sermon was preached by John Sharp, Archbishop of York, on a text which the Queen herself had chosen: ‘Kings shall be thy nursing fathers and queens thy nursing mothers’ (Isaiah 49:23).

Once Queen Anne had died and the crown had passed to the Hanoverians, we have the anomaly of the Coronation of George I, where the liturgy was spoken in Latin or broken French in order to get him through it. He couldn’t understand English and his bishops couldn’t speak German.

Following the reign of George I, we come really to the moment of blossoming of Coronation music as we know it today with the Coronation of George II. One of George I’s final acts in England before he died was to sign the papers giving George Frederick Handel British citizenship. It was an ‘act for naturalising George Frederick Handel and others’ and thus it was that Handel, a newly created Englishman, could compete on equal terms with any of his rivals for appointment in England. Handel was not only honoured with the task of composing the four anthems

for the Coronation but also, except for ‘Zadok the Priest’, he was given the freedom to choose his own words. A later handwritten comment on a copy of the Coronation anthems, possibly by George III, adds that Handel had ‘but four weeks for doing this wonderful work which seems scarcely credible’. As for the first anthem, ‘Zadok the Priest’, the comment notes it possibly the most ‘perfect of all his compositions’. Not perhaps unnaturally, the Archbishop of Canterbury was somewhat alarmed that an ex-foreigner such as Handel should have been entrusted with the task of choosing biblical texts for such an important event. So he offered to help Handel in choosing them. Handel, however, was adamantly independent: ‘I have read my Bible very well,’ he growled, ‘and shall choose for myself.’ In the event, the four anthems he produced—‘Let thy hand be strengthened’ (for the Recognition), ‘Zadok the Priest’ (for the Anointing), ‘The King Shall Rejoice’ (for the Crowning of the King) and ‘My Heart Is Inditing’ (for the Crowning of the Queen)—are all set to wonderful texts, as follows:

For the Recognition:

Let thy hand be strengthened and thy right hand be exalted.  
Let justice and judgment be the preparation of thy seat!  
Let mercy and truth go before thy face.  
Let justice, judgment, mercy and truth go before thy face.  
Alleluia.

For the Anointing: (chosen by St Dunstan and used at all English Coronations since 973AD)

Zadok, the Priest, and Nathan, the Prophet, anointed Solomon King;  
and all the people rejoic’d, and said:  
God save the King, long live the King, may the King live for ever!  
Amen! Alleluia!

For the Crowning of the King:

The King shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord.  
Exceeding glad shall he be of thy salvation.  
Glory and great worship hast thou laid upon him.

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Thou hast prevented him with the blessings of goodness  
and hast set a crown of pure gold upon his head.  
Alleluia!

For the Crowning of the Queen

My heart is inditing of a good matter:  
I speak of the things which I have made unto the King.  
Kings daughters were among thy honourable women.  
Upon thy right hand did stand the Queen in vesture of gold  
and the King shall have pleasure in thy beauty.  
Kings shall be thy nursing fathers  
and queens thy nursing mothers.

Many musical critics have commented upon the gentle and warm music that Handel wrote for Queen Caroline—‘My Heart Is Inditing’. Caroline was not only a powerful character but a sensitive patron of the arts. Handel’s music was a grateful tribute to her. Before the Coronation, rumours abounded that Handel had written music of great quality and style, and even the rehearsals were mobbed with people trying to hear the new music. The rehearsals were newsworthy. *Parker’s Penny Post* of 4th October, just one week before the Coronation, captures the excitement: ‘Mr Handel has composed the music for the Abbey at the Coronation and the Italian voices and over 100 musicians will perform.’ It goes on to say that it will ‘exceed anything’ composed before. The times of the rehearsals had to be kept private ‘lest the crowd of people should be an obstruction to the performers’. Handel obviously enjoyed the financial freedom to engage a huge orchestra. It was of course ‘Zadok the Priest’ that enraptured all who heard it. It is a blaze of sound. The Coronation of George II and Queen Caroline did have some awkward moments, however, even with parts of the music. The Archbishop of Canterbury made some quite acidic comments in his copy of the order of service, noting that the anthem ‘I Was Glad’ was omitted and no anthem was sung at this point due to the ‘negligence of the choir of Westminster’. Nevertheless, the effect of the ceremony of the second Hanoverian monarch was one of thus far unparalleled magnificence.

At the Coronation of George III, we return to the problem of people not paying attention as William Hickey recorded that, as soon as the sermon

began and for much of the ceremony, 'they took that opportunity to eat their meal when the general clattering of knives, forks, plates and glasses that ensued produced such a ridiculous effect and a universal burst of laughter followed'. Not much paying attention to the music there!

The Coronation of 1761 is the only known Coronation where almost all the music was written by the same composer, William Boyce, who was Master of the King's Music. Boyce believed, probably incorrectly, that he had been commissioned to write new musical settings for all the traditional Coronation texts. Although he completed eight choral pieces for the service, he wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury declining to rewrite the music for the anthem 'Zadok the Priest' because 'it cannot be more properly set than it has already been by Mr Handel'. The Archbishop wrote back to say that the King had agreed, and Handel's setting of 'Zadok' has been used at every Coronation since. Boyce's setting of the entrance anthem, 'I Was Glad', was probably sung in two parts to allow the boys of Westminster School to shout their traditional *Vivat!* acclamation. The combined choirs of Westminster Abbey and the Chapel Royal probably numbered forty-two singers and there was an orchestra of about one hundred and five musicians. And so we get the grandeur and scale of Coronation choirs coming to the fore.

The music at George IV's Coronation was rather influenced by the King's own wishes, although some of it was changed at the final rehearsal only three days before the event. By tradition, the monarch's entry into the Abbey is greeted by the anthem 'I Was Glad'. However, this was deferred until the King had reached the quire and was sung to a new setting by Thomas Attwood. Instead, at the initial entry of the King, the 'Hallelujah Chorus' from Handel's *Messiah* was sung. At that point, the King's Scholars of Westminster School shouted the traditional acclamation: *Vivat Georgius Rex!* This was followed by music from another Handel oratorio, *Saul*, in which the libretto of the aria, 'Already See the Daughters of the Land Advance' was amended, apparently at George's suggestion, to, 'Already See the Monarch of the Lord Advance'. The piece finished with the chorus, 'Welcome, welcome, mighty King!'

