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*HRH King Charles III*

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# **The Coronation from a Christian Perspective**

*Not all the water in the rough rude sea can wash the balm off from an anointed king; The breath of worldly men cannot depose the deputy elected by the Lord.*

*Richard II, Act III, Scene 3*

One of the aspects of twenty-first century Western culture which is most remarkable is the intellectual dominance of secularism. Society is undergoing – in the West at least – a rapid and seemingly irreversible secularisation. This evolution has not been without its effects on the constitution of States – despite the oft-quoted principle of the separation of Church and State. A State is not without some elements of an ethos, or an underlying philosophical or moral identity. But a widespread disillusionment with liberal democratic models of government, with capitalism, and with materialism, has left the State, in many societies, unable to provide the degree of conceptual unity of focus which it might be expected to do. Like the contrast between the earnest and well-meaning atheist policeman in Graham Greene's, *The Power and the Glory*, and the drunken and deeply flawed priest, sometimes deeper meaning is found in the tried and tested, rather than in modern approaches or ideas.

This has been exacerbated by declining homogeneity and increased political, social, cultural and economic polarisation and marginalisation. Increased diversity in a pluralist society is said to bring strength, but it cannot do so if it means there is little or no common identity to the State. Only when diversity becomes the underlying principle of the State – as arguably it has in several countries including the United Kingdom and the United States of America – can it strengthen it.

This brief article will look specifically at the existence of an underlying ideology in Christian monarchies – once the dominant form of government, and still one of the commonest forms of government in the

world. Monarchy is *amongst* the most ancient, if not *the* most ancient, forms of government. It is found in biblical and pre-biblical times, was the prevailing form of government until the twentieth century, and remains the leading form of political organisation into the twenty-first century. We then consider the place of the coronation.

Monarchy, as found in classical and ancient times, was the most stable form of government. It comprised centralisation of authority and certainty of succession with moderation of rule, for the King was always, or nearly always, subject to the limitation of conciliar government, or the need to govern with the advice and consent of a council – or at least subject to some ghostly or spiritual authority. The early Saxon monarchy, whether found in the wilds of northern Germany, or in sub-Roman Britain of the Dark Ages, depended upon these limitations. But the King also sought to appeal to higher notions than mere consensus, so Saxon monarchs appealed, as did their Continental cousins, to mythical descent from Wōden, the Saxon god of war, or other dread ancestors.

The traditional date of the Saxon settlement of Sussex is 477, and of Wessex 495 – with Kent somewhat earlier. From the fifth century, as the new separate kingdoms of Britain merged and divided, sometimes in war, sometimes by dynastic alliances, Christianity became an important additional element. Cerdic, son of Elesa, was King of Wessex (or West Saxons) 519-534, and is the earliest clearly recognisable ancestor of His Majesty The King, from whom he is 52 generations distant. But Cerdic was a pagan, like his people. Doubtless many of the Britons still fleeing to the west to escape the invading pagan Saxons were also pagan, though Christianity had been adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire in 310. But in 597 St Augustine arrived in Kent, and began the re-Christianisation of Britain. Success was swift. King Edwin of Northumbria was converted in 627, and King Cynegils of Wessex followed in 635. In both cases their subjects followed their example – sometimes through policy but often through conviction.

In 959 Edgar, King of Wessex, became King of England (or King of the English) after the last pagan Norse king of York was deposed, and received the submission of British princes at his coronation in 973. The country was united for the first time in some 500 years – and once again as a Christian country. This had enormous implications for the nature of

the mediæval and modern monarchy. Unlike the Saxon monarchies, which began as a form of tribal chiefship, and Celtic kingship, which had a similar origin, this was national – it was not mere vanity that led Edgar to style himself *Albionis Imperator Augustus* (literally Emperor of England).

The Christian nature of the monarchy was reflected in the coronation service, and the strong ongoing relationship between what we would now call Church and State. St Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury 961-988, who anointed and crowned three kings (Edgar 973, Edward the Martyr 975, and Ethelred the Unready 978), saw anointing as being on the same level as baptism and confirmation. Just as the early Church used oil in baptism and confirmation, so the Church also used oil for anointing Christian kings – and kings, like priests and bishops, used chrism. This owed much to the Old Testament of the *Bible*.

