



BRITISH CORONATIONS

A HISTORY

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[The Coronation of Elizabeth II, 1953](#)

‘the essential meaning shines out clearly... the Queen is consecrated to be God’s “anointed servant”... The *Anointing* is the spiritual climax’
Geoffrey Fisher,
Archbishop of Canterbury

‘no matter how greatly outward circumstances have changed, the girding with the Sword, the clothing with the Royal Robe, the presentation of the Orb with the Cross, the Ring, and the two Sceptres – all these, with the culminating act of Coronation, are charged with spiritual meaning and intent which have remained constant for the past twelve hundred years’

Alan Don, Dean of Westminster, 1953



Five coronations in 50 years:

Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, 24 June 1509

Anne Boleyn, 1 June 1533

Edward VI, 20 February 1547

Mary I, 1 October 1553

Elizabeth I, 15 January 1559





Images from the 14th-century *Liber Regalis*,
Westminster Abbey Muniments Room



Hic est ordo scdm quem rex debet
coronari iuxta et iungi. In
primis preparentur pulpiti
aliquantulum ammens inter
magnum altare et chorum eccle
siam p[er]i w[est]monasterii. videlicet congrui
et omni parte quatuor columpnis principa
libus infra arcum eccle p[ro]bat. ad annis qui
tem pulpiti ascensum fiant gradus de medio
chori a parte occidentali p[er] quos princeps co
ronandus in aduentu suo mansurus p[er]
chori medii dictum pulpiti possit ascende
re etiam fiant alii gradus a parte orientali
p[er] quos princeps prefatus descendet possit
versus manus altare ibidem ante gradus
dicti altaris sacrosct vnctiois ac sic coro
nandus sollempnia a metropolitano suc
c[ess]o ipm consecratur debita cum deuotione
accepturus. In medio vero dicti pulpiti erit
preparatus thronus eccelsus ut in eo prin
ceps iudens clare ad omnib[us] possit intuen
dngere eum et coronare reges anglie atq[ue] re
gias et antiqua consuetudine et hactenus



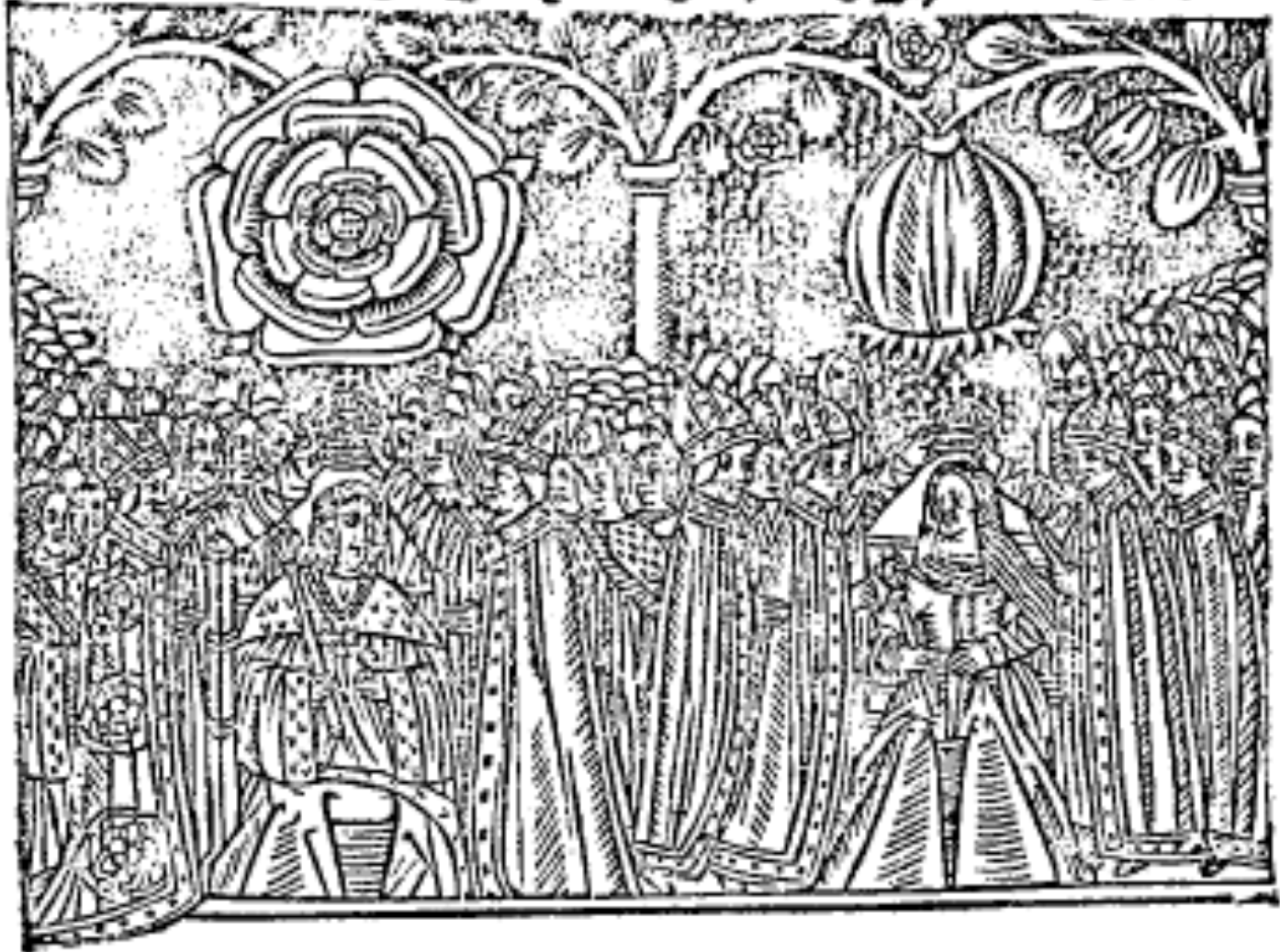
Coronations of Henry III (1216, 1220) and of Henry IV (1399)