The choir and the orchestra were placed in a temporary gallery, which spanned the east end of the Abbey. One news reporter states that there were 'a hundred instruments and twice a hundred voices'. The only choirs officially mentioned are those of the Abbey and the Chapel Royal, but it is likely that the choir of St Paul's Cathedral was also present.

## *The King Shall Rejoice: Music and the Prayer Book at the Coronation*

With the Coronation of William IV and Queen Adelaide, there was a considerable omission of large parts of the ceremonial. William IV couldn't really see the point of a large and over-long Coronation. He disliked traditional ritual and so didn't receive the sword, for example. He also wore a robe over his admiral's uniform instead of the traditional Coronation vestments. The liturgy remained unchanged but the music was simpler, the Litany and the Nicene Creed being spoken rather than sung, and some established elements being omitted altogether.

The opening anthem was restored, Attwood's setting of 'I Was Glad', and both Handel's 'Zadok the Priest' and 'Hallelujah Chorus' were included. William Boyce's *Te Deum* in A was sung again and, rather wonderfully, a new anthem, 'O Lord Grant the King Long Life' was composed by Thomas Attwood and includes the melody of 'Rule Britannia', in reference and deference to King William's naval career.

The music at Queen Victoria's Coronation was again particularly grand: there was an orchestra of eighty players, a choir of one hundred and fifty-seven singers, and various military bands for the processions to and from the Abbey. The quality of the Coronation music did nothing to dispel the lacklustre impression of the Ceremony, however. It was widely criticised in the press, as only one new piece had been written for the occasion, and the choir and orchestra were perceived to have been badly coordinated.

The music was directed by Sir George Smart, who attempted to conduct the musicians and play the organ simultaneously: the result was less than effective.

We can read Queen Victoria's own account:

Then followed all the various things; and last (of those things) the Crown being placed on my head—which was, I must own, a most beautiful impressive moment; all the Peers and Peeresses put on their coronets at the same instant. My excellent Lord Melbourne, who stood very close to me throughout the whole ceremony, was completely overcome at this moment, and very much affected; he gave me such a kind, and I may say fatherly look. The shouts, which were very great, the drums, the trumpets, the firing of the guns, all at the same instant, rendered the spectacle most imposing. The Archbishop had (most awkwardly) put the ring on the wrong finger,

and the consequence was that I had the greatest difficulty to take it off again, which I at last did with great pain. At about half-past four I re-entered my carriage, the Crown on my head, and the Sceptre and Orb in my hands, and we proceeded the same way as we came—the crowds if possible having increased. The enthusiasm, affection, and loyalty were really touching, and I shall remember this day as the Proudest of my life! I came home at a little after six, really not feeling tired. At eight we dined.

Queen Victoria looked back on her Coronation with some joy and thanksgiving. The Bishop of Rochester did not share her impression since he wrote that the music was ‘not all that it was in 1831, it was impressive and it did make us think we were taking part in a religious service but it was not a great pageant’.

As we entered the twentieth century, the music at the Coronations began to take a set and solidified form, although there continued to be new anthems and new texts used by composers. The Coronation of Edward VII was directed by Frederick Bridge and he included new anthems by Stanford, Sullivan and Stainer. And it was for this Coronation that H. H. Parry set the words ‘I was glad’, used at every Coronation since and perhaps as much of a Coronation staple as ‘Zadok the Priest’. The music was performed by a choir of four hundred and thirty, a sixty-five-piece orchestra and ten State trumpeters. The only real musical error was that Bridge misjudged the timing of ‘I was glad’ and had finished the anthem before the King arrived, having to repeat it when the right moment came. Bridge was saved by the organist, who improvised in the interim on the theme.

The Coronation of George V follows a very similar pattern, including works by Tallis and Merbecke. Again, Frederick Bridge was in charge of the music and he wrote his own anthem, ‘Rejoice in the Lord, O Ye Righteous’ for a tenor solo.

The King recorded in his own diary:

The service in the Abbey was most beautiful, but it was a terrible ordeal. I nearly broke down when dear David came to do me homage as it reminded me so much when I did the same thing to dear Papa.

The Coronations of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II contain some changes in the service. During all previous Coronations, the great Litany from the Prayer Book had been sung after the Recognition of the

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monarch. The peers and peeresses recognised their new monarch, and the congregation would then join in the singing or saying of the Litany. The Coronation of George VI and that of Queen Elizabeth II placed that part of the ceremony before the arrival of the monarch, so the Litany became a spiritual preparation for the Coronation. It acknowledged sin and the need for repentance, and stressed the importance of intercession and prayer in preparation for the spiritual event which was to follow. It became, if you like, the prayer of the nation—a prayer for the monarch and all that was to come. Then, when the monarch arrived, we had the singing of ‘I Was Glad’ to the setting by Parry with the *Vivats*. At the Coronation of Elizabeth II, there was another addition, with the introduction of the hymn, ‘All People that on Earth Do Dwell’ at the offertory. It was placed there so that everyone could take part in the singing and the whole congregation could join in. Then there was the setting of the Creed and *Sanctus* taken from Vaughan Williams’ ‘Mass in G Minor’; these were rewritten so that the English text of the Prayer Book could be used. All the way through the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, we have the Rites and propers of the Book of Common Prayer Communion Service.

The Coronation happens right in the midst of the Communion Service. The Archbishop begins the Communion Service, we have the readings and the Creed, and then the Coronation takes place. The Communion itself comes after this, and there is a sense in which the sacred nature of the Coronation, coming in the midst of the Communion Service, places it quite rightly at the heart of all the monarch will do. The monarch is crowned and then makes the act of confession; the monarch receives the absolution and Holy Communion as the first act of a newly anointed and crowned sovereign. There is a great beauty in arranging the Rite in this way, and the words that have been set to music have always added to it. The music has covered some of the liturgical action, but it has also helped us to understand the grandeur and importance of what is going on. The use of music has helped us to understand how the service is developing, and has revealed to us something about the sacred nature of kingship.

On 18th February this year, it was announced from Buckingham Palace that twelve newly commissioned pieces of music will be performed at the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla at Westminster

Abbey. These, we are told, will showcase musical talent from around the country and the Commonwealth. There will be a range of music, blending heritage and tradition along with innovation, all reflecting the King's love of music. The King has played a key role in the commissioning of the music. So we see that, just as music has developed and changed over the years at the Coronation, this tradition is continuing with the new King displaying his own interest and styles. This is nothing new and we will see in the years to come how these different emphasises are put into play. Our own King is carrying on in a long tradition of musical development at Coronations. For many of us, having only seen the 1953 Coronation, we may just want a carbon copy of that service. However, as we have seen in this paper, that has never been the tradition of Coronations and, because of the breadth and variety of tastes, both the nation's musical life and the nation's spiritual life, enshrined in the Book of Common Prayer, have been enhanced.