The holy oil used for the 2023 coronation of King Charles III was consecrated in Jerusalem on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built on the site where it is believed Jesus died and was buried. It was consecrated by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, and the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, the Most Reverend Hosam Naoum. It did not include any ingredients derived from animals, omitting the usual civet oil (from the glands of small cat-like animals), and ambergris (from the digestive system of sperm whales). Musk – a glandular secretion from a musk deer – was also omitted. The new oil includes olive oil scented with a mix of essential oils, sesame, rose, jasmine, cinnamon, neroli, benzoin and amber, with orange blossom also added. Ingredients include oil from olives grown in two groves on the Mount of Olives, one of which was at the Monastery of Mary Magdalene, which is where the King's grandmother, Princess Alice of Greece (Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh's mother), is buried. The second was the Monastery of the Ascension. The olives were pressed just outside Bethlehem. The Archbishop of Canterbury was quoted as saying:

Since beginning the planning for the Coronation, my desire has been for a new Coronation Oil to be produced using olive oil from the Mount of Olives. This demonstrates the deep

historic link between the Coronation, the Bible and the Holy Land. From ancient kings through to the present day, monarchs have been anointed with oil from this sacred place. As we prepare to anoint The King and The Queen Consort, I pray that they would be guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

The anointing invoked the descent of the Holy Spirit on the candidate for kingship, making him a new man, transmitting through the anointing the divine grace by which alone he would be able to fulfil his royal *ministerium* as defender of the Church. Kingship became an office within the Church without bestowing on it any priestly status. This did not change markedly over time – even the Reformation did not alter this. Indeed, the coronation services remained replete with pre-Reformation ritual, though conducted in the vernacular, with the blessing, censuring and prayers to the saints alone deleted. A second crowning was possible, but not a second anointing; though King Henry III obtained a papal dispensation for this in 1220.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries the coronation robes were deliberately priestly in character – though whether this was in emulation of Byzantium or whether (in England) it was for indigenous reasons is not clear. Kings were dressed in choir (not eucharistic) dress like bishops, as the priest kings of Old Testament.

There were two rulers in mediæval European society, the King and the Pope. Thomas Aquinas, in *On Kingship* (1260-1265) wrote how a good king avoided tyranny.

Pope Gelasius I, in a letter to the Eastern Roman Emperor Anastasius I in 494, wrote that “two there are, august emperor, by which this world is chiefly ruled, the sacred authority of the priesthood and the royal power”. Though the former may be weaker, at least in the West, the latter is now pre-eminent (though today the “royal power” is more likely than not to be wielded by an elected politician of one sort or another). As we are told, we should “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s” (Luke 20:25, and Matthew 22:21). St Peter adds “Honour all men. Love the

brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17). But the early mediæval times rulers were cast as *Christus Domini* (literally as though they were Christ on earth). "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1).

This theocratic conception of monarchy – common to most of the West – was seen as a potential threat to the papacy in the eleventh century, so royal unction was declared to not be a sacrament, and anointing with chrism was for a time ended. But it was back again by the fourteenth century. Today the anointing survives only in the United Kingdom, the surviving European monarchies having either never been granted the privilege of using holy oil, or having abandoned the rite, usually due to revolution (as in Spain) or a desire to modernise (in Scandinavia). However, modernising is dangerous if it means abandoning an element which was once seen as an integral part of establishing a royal title. Indeed, the desire to deny the Sovereign any religious or historical mandate was behind most moves to "modernise". This inherently weakens the legitimacy of the Sovereign, threatening to render then wholly dependent upon the mandate of Parliament, by ignoring the much older and more sophisticated nature of the legitimacy of the Crown.