Mary I and Charles II touching for scrofula, 'The King's Evil'



**A Joyfull medytacyon to all Englonde
of the coronacyon of our moost naturall soue
rayne lord kyng Henry the eyght.** ∞



Coronation of
Henry VIII
and Katherine
of Aragon,
1509

Coronation
oath,
amended
by Henry
VIII

renovacion that he shall kepe and mayntene the ^{kingdome} most

and the libertie of holy church of old tyme limited by

the right noble Cristen Kinge of England ^{to the holy church} And that he
shall kepe all the landes honours and dignities ^{off the same} right noble
and free of the crowne of England in all maner hole

without any maner of arrogancement / and the more of the

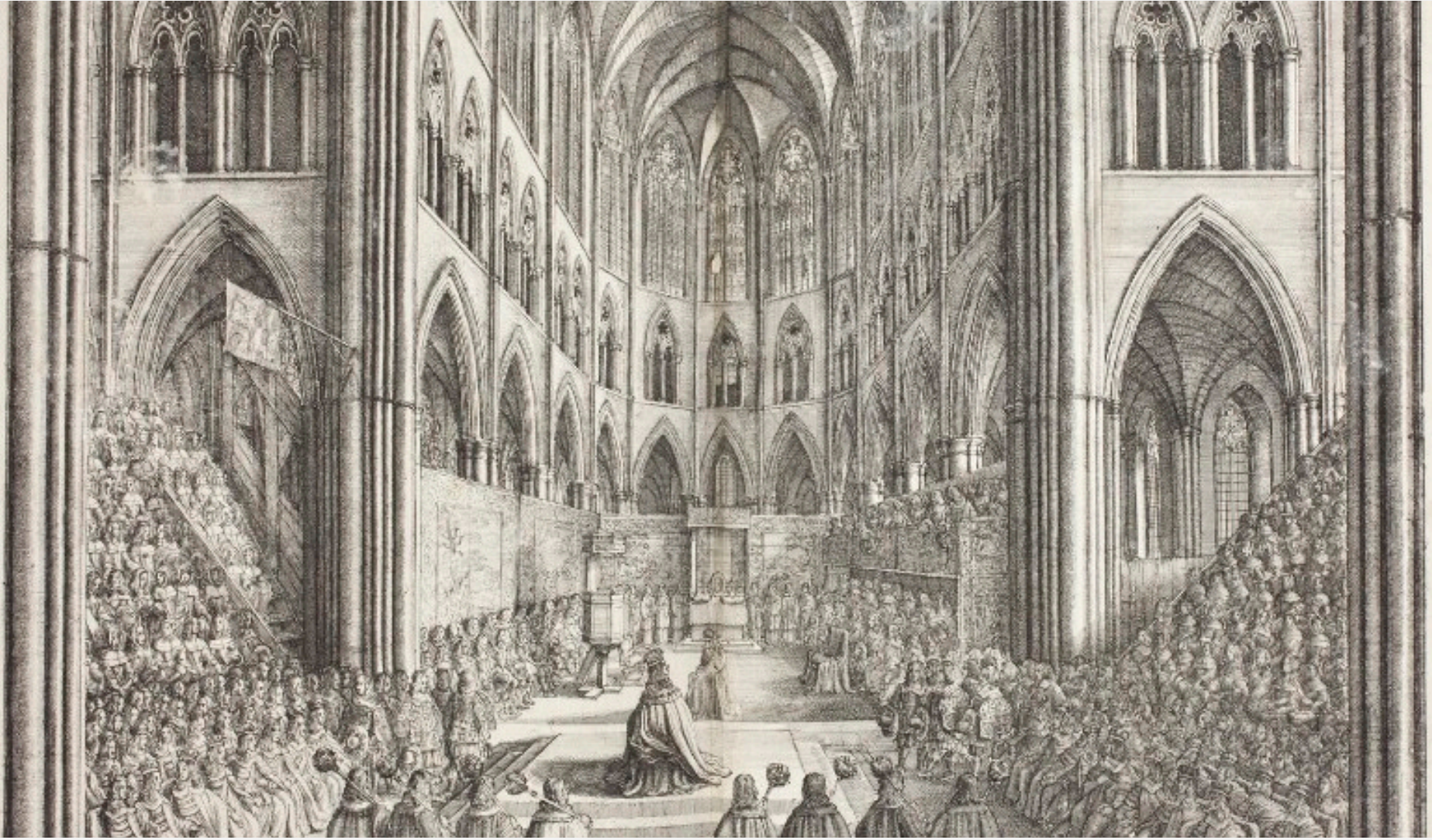
Crowne shalbe decayed or lost to his power shall call