# The Biblical Foundation of Sacral Kingship and Anointing

WILLIAM GULLIFORD

The English Coronation Rite presents divine sanction of the rule of the monarch, and it does this within a strongly biblical framework. This study seeks to chart aspects of the biblical basis for understanding Christian monarchy, with a particular focus on the Anointing within the Rite. The persistence of the use of Chrism is one of its most fascinating theological features. The Edwardine Reformation of the Church of England might have done away with its use, as happened in the revision of Ordination Rites, and yet despite the reformers' suspicion of symbolism, the Anointing's powerful precedent meant it remained. There is a suggestion from musical historians that Hanoverian Kings of England, unused to Anointing from their own German Accession celebrations, kept it thanks to the magnificence of G. F. Handel's setting to 'Zadok the Priest'. Whatever hold the Anointing has had over successive architects of the Rite over the many changes of the last one thousand years, its persistence merits proper recognition. The renewed symbolism attached to the oil for the 2023 Rite, with its provenance being the Mount of Olives itself, underlines the potent significance the Rite of Anointing has.

## **Biblical References to Anointing**

Anointing in the Old Testament functions to set apart, as especially holy, places and people of extraordinary significance. In Genesis 28:18, the Anointing of the stone set up as a pillar at Bethel is the first example. The parable of Judges 9:7–15, the Anointing of the bramble as King over the trees, suggests the pre-historical understanding of unction in relation to kingship. The Anointings of Saul (1 Sam. 10:1), David (1 Sam. 16:13) and Solomon (1 Kings 1:39–40) are of clear significance, as is the earlier Anointing of the Sanctuary in Exodus 30:25–26 which, as for the Anointing of Kings, has become foundational in the Church for the consecration of sacred space. The Anointing by Elisha, at the injunction by

Elijah, of the Kings Hazael and Jehu (1 Kings 19:15–16) underlines the ubiquity of this Rite, even beyond Israel. David's anger against King Saul's assassin derives from temerity to kill the Lord's anointed (2 Sam. 1:14). The Early Church's respect for the secular (even when inimical) authority reflects the divinely instituted character of secular rule—even when not anointed (Romans 13:4).

## **The Rites of Anointing in the Early Church and their Association with Baptism and Identity**

The Coronation Rites, as Anointings, effectual rebirths and quasi-Ordinations, cling firmly to early Christian baptismal practice, which is a study worthy of further investigation.

Baptismal Rites are the templates for the conferral of a new identity or, better, ontology at Ordination. Consecratory Ordination Rites mirror the development of baptismal orders. The blessing, by unction, of the candidate, enacts the outpouring of the Spirit, which confirms God's action and authoritative gift, in the Rite.

This is the origin of the early medieval understanding of Coronation rituals being sacraments in their own right.

So, in exploring the origin of the Coronation Anointing, we need to understand the character of Baptism as foundational. What is apparent is that Baptism had associated with it the strong symbolism of rebirth, prefaced and often concluded by Anointing. In some later Coronation Rites, the King was anointed with the Oil of Catechumens. In the English Rite, from the outset, and borrowing from France and Byzantium, the most sacred oil of Chrism has been employed.

## **The Oils—Chrism and Catechumens**

The precedent for the use of oil for consecration of sacred items and people is derived from Exodus 29:7–8 and Leviticus 8:10–12. Holy vessels, objects and priests are set apart by the pouring of the oil of Anointing. Exodus 30:25–26 adds the reference to specially prepared oil, for the dedication of the sanctuary itself.

The Church took on this practice by using the most holy oil of Chrism for the sealing of Baptism, the sign of Confirmation, and Ordination, and the consecration of churches and altars.

Chrism is a blend of olive oil and balsam, the latter a particularly expensive and fragrant substance. Other fragrant oils supplement this

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basis, in different traditions. The oil itself is the outward sign of the sacrament it confers; it can only be prepared and consecrated by the Pope or bishops on Maundy Thursday. In Greek Orthodoxy, the preparation of Chrism takes place only once a decade, and up to fifty-two fragrances can be used.

In the later twelfth century, the Roman authorities began to argue that the oil of Chrism was too holy to be used at Coronations and it should be replaced by the oil of Catechumens instead. The use of Chrism persisted in England once the Fourth Recension became established, but there was a lingering unease about what it spelled. In 1302 came the promulgation of Boniface VIII's encyclical *Unam Sanctam*, which claimed papal supremacy above secular rule.

By the tenth century AD, the sacramental sign for which the King stands is not only as ruler of their nation and King of their people. Like their Israelite predecessors, the King becomes the embodiment of the people. In the sacring, the sacramental Rite binds the monarch to their nation and dominions, so that they are indistinguishable from them. This then borrows from the ancient precedent upon which it is based. Pre-Christian Saxon sensibility understood kingship in these terms too.

Two distinctively Christian elements are added. First, the sovereign is consecrated and set apart in a way which is particular, and reminiscent of Ordination. Beyond that still, and in conformity with essential Christian doctrine, is that Baptism speaks of Christian destiny as much as of immediate salvation. The dying and rising of the baptismal candidate with and in Christ is the outset of the journey of faith. This trajectory is not limited to the span of the candidate's earthly existence. Dying and rising with Christ patterns not just discipleship until death. The Christian promise of resurrection is that we are bound to Our Lord not just in dying but in His rising too. That rising is the expectation of the Last Day; it is not simply an earthly resurrection but a heavenly movement towards the right hand of God—in Christ.

The King's Anointing is the moment of rebirth, the invisible and sacramental truth. The Coronation is the visible, shining beginning of ascension, as the natural outworking of resurrection. The ascension of the monarch to their higher throne, after the Crowning, is the culmination of the sacring process. It might need to be underlined at this point that, following the Coronation, in the English Rite, the King is led to a higher

throne from the St Edward's Chair. In the fifteenth century, the height of the higher throne could be considerably higher than more recent services. Whatever its height, that higher throne sits at the centre of the Coronation theatre, between the transepts of Westminster Abbey. It might not push the bounds too far to say this is a realised eschatology.