The hallowing of the Sovereign remains vital. St Augustine of Hippo, Doctor of the Church, wrote at the beginning of the fifth century during the first great wave of barbarian incursions into the western empire. He described (in *The City of God*) two societies, of the spirit and of the world. Despite Christianity's designation as the official religion of the empire, Augustine declared its message to be spiritual rather than political. Christianity, he argued, should be concerned with the mystical, heavenly City of Jerusalem rather than with Earthly politics. The book presents human history as being a conflict between what Augustine calls the City of God and the City of Man (a conflict that is destined to end in victory for the former). The City of God is marked by people who forego earthly pleasure and dedicate their lives to the promotion of Christian values. The City of Man, on the other hand, consists of people who have strayed from the City of God. The coronation is the hallowing of the Sovereign to be a kind of bridge between the two cities. Religious

mumbo-jumbo to “politically correct” individuals, but important to many others. Most critically, any abandonment of the key ritual of king-making threatens to undermine the legitimacy of the monarchy.

In 1937 Archbishop Lang emphasised the sacred role of the coronation in the Official Souvenir Programme for the Coronation of George VI:

But the significance of the ceremony is that the King does not crown himself. His Crown is brought from God’s Altar and put upon his head by the Archbishop, in token that his kingship is a solemn trust committed to him by Almighty God.... the ultimate source and sanction of all true civil rule and obedience is the Will and Purpose of God, that behind the things that are seen and temporal are the things that are unseen and eternal.

As a more recent Dean of Westminster puts it

At its heart, the anointing of the Sovereign, and clothing with priestly garments that precede the coronation itself, resemble the ordination of a priest or the consecration of a bishop. The coronation is a setting apart for service after the pattern of Jesus Christ.

In the revised edition of a book originally published in 2002, Ian Bradley puts forward the counter-cultural proposition that the monarchy still has a vital role and that this role is primarily spiritual:

It involves symbolizing spiritual values, embodying the sacred, representing and defending religious faith against unbelief and secular materialism, promoting order in the midst of chaos standing for the public good against private gain, and acting as a focal point for unity in a society which is increasingly fragmented and fissiparous.

The idea that the Sovereign is above politics – which can be traced to *The Patriot King*, a 1714 essay by the statesman and philosopher Henry St John Viscount Bolingbroke – does not render the oath any less

important. It becomes, like the anointing, part of the hallowing and dedication of the Sovereign as a national figure.

While the Christian beliefs of Queen Elizabeth II were well known, those of King Charles III were perhaps less well understood. Yet he is remarkable as a philosopher-King, who genuinely strives to bring some sense to the place of religion in society. This role is as relevant to the atheist and agnostic as it is to the believer.

Nor is there any inconsistency with Christianity remaining at the heart of the political system, despite the long-established principle of freedom of religion. Freedom for individuals to choose does not mean that the state must be atheist or agnostic – for that is adopting a stance on – or rather against – religion. If a Sovereign reflects and adheres to a religious belief system it gives them a sense of moral purpose which is often lacking in political figures.

The religious think tank Theos published a report, *Who wants a Christian Coronation?* Relying on a telephone survey, the report maintained that there were no majorities for a secular coronation or for the view that a Christian coronation would alienate those of other faiths or none. A majority (57 per cent) thought the ceremony should be Christian compared with 19 per cent who thought it should be multi-faith and 23 per cent who thought it should be secular. The authors also noted that there were majorities saying they would not feel alienated by a Christian ceremony, even among religious minorities and those of no religious faith.

However, Morris argued that

the size and composition of the Abbey congregation, the length of the service and its feudal and eucharistic elements all require radical review. This is not simply on grounds of cost, but more on how a modern, forward looking and confident state should choose to present itself to itself and for view from outside.

The reasoning behind these conclusions appears to be insufficiently developed – the feudal elements of the coronation, for instance, being



more apparent than real, given that the basic form of the coronation predated feudalism. The eucharist elements are there for the simple reason that the coronation ritual is a church service, conducted in Westminster Abbey since 6 January 1066, and the sacring and anointing of a Sovereign by the church. To omit this aspect would bring into question the whole nature of the coronation, and thereby raise difficult and nuanced issues of legitimacy and authority. A modern, forward looking and confident state should have the confidence to retain its core values, customs and rituals.