again into the unmyght estate / And that he shall kepe
underze hym self to kepe unite in his clergy and temporall sub.
the peace of the holy church and of the clergy and of
the people wth god accord. And that he shall ^{he shall according to his conscience}
in his iudgements equite ^{all} ^{unmyghte}

in his iudgements equite ^{and} ^{unmyghte} ^{no} ^{disturbance}

In 1509 Henry VIII swore to ‘keep such laws as to the honour of God shall be chosen by [the] people’

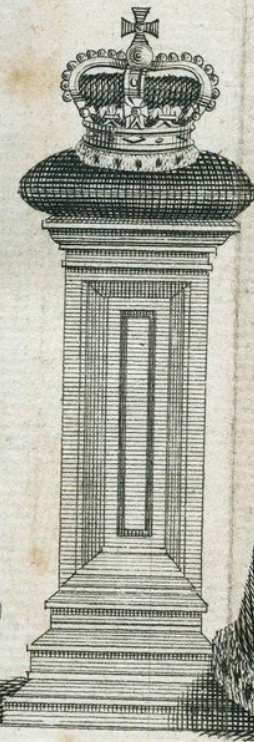
In c. 1533 he sought to ‘holde lawes and approvyd customes of the realme ... **not prejudiciall to hys crowne or Imperiall Jurisdiction**’



The Coronation of Charles II, 1661

Kings ‘stand engaged both in conscience and in justice to give their Royall Assent ... in respect of the Oath that is or ought to be taken by the Kings of this Realm at their Coronation’

Parliament’s *Third Remonstrance* to Charles I, 1642



KING WILLIAM III.

QUEEN MARY.

Published according to Act of Parliament April the 23. 1708.

William
and Mary,
1689



Mary I (1553) and Elizabeth I (1559)

The Quiers and footemen nexte about her highnes litter barehed



The Quenes maiestie in her litter
vnder the canapie borne by



The lord giles paulet
leading the firste
litter horse

The lord ambrose
dudley leadinge the
seconde litter horse

The lord Robert dudley m^r
of the horses
leadinge the
pairste of honore



The Coronation Procession of Elizabeth I, the day before her coronation, 1559



Procession of Charles II on the Eve of his Coronation, 22 April 1661
'it is impossible to relate the glory of this day', Samuel Pepys, *Diary*



num, ac totius ordinis equesteris confectus.

Principum, dominarum ac virginum confectus.

horis insignis magnificentia occurrere.

Coronation of James I, 1603

God the sonne of god Christ Jesus our Lord
which is annointed of his ffather with the oile of
gladnesse above his fellowes, hee by his holy
annoynting power downe uppon thy head, the
blessing of the holy ghooste, and make it enter
into the bowells of thy harte, so that by this visible
guifte thow maiest receave invisible grace.

From a first draft of the English translation of the *Liber Regalis*, first used at the
coronation of James I and VI, 1603

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which is annointed of his ffather with the oile of
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blessing of the holy ghooste, and ~~make it enter~~
~~into the bowells of thy harte,~~ so that ~~by this visible~~
~~guifte~~ thow maiest receave invisible grace.

From a first draft of the English translation of the *Liber Regalis*, first used at the coronation of James I and VI, 1603

‘The trueth is, the ceremony doth not any thing; onely declareth what is done’, Lancelot Andrewes, sermon preached before James I, 1610

‘Ceremony though it is nothing in it selfe, yet it doth everything’, William Cavendish, Marquis of Newcastle, *Advice to Charles II*

‘For what purpose was it ordained, that Christian kings (all though they by inheritance succeeded) should in an open and stately place before all their subjects receive their crown and other regalities, but that by reason of the honorable circumstances then used, should be impressed in the hearts of the beholders perpetual reverence... Let it be also considered that we be men and not angels, wherefore we know nothing but by outward significations’, Thomas Elyot, *The Book Named the Governor* (1531)

‘the easy yoke / Of servile pomp’, John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

‘Royalty will be strong because it appeals to diffused feeling, and Republics weak because they appeal to understanding’, Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (1867)

‘A thing that existed only to be looked at...The faculty of awe remains intact’, Hilary Mantel