The Coronation Rite plays out the eschatological destiny of the baptised.

### **Miscellanea Relating to Anointing**

It has been the custom of most Coronations in modern times to consecrate the oil on the day of the Coronation either on the High Altar or at St Edward's Shrine. The oils used in a blend with olive oil for the Chrism for Queen Victoria were provided by her Apothecary Squire and Co., and the bottles of lavender and rosemary oil are still held.

The oil used for King Edward VII was also used for King George V and comprised sesame oil, essence of roses, orange blossom, jasmine, cinnamon, and flowers of benzoin, with musk, civet and ambergris. The Dean of Westminster made provision for the oil to be consecrated by one of the canons if a bishop, which happened in 1902, when Canon James Welldon, a former Bishop of Calcutta, had this special privilege.<sup>1</sup>

The oil used in 2023 was from olives harvested on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem, which is part of the Garden of Gethsemane. The link with Our Lord's Passion is of singular character. In the same tranquil garden are buried, in the Russian Monastery of St Mary Magdalene, two Orthodox religious: St Elizabeth of Russia, granddaughter of Queen Victoria and sister of the last Tsarina of Russia, and Elizabeth's niece and goddaughter, Princess Alice of Battenburg and Greece, our King's grandmother. Both women were brave and remarkable and are remembered for their courage. Their reward is to rest in a place of the greatest sanctity. The many associations, biblical and personal, for King Charles III through the use of this particular oil at his sacring must have added to the solemnity of his Anointing and made important connections with Christian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land.

1 Westminster Abbey Muniments. Peter Hinchliff adds, 'Whether the blessing conferred by a former headmaster of Harrow in any way compared with that of the miraculous oil given to St Thomas of Canterbury is not a matter for this article.' See Peter Hinchliff, 'Frederick Temple, Randall Davidson and the Coronation of Edward VII', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (JEH 48 (1)), 1997, p. 98.

## **The Biblical Symbolism of the Crown Itself**

The crown as an object is an outward and material sign of the inner truth of Anointing. The crown symbolises and envelops the indelible balm. The diadem manifests a divine glory inherent in the sacring.

The crown's origins are twofold and almost intimately bound together: they are at once the headdress of the High Priest and the diadem of kingly rule. The kingly diadem, echoed in Our Lord's crown of thorns, may itself be an allusion to Aaron's turban. It is also one of the Passion's echoes of the ritual humiliation of the priestly representative of the people in the Atonement Rites. We must remember that in the days before the High Priest played this part, the King had this liturgical role of atoning persona.

We hear also of the crowns of the elders and saints in Revelation who are amongst those who have been through the great tribulation—the means by which they have attained their crowns.

## **Conclusion**

Through Anointing, the King becomes one with his people, whom he will serve. The allusions to priestly service and the use of the Chrism have persisted for a thousand years, despite deep-seated Protestant sensibilities. The King becomes *persona mixta*. His high calling speaks of self-loss, sacrifice and death. The sequence of robes worn, red, linen, gold upon gold, imperial purple, tell of human destiny in Christ.

It is not surprising that in medieval England it was thought that anointed kings could heal skin diseases. It is not surprising, either, that Richard II thought that the Holy Oil would protect him from harm in battle. Even today, the power and popularity of the British monarchy can be linked to the abiding memory of the 1953 Rite of Coronation, and the mystical aura it created around the late Queen.

This sacring is the heralding of a new dawn, with all the hope and joy that a royal Accession spells. It speaks through symbols and actions which have resonances stretching back to ancient Israel and beyond, into the mists of prehistory. It is an inescapably and unalterably Christian Rite, but one with a universal and not exclusively Christian significance. It embodies the role of the sacred at the heart of the British state and national life, and long may it continue to do so.

# Bells and the Coronation

RICHARD BIMSON

Sir John Betjeman wrote that ‘Silent church towers are hearts which do not beat’. It would be difficult to deny that the sound of church bells is part of the English soundscape; bells call the faithful to worship, mark in sombre tones moments of sadness, and ring out in joy at times of joy and celebration.

Bells have been part of Christian worship since the early missionaries carried small hand bells, with these being adopted by Paulinus, Bishop of Nola in Campania (hence the Italian word *campana*, whence campanology for the study of bells). Bede notes, in his *History of the English Church and People* at the time of St Hilda’s death, the ‘well-known note of the bell that used to wake them and call them to prayer when any of the sisters had died’. In England, St Dunstan, the patron saint of bellfounders, is known to have been a skilled metal worker and cast bells for many churches in the late tenth century. It was of course Dunstan who was instrumental in the Coronation Rite of Edgar in 973. It is the technological advances in bell hanging and in particular the development of the wheel, from a quarter wheel to a full wheel in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which led to the particular English system of ringing, termed full circle ringing. In this way, bells can be controlled with a great deal of accuracy, which in turn has led to the development of change ringing, a system to allow the bells to ring in pre-determined patterns, now so familiar to the English ear.

Does this, however, mean that they should be the subject of an article for the Prayer Book Society’s journal *Faith & Worship* in its Coronation issue? The author would, of course, answer this question in the affirmative, but, he hopes, with justifiable good reason. At the Reformation, the use of bells was retained within the Church of England to announce church services. This is enjoined in the direction in ‘The Services of the Church’ in the preparatory introductory material in the Book of Common Prayer that the Curate who is to say daily Morning and Evening Prayer ‘... shall

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cause a Bell to be tolled thereunto a convenient time before he begin that the people may come to hear God's Word, and to pray with him'. This is the important but sole injunction in relation to bell ringing to be found in the Book of Common Prayer. However, the study of liturgy is not only to focus on the written text and rubrics. The worship of God is not fully encapsulated in the text itself, which is only the starting point:

Liturgy is a complex phenomenon. It encompasses text and language, music, gesture and sets of ethnographic aspects related to the performers, to time and place, and to the very progression of the performance. Liturgy proceeds through highly ritualised forms of linking between the above-mentioned aspects. It is generally set inside or accompanied by a strong historical consciousness as well as by outspoken authority and obedience. A truly comprehensive understanding of liturgy imposes an analysis of its several components but also an integrative perspective.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst, therefore, bells do not form a central part of the Coronation Rite in and of themselves, their presence should be noted and explored.