*Noel Cox*

## **Close of Play**

*Anonymous*

Now into the keeping of God I put  
All doings of today;  
All disappointments, hindernces,  
forgotten things, negligence's:  
All gladness and beauty, love, delight, achievement:  
All that people have done for me'  
All that I have done for them.  
My work and my prayer.  
And I commit all the people whom I love  
to his shepherding,  
to his healing and restoring,

to his calling and strengthening  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
May the Lord grant us his blessing and fill our hearts with the spirit of  
truth and peace now and evermore

## **I am a Bridge**

How do you communicate, I wonder? Not long ago, I asked a similar question at a school I was visiting. One of the boys brought the house down with his snappy, TV-commercial-based answer. "You must be like a Cadbury's snack," he said. "You must bridge the gap!" I was so impressed with his answer that I made it the basis of a song which you may have heard me sing. Let me share it with you.

I am a bridge;  
Walk over me and you could find God  
Expressed in a human life;  
I am a bridge.

I am a link,  
A link in a chain that could bind you to God,  
Entwining His life with your own;  
I am a link.

I am a sign;Pages at Top

Read me, and know the direction to God,  
And decide to companion my way;  
I am a sign.

I am a word;  
Understand me as one who interprets my God  
In the everyday life of my time;  
I am a word.

I am a link,  
A sign,  
A word;  
I am a bridge.

Each in his or her own way, everyone can "bridge the gap"

*(Note from Editor: Apart from "Joy Webb" handwritten at the foot of this poem, its origins and the surrounding commentary are unknown)*

## **When is a Car not a Car?**

*By Tony Poole*

*The information in this article was taken from a recent issue of **AA Directions** (the magazine of the Automobile Association of New Zealand). It is reproduced here (with minor amendments) with the permission of the Editor of AA Directions, to who we extend our most grateful thanks.*

**Question: When is a car not known as a car?**

**Answer: When its main method of propulsion is so important to us, that the car is referred to by an acronym for its method of propulsion, rather than by the logo on the car itself.**

This has given rise to a new method of referring to what type of car we drive. For example:

- 1 If our car is powered by a traditional **I**nternal **C**ombustion **E**ngine, it can be referred to as an **ICE**;
- 2 If it relies solely on electricity stored in a battery to power it, it can be referred to as a **BEV** (a Battery Electric Vehicle);
- 3 Most modern cars use both; they have a battery which must be plugged into the national grid to provide initial power to an electric motor, and a conventional petrol or diesel engine which takes over when the car gets low on electricity. Most such cars are referred to as a **PEV** (Plug-in Electric Vehicle);
- 4 Some modern vehicles do not plug into the national grid to gather electricity, but they do still use electricity, which they generate through "**regenerative braking**". Put simply, this means their **ICE** runs all the time at its most efficient revolutions-per-minute, with any surplus power being diverted to a generator which produces electricity which the car stores for later use. Some such vehicles are still called **BEVs**, or sometimes **FHEVs** (**F**ully **H**ybrid **E**lectric **V**ehicles);
- 5 If a car has a small electric motor and a rather larger **ICE**, and both run at the same time with both aiming for maximum efficiency, it can be called a **MHEV**, (or **M**ild **H**ybrid **E**lectric **V**ehicle).

This confusing use of acronyms is perhaps symptomatic of the relatively new and confusing state of motor engineering, as various theories are tried out, as engineers try to reduce the high-level of carbon emissions from motoring. One or perhaps two solutions, will probably be decided upon; and the remaining methods and their acronyms may well be abandoned.

Motorists can make themselves part of this experimentation programme if they want to. Six models of hybrid car are listed in the latest edition of *AA Directions*, which motorists can if they wish buy and test right now. They are:

### **MG ZS EV**

Yes! you can buy a new EV for under 50K. The fully electric **MG ZS Excite** is priced at \$49,990 and with the Clean Car discount applied is under \$42,000. The higher Spec'd **Essence** is \$53,990, pre-rebate. Both stylish models come in a range of five colours, with front grilles colour-matched to the body. The ZS has a spacious interior for a compact SUV, with a friendly and comfortable design, and has a range of 320km. It is powered by a 50.3kWh, liquid-cooled, lithium-ion battery, delivers 280Nm of instant torque, 130kW of power and can go from 0-100 in 8.2 seconds. It can also tow up to 500kg.