To understand the ringing which takes place on Coronation Day itself, it will be useful to consider the development of ringing for royal events more generally, which really begins in a significant way in the reign of Elizabeth I. Whilst one should not entirely discount factors such as the amount of documentary evidence that survives in churchwardens' accounts, and also the technical advances in bell hanging during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there are more significant factors to explain why ringing became more widespread during that reign.

The main annual celebration which saw bells rung was not the Coronation and its anniversary, but rather Elizabeth I's Accession on the 17th November. Sir Roy Strong points to this being a celebration of Protestantism, 'a holidaye which passed all the popes holidayes', as one speech put it.<sup>2</sup> The earliest surviving records of ringing for the anniversary of the Accession are in 1564 at St Peter Westcheap and

1 F. Alvarez-Pereyre, 'Liturgy and the Concepts of "Text" and "Music"' in *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem*, 17, 2006 (pp. 179–190), p. 179.

2 R. C. Strong, 'The popular celebration of the Accession Day of Queen Elizabeth I' in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 21, No. 1/2, Jan–Jun, 1958 (pp. 86–103), cited p. 87.

St Botolph Aldersgate, and at Lambeth in 1567.<sup>3</sup> Instances of ringing increase greatly throughout the 1570s and are an established feature by the end of Elizabeth's reign.<sup>4</sup> Strong attributes the rise of ringing at this point in Elizabeth's reign due to the unrest following the Rising of the North in 1569. He charts the developments of official liturgies (through which '... was disseminated the official Accession Day propaganda'),<sup>5</sup> sermons and poetry throughout the 1570s and beyond, all of which helped give rise to this national celebration, one in which bell ringing was 'the most essential feature of the annual triumph'.<sup>6</sup> This is what Cressy terms the 'vocabulary of celebration' and Ben Johnson 'the poetry of steeples', bells being particularly appropriate 'instruments of celebration' as it was difficult to escape their sound.<sup>7</sup>

However, both Strong and Cressy do not mention another factor in the spread of ringing for Elizabeth's Accession. The calendrical revisions to the Book of Common Prayer in 1561 included the addition of the Queen's Accession as a Red Letter Day, by the inclusion of the words 'Init. Reg. Elizabeth'.<sup>8</sup> The addition to the Kalendar predates the earliest recorded ringing for the day. However, its inclusion gave sanction to these celebrations, although no official instructions were issued. This sanction was magnified by the fact that it was marked as a Red Letter Day, in contrast to the addition of the Black Letter saints. It is argued that, whilst Strong and Cressy were correct in their narrative that ringing for the Accession formed initially spontaneous local initiatives, this should nevertheless be viewed within the context of official approbation.<sup>9</sup> However, official sanction for the ringing of the bells was probably muted, lest it be seen that encouragement was being given to superstitious ringing or elevating the status of Elizabeth I to one approaching that of a saint.<sup>10</sup> The tradition of printing the monarch's Accession in the Kalendar

3 N. Mears and P. Williamson, 'The "holy days" of Queen Elizabeth I' in *History*, 105, 2020, pp. 201–22, accessed via Durham Research Online, <https://dro.dur.ac.uk/30073/1/30073.pdf?DDC115+DDD17+DDO65+kswl88>, to which page references here refer, p. 5.

4 For a full discussion of instances see, in addition to Strong, D. Cressy, *Bonfire and Bells*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989, Chapter 4 'Crownation Day and the Royal Honour', pp. 50–66.

5 R. C. Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

6 *Ibid.* p. 88.

7 D. Cressy, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–71.

8 N. Mears and P. Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

9 *Ibid.* pp. 16–17.

10 *Ibid.* pp. 25–26. The date of the Queen's Accession, 17th November, St Hugh's Day, had already led to an ambiguity as to why bells were being rung, and parochial records vary in the reason for which the ringing was recorded. See *infra* pp. 14–17.



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continued in both the reigns of James I and Charles I.<sup>11</sup> Ringing for the anniversary of the Accession was specifically questioned in two sets of episcopal visitations, those of Montagu for Norwich in 1638 and those of Wren in Ely 1638–9.<sup>12</sup> The practice of printing the date was discontinued in the reign of Charles II, undoubtedly because both the *de facto* date, 30th January, and the *de jure* date, 29th May, of the Accession had special services of commemoration for Charles I and the Restoration respectively. Nevertheless, by this point the ringing of bells for royal occasions, particularly the anniversary of Accession Day, had become a well-established tradition and this cessation of printing did not lessen the number of occurrences of ringing recorded for royal occasions and anniversaries.

In Cambridge,<sup>13</sup> one can also see a political dimension to ringing for the royal anniversaries. The Coronations of both Charles II and James II took place on St George's Day. In the former, ringing on that day was always described as being for the Coronation, but in the latter, it was often described specifically as being for St George's Day. This change in description is attributable to James II's unpopularity in Cambridge and ringing rarely took place for the Accession in that reign, compared to forty-nine times in the preceding one. The balance swung in favour of Coronation Day ringing in the reign of William and Mary, with fifty-seven instances of ringing, compared to only five for the Accession. Queen Anne's reign saw sixty-four occasions when churches in Cambridge rang for her Coronation, and fifty-three for her Accession. Interestingly, ringing commemorating these dates continued into the reign of George I, but ringers also rang for the corresponding dates for George I. At Great St Mary's, there was only ringing for George I, probably because significant payments came from the Corporation and the university, who would not wish to be seen as undermining the reigning monarch. Ringing continued for the remaining Hanoverians in equal measure for the Accession and the Coronation anniversaries, and

11 See, for example, copies of the Book of Common Prayer from the beginning and end of both reigns, which include Accession Day in the Kalendar; James I (24th March): 1604, STC 16328.5 and 1625, STC 16365, and Charles I (27th March): 1626 STC 16367 and 1640 STC 16421.5.

12 K. Fincham (ed.), *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Early Stuart Church: II*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998, pp. 207 and 153.

13 I am grateful to Gareth Davies for his lengthy correspondence and observations in particular on ringing in Cambridge, and also to other members of the Bell Historians mailing list for their insights into churchwardens' accounts from their own research. Where records are uncited in this article, their input has been the source.

throughout the reign of Victoria. During Queen Victoria's reign, with the end of the compulsory church rates in 1858, payment passed from the churchwardens, in beer, to the Corporation and university, in cash.

Paid ringing has all but disappeared now, but still occurs in Oxford, where the Oxford Society rings at several colleges and at Carfax for both the anniversary of the Accession and the Coronation of the reigning monarch; the same anniversaries are also counted amongst the 'Ringing Days' at Westminster Abbey. It is only natural that Coronation Day should be marked at the Abbey, where the actual solemnities occur and in which the bells play their own part.

There are two ways in which bells play, or have played, a role within the Coronation ceremonies. There is of course the ringing of the church bells in the tower, both at Westminster Abbey itself, and wider abroad throughout the country. However, in addition to this, there have historically been other bells at the Coronation, which have played a quasi-liturgical role, and it is these which will be treated first.

The inventory of the pre-Commonwealth regalia in 1649 listed St Edward's Crown as 'King Alfreds Crowne of gould wyerworke sett with slight stones, and 2 little bells'.<sup>14</sup> These bells must therefore have tinkled as the monarch moved whilst wearing it. The other use of small bells is found in the canopy carried over the monarch. This canopy was used in the formal procession from Westminster Hall to Westminster Abbey and was carried by the Barons of the Cinque Ports. The presence of bells attached to the canopy, and the staves carrying it, is well attested. Samuel Pepys, in his diary, notes about the Coronation of Charles II: 'The King came in with his crown on and his sceptre in his hand, under a canopy borne by six silver staves carried by Barons of the Cinque Ports, and little bells at every end.' The right to carry the canopy was a long-established one; the Barons of the Cinque Ports made their claim for the Coronation of George III in this manner:

At the Coronation of every King and Queen of England, and Queen Consort, to support, upon four silver staves, a canopy of gold or purple silk, having four corners, and at each corner a silver bell, gilt with gold; four of such Barons to be appointed to each stave, and to have and take the said canopy staves, and bells, as their fees for the

<sup>14</sup> L. G. W. Legg, *English Coronation Records*, Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd, 1901, p. 274.

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said services; and also to dine, on the day of the Coronation, at a table on the King's right hand, at his palace at Westminster, and likewise to have cloth for vestments at His Majesty's expence.<sup>15</sup>

That right was well established by 1276<sup>16</sup> and had most latterly been confirmed in the final charter granted to the Cinque Ports by Charles II.<sup>17</sup> The presence of these bells on the staves of the canopies is also recorded in the *Liber Regalis*.<sup>18</sup> There are still examples of these bells,<sup>19</sup> one of which was sold at auction earlier in 2023. Again, it is clear that the bells must have rung as the procession moved forward. Both these uses of bells are reminiscent of the only biblical reference to them, in Exodus 28, where bells were sewn around the base of the Aaronic robe so 'his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out' (v.35). Thus, this use of bells is used to signify to the people the presence of the priestly minister carrying out his priestly duties. In like manner, these bells on both the canopy and the crown would have signalled the presence of the monarch fulfilling his monarchical ministry.

The more general use of bells, however, does not find a direct biblical authority. It is instead the use of trumpets in Numbers 10 to signal an assembly, as an alarm before battle and at the times of solemn feasts that has been seen as a prefiguring of the use of bells as a means of calling the faithful to worship. Whilst clearly not a direct parallel, the use of a loud metal instrument as a signal is, nonetheless, suitably analogous to bear comparison and serves as a good model. Bells were historically used to sound the alarm, as so aptly illustrated in Dorothy L. Sayers' *The Nine Tailors*, where also the close of the old year was marked by the ringing of the Nine Tailors (a form of the passing bell), followed by a long-length peal lasting nine hours to welcome the New Year.<sup>20</sup> Bells are not solely used

15 T. Mantel, *Coronation Ceremonies and Customs relative to the Barons of Cinque Ports as Supporters of the Coronation*, Dover, 1820, p. 13.

16 *Ibid.*, p.v.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 55.

18 L. G. W. Legg, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

19 For a pictorial record of an example, see Figure 130 in H. H. Mulliner, *The Decorative Arts of England 1660–1780*, London: B. T. Batsford, 1923, which shows an inscribed example from the Coronation of George II.

20 Lord Peter Wimsey's early bell ringing career can itself be linked, whimsically, to this year's Coronation, as the story informs us that, as a boy, he rang at Duke's Denver, at the church of St John *ad (sic) Portam Latinam*, on whose feast day in the Kalendar of the Book of Common Prayer (6th May) the Coronation took place.

to call the faithful to worship, but also for other significant purposes, of which these are just examples. Thus it is also with bell ringing at the Coronation; bells are not only rung before the service, but during and after it at Westminster Abbey, and across the country, too, in celebration.

It cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty which Coronation first featured bells. However, it is clear that ringing at the Abbey dates from an early period. A Patent Roll dated 6th March 1255 records a grant from Henry III to the Brethren of the Guild of Westminster 'who are appointed to ring the great bells', who were 'to enjoy all privileges and free customs they have enjoyed from the time of Edward the Confessor',<sup>21</sup> although this phrase is likely to be a convenient phrase similar to 'from time immemorial' to suggest a long period of time.<sup>22</sup> Pitstow, who was Secretary of the Abbey Ringers, tantalisingly notes, 'Nothing more is known of the original bells beyond a reference to the fact that they were rung for coronations and funerals'<sup>23</sup> and Canon Jocelyn Perkins, Canon Sacrist of Westminster, makes a similar oblique reference in his history of the Abbey's bells.<sup>24</sup> Both Cook and Perkins cite sixteenth-century sources which refer, without definite sources, to the ringing of the Abbey bells for Coronations.<sup>25</sup> It seems that, whilst there is no definite reference to the Abbey bells being for Coronations at this early date,<sup>26</sup> the bells must have been rung. Evidence is equally scant for the early modern period. The ringing of the Abbey bells is not included in any of the official reports of the *London Gazette* or in newspaper reports. These do frequently mention ringing in London on Coronation Day; for example, at Queen Anne's Coronation, the evening ended with 'Bonfires, Ringing of Bells and all possible Demonstrations of Joy and Satisfaction',<sup>27</sup> but no specific mention is made of ringing at the Abbey.

It is therefore not until the twentieth century that one can speak with any certainty of what actually happened at Westminster Abbey on Coronation Day. The bells were rung for all four Coronations in the last

21 H. N. Pitstow, *A Short History of the Bells and Belfries of Westminster Abbey*, c.1967, p. 3.

22 W.T. Cook, *Westminster Abbey Bells and Ringers*, 1984, p. 2.

23 H. N. Pitstow, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

24 J. Perkins, *The Organs and Bells of Westminster Abbey*, London: Novello & Co Ltd, 1937, p. 91.

25 W.T. Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 3 records John Stow's observations in his *Survey of London* (1598) and J. Perkins, *op. cit.*, p. 85, cites John Norden's observations in his *Speculum Britannie* (1593) on the external bell tower, the Clochard, 'wherein was a bell of wonderful bigness... rung only at Coronations'.