### **BMW iX M60**

At the other end of the price spectrum, this car retails for \$238,900. It is a masterpiece of aerodynamics and luxury accents. Performance is on another level, with power and torque up to 455kW and a massive 1,100Nm, thanks to two electric motors making it an AWD. The **iX M60** has a range of up to 566km. Superior suspension incorporates electronic dampers along with air suspension to absorb bumps and disguise its significant weight. Despite its length, parking is a breeze, as the **iX M60** comes with active steering which also sharpens turns while driving, through the use of rear wheel steer. The BMW iX M60 has a five-star ANCAP safety rating.

## **Hyundai Kona 2.0 Elite Series II**

The Kona Hybrid's powertrain switches easily between the petrol and electric motors and can also access both at the same time. The front wheel drive delivers a combined output of 104kW of power and 265Nm of maximum torque. And while the Hyundai Kona is not a powerhouse – smooth rather than sporty – its sleek exterior and comfortable, well-considered interior add to its considerable charm. Plus, it comes with a 5-star ANCAP safety rating, and features including Rear Cross-traffic Assist, Collision Avoidance Assist, Forward Collision Avoidance Assist, Lane Keep Assist, Smart Cruise Control and a reversing camera. Priced from \$51,990 + ORC, it has a 5-star ANCAP safety rating.

## **SUBARU WRX**

The new Subaru WRX features a completely revised, powerful and responsive 2.4-litre turbocharged, horizontally opposed boxer engine delivering 202kW of power and 350Nm of torque. There are two body styles available: a wide-bodied sedan and a wagon. The **WRX** sedan comes with a choice of close-ratio 6-speed manual, or an 8-speed automatic, which is standard for the wagon model. While youthful with its pointy grille and narrow headlights, it also looks modern with its chiselled fenders and creased taillights. Both models feature machine-finished 18-inch alloy wheels, self-levelling LED headlights, Steering Responsive Headlights and LED front fog lights. Priced from \$59,990 to \$64,990.

## **SUZUKI SWIFT GL AUTO**

The Suzuki Swift GL auto is just \$23,990 + ORC, and with the Clean Car discount of \$2,335.60 it is even more affordable. The other thing the Swift GL has going for it is fuel economy, at 4.8L/100km. Its zippy four cylinder 1.2-litre engine produces 66kW of power and 120Nm of torque. While not a hot hatch, its power-to-weight ratio enables it to deliver well for getting around town. The interior is understated, a little plastic and bland, but it feels solid and should be hard-wearing. Visibility is great thanks to a tall windscreen. The Suzuki Swift has a 5-star ANCAP safety rating.

## MAZDA CX-5 TAKAMI

With a price tag of \$64,290 + ORC, the Mazda CX-5 Takami is in the premium SUV category. It has AWD technology, and a 2.5-litre petrol 170kW/420Nm engine, giving it an extra 30 kW over its sibling, the Mazda Activ. Appearance-wise, the Takami is distinctive with a unified, one-colour exterior. The interior features soft leather seats. woodgrain and dual zone climate control. The Takami seats five people comfortably. The 40/20/40 split fold-down rear seat provides flexibility and when all the rear seats are flat, there is 1,340 litres of cargo room. Its hands-free tailgate operates by sensor. It has a 5-star ANCAP safety rating.

## Getting Sorted

Some parishioners already get their Messenger by e-mail. They have their email address, they tell us what it is, and they are expert at regularly checking their inboxes and downloading the Messenger as soon as it comes.

As a result, they get full colour photographs in their messenger. Another benefit is they get it quicker; no-one needs to print it, address it, or deliver it. And there is no waiting around for up to a week for it to be printed, enveloped, addressed, and delivered.

If you would like to get your messenger by email, all you need to do is give your email address to Tony Poole. He has a memory like a sieve, so don't tell him what your email address is, **write it down**; then check it just to make sure you got it right.

It's as simple as that!

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