26 The author has been unable to consult the archives at Westminster Abbey, which might reveal more definite evidence.

27 *Post Boy*, 23rd April, 1702–25th April, 1702.

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century. Ringing was severely restricted at Westminster Abbey in the first two decades of the last century and the bells were only rung four times, including at both Coronations. Sir F. Dixon Hartland (MP for Uxbridge) offered to pay for the complete refurbishment of the bells for the 1902 Coronation, only for the plans to be stopped by the Abbey's surveyor, due to the opinion that the tower would not withstand the ringing of the bells.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the bells were rung, including at the moment of the Crowning when 'the trumpets sounded triumphant notes, the guns gave forth their distant roar, and the bells clanged out their welcome'.<sup>29</sup> The ringers were presented with Coronation Medals.<sup>30</sup>

The state of the Abbey bells was still a cause for concern at the Coronation in 1911. The Office of Works commissioned an expert, W. Pollard Digby, to make a report on the feasibility of ringing the bells for the Coronation based on a visit he made to the Abbey on 20th April to measure the vibrations whilst the bells were being rung (the principal architect had already reported that the bell frame had been strengthened). Digby gave a lengthy report of that visit, with comparisons of measurements taken at both Worcester Cathedral and St Aldate's, Oxford, and a second report after a subsequent visit to the Abbey practice in early May. Finally, following a meeting with Sir Schomberg McDonnell, Secretary to the Office of Works, he made an unequivocal summary that the tower movement was normal and the bells were safe to ring.<sup>31</sup> Ringing on the day was shared with St Margaret's, Westminster, to some extent probably due to the state of the bells: 'We and our near neighbours at the Abbey had to share the ringing... We started at 9 o'clock, and, after a few changes, they took it up, and so on throughout the day.'<sup>32</sup> Ringing occurred both before and after the service, but the pivotal moment for Coronation ringing is the moment of the Crowning:

The peal of six in the grey old Abbey itself clashed out the signal of the crowning of the king and the bells of St. Margaret's, under the shadow of the ancient pile, took up the chorus with brazen voices. They were rung at other periods as well, but the most important part

28 Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

29 'The Sacring of Edward VII And Alexandra' in *The Church Times*, 15th August, 1902, p. 183.

30 Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

31 The National Archives of the UK (TNA): WORK/21/24/9.

32 J. A. Trollope, 'The Coronation. Ringers' View from St. Margaret's, Westminster' in *The Ringing World*, 30th June, 1911, p. 248.

they played was in helping to announce, to the waiting multitude outside, that the supreme act of the solemn service within the Minster walls had been accomplished.<sup>33</sup>

The term 'clashed out' is not a reflection on poor quality ringing, but rather a description of the bells firing, a deliberate method of causing all the bells to ring at once to simulate a volley of shots.<sup>34</sup> At the moment of the Crowning itself, the bells joyfully echo to the outside world the 'loud and repeated shouts' of the people in the Abbey of 'God Save the King'.

The poor state of the bells was rectified by the restoration and augmentation to eight bells in 1919, so that the concerns which had arisen for the previous two Coronations had disappeared by the Coronation of George VI in 1937. This meant that, at the conclusion of the Coronation, a full peal of 5040 Stedman Triples was rung in three hours and nineteen minutes.<sup>35</sup> Before the service, the bells of St Margaret's, Westminster were rung, witnessed for the first time by listeners throughout the world 'over the ether'; the same listeners also heard the bells of the Abbey firing at the moment of the King's Coronation.<sup>36</sup>

The first bells heard from Westminster Abbey in 1953, at 9.15, were the two chiming bells from the reign of the first Queen Elizabeth, this having been ordered by the Dean in recognition of their antiquity and the Elizabethan reference.<sup>37</sup> Again, the bells of St Margaret's, Westminster rang before the ceremony, which was now claimed as a 'right... reserved to St Margaret's, Westminster',<sup>38</sup> the bells of the Abbey fired at the moment of Coronation, and a full peal was attempted at the conclusion of the ceremony. The peal was unfortunately unsuccessful due to an ominous banging after three hours, which turned out to be nothing more than a window left open by an electrician,<sup>39</sup> but an attempt, as in 1937, of Stedman Triples was successful on Friday, 5th June.<sup>40</sup>

33 'Coronation Bells' in *The Ringing World*, 30th June, 1911, p. 234.

34 The ringers had had a long wait for their firing, having arrived at the Abbey early in the morning; their wait was, however, eased by the presence of a large hamper of food provided by Canon Jocelyn Perkins. 'Abbey Ringers' part in Coronation Ceremony' in *The Ringing World*, 27th February, 1953, being a reprint of an article from the *Manchester Guardian*, which included recollections of 1937.

35 'Coronation Peals' in *The Ringing World*, 21st May, 1937, p. 326.

36 'Coronation Joy Bells' in *The Ringing World*, 21st May, 1937, p. 336.

37 'June 2nd 1953' in *The Ringing World*, 29th May, 1953, p. 338.

38 'In the Belfries on Coronation Day' in *The Ringing World*, 19th June, 1953, p. 395.

39 'Belfry Gossip' in *The Ringing World*, 12th June, 1953, p. 376.

40 'Peals Rung in Honour of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II' in *The Ringing World*, 26th June, 1953, p. 409.

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King Charles III's Coronation saw the Abbey bells ringing before the service, at the moment of the Crowning (this time to rounds rather than being fired), and again at the end of the service to a full peal of 5040 Cambridge Surprise Royal.<sup>41</sup> No ringing was recorded for Coronation Day at St Margaret's, Westminster. Significantly, the role of the bells during the service was acknowledged in the rubrics, which stated that 'The bells of the Abbey are rung'. This is the first official reference to bells in the Coronation Rite, which previously stated, in slightly more poetic tones, that '... the trumpets shall sound, and by a signal given, the great guns at the Tower shall be shot off'.

The focus of the Coronation is of course centred on Westminster. However, just as celebrations for Coronations are a nationwide phenomenon, so also bells across the whole country play their part in the celebration of them. It is known that the bells of St Thomas, Bristol rang on the day of the Coronation of Queen Mary in 1553.<sup>42</sup> The ringers of St Michael, Cornhill, rang for both the Accession and Coronation of Mary I and for Elizabeth I, and at St Martin's in the Fields, a payment is recorded 'to the ringers to drincke the Coronation daye... xij d' for the Coronation of James I in 1603. Newspaper accounts give some idea of the importance of bells on Coronation Day. Almost countless records could be cited as to the part which bells play in the festivities. In Oxford, for example, in 1661, 'Bells, Volleys of shot, Bonfires, Musick, Dancing and all the usual ways of expressing so great a joy, continued three days'.<sup>43</sup> In 1689, it was not only the bells of England that rang, as the *London Gazette* reported that, at the Hague, it was ordered that bells be rung through all the 'United Provinces on the day of the Coronation of their Majesties the King and Queen of England'.<sup>44</sup> In 1702, ringing began in Portsmouth at 2a.m. and 'so held all day'.<sup>45</sup> George III's Coronation was marked even earlier in Nottingham, according to the *Leicester and Nottingham Journal*, with ringing beginning 'so early as 1 in the morning, to the great joy of all lovers of ringing'; in Worcester, *Berrow's Worcester Journal* reported All Saints rang 1162 changes, corresponding to the King's age in weeks; and the peals listed in the *Leeds Intelligencer* marked that the 'Rejoicing in each Place exceeded any Thing known in the Memory of the eldest Man living'<sup>46</sup>.

41 J. Hughes-D'Aeth, 'A military operation' in *The Ringing World*, 12th/19th May, 2023, pp. 425–6.

42 'Coronation Bells' in *The Ringing World*, 5th May, 1937, p. 293.

43 *Mercurius Publicus*, 2nd May–9th May, 1661.

44 *London Gazette*, 8th April–11th April, 1689.

45 *London Gazette*, 27th April–30th April, 1702.

46 All cited in C. Wratten (Comp.), *Order and Disorder in the Eighteenth Century: Newspaper Extracts About Church Bells and Bellringing*, CCCBR, 2010, p. 118.

With the advent of journals dedicated to bell ringing at the end of the nineteenth century, most notably *Bell News* and its later brief rival and then successor *The Ringing World*, there is a consolidated source for ringing for the Coronations. All four Coronations of the twentieth century saw pages of peal and quarter peal reports, and some (more limited) reports of shorter pieces of ringing recorded. This reflects the focus at the time to record in detail longer, more substantial performances, but it is clear that although the details of what was rung in towers throughout the country was not recorded, they were being rung on a countrywide scale. Ringers sought advice about when they should ring, plans were made by local ringing associations, and leading articles in *The Ringing World* told in eulogistic tones about the part the bells had played. Reports of ringing were not only limited to these shores but included those of the Empire and latterly the Commonwealth.

The emphasis in the early twenty-first century has shifted to recording the details of all pieces of ringing, however long or short, so that any village church can record its ringing. The Coronation of King Charles III required an entirely separate supplement to be produced by *The Ringing World*, which ran to ninety pages, covering ringing not only within the United Kingdom but also in the Crown Dependencies, Commonwealth, Europe and even Japan (a single bell tolled in a bell foundry). In the digital age, eleven performances were recorded as being rung on simulated bells over the internet (a phenomenon of the COVID-19 pandemic, which still continues). In total, there are currently over 5,100 performances linked to the Coronation on *The Ringing World's* companion website, *BellBoard*; never has there been such a complete record of ringing for a Coronation.

As a journal about bell ringing, for bellringers, it also records the stories behind those records. As has been seen in earlier centuries, ringing often began in the early hours of the morning and this continued in the twentieth century: the ringers of St Nicholas, Guildford commenced their ringing at 3.45a.m. in 1911,<sup>47</sup> and the parish of Wymeswold, Leicestershire cannot have been alone in 1953 when its bells rang at 7.30a.m. for early morning service at 8a.m. The age of ringers is often a source of pride and comment. *Bell News* in 1902, for example, reported that a Peterborough ringer had rung for the birthday of Princess Victoria

47 'Coronation Bells' in *The Ringing World*, 30th June, 1911, p. 234.



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in 1837 and her Coronation in 1838,<sup>48</sup> only to be outdone a fortnight later by a correspondent who had rung for the Coronation of William IV.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, in 2023 over a hundred ringers were recorded as ringing for both the Coronations of Queen Elizabeth II and King Charles III. It is not only in the ringing of church bells that ringers participate in the wider festivities of a Coronation. Rings of bells are often restored or augmented for Coronations, including St Margaret's, Westminster for the Coronation, 'so there will be a complete ring of ten bells to ring at His Majesty's Coronation.'<sup>50</sup> Even in the area of commemorative goods, bellringers do not stint; in 2023 over six thousand Coronation ringing pin badges have been sold and in 1953 over a thousand commemorative miniature bells were produced by the Croydon bell foundry of Gillet and Johnston.

The use of bells at the Coronation and its related festivities, not only in Westminster and London as part of the official proceedings but across the country and beyond, has a long tradition. They play a significant part within the Coronation Rite as they are used to signal to the outside world the moment of Crowning. The continued use of bells after the Reformation is enjoined, in simple terms, in the Book of Common Prayer, and has been augmented by the developments of full circle ringing to become a truly English tradition. That tradition, although not exclusive to the Anglican church, let alone those churches which adhere to the liturgies contained in the Book of Common Prayer, is nonetheless part of the wider Anglican patrimony. Their use, not only for calling the faithful to worship but for marking moments of solemnity and celebration, points to the wider ministry of the Church in the life of local communities and the nation. As Sir John Betjeman wrote in 1977 for the late Queen's Silver Jubilee:

Hers the grace the Church has prayed for,  
Ours the joy that she is here.  
Let the bells do what they're made for!  
Ring our thanks both loud and clear.

48 'A Veteran Bell-ringer', *Bell News*, 16th August, 1902, p. 219.

49 *Bell News*, 30th August, 1902, p. 244.

50 *Lloyds Evening Post and Chronicle*, 23rd February–25th February, 1761, cited in J. Eisel (Comp.), *Order and Disorder in the Eighteenth Century: A Supplement: Further Newspaper Extracts About Church Bells and Bellringing*, CCCBR, 2011, p. 30.

