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Summary Article: **crown**

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circular head ornament, symbolizing sovereign dignity. (For crowns worn by nobles, see coronet.) The use of the crown as a symbol of royal rank is of ancient tradition in Egypt and the Middle East. In ancient Greece and Rome, however, crowns—sometimes made of leaves—were merely wreaths, awarded to victors in athletic or poetic contests or bestowed on citizens in recognition of an act of public service. The crown as used in medieval and modern times is an elaboration of the diadem and is generally made of metal, often gold inlaid with precious gems. The crown became thoroughly identified with the functions of monarchy, and the term *crown* is often used in a purely institutional sense, as in crown lands, crown colonies, and crown debt. Among famous crowns of historic interest are the Lombard iron crown, kept at Monza, Italy; the crown of Charlemagne, at Vienna, Austria; and the sacred crown of St. Stephen of Hungary. These are exceptional in that they were used repeatedly over centuries for coronation ceremonies. Most crowns are of recent origin, although the jewels they contain are often taken from older crowns. The ancient crowns of England were destroyed under Oliver Cromwell. There are two crowns used by the British sovereigns: the crown of Edward the Confessor (a much-altered replica of the original crown) is used for the coronation ceremony in Westminster Abbey, and the imperial state crown is worn on state occasions. Crowns are also worn by the consorts and families of sovereigns. The triple crown of the popes, known as a tiara, dates from the 14th cent. Regardless of their actual shape, crowns are usually represented in heraldry as closed at the top by four arched bars called diadems and surmounted by a globe and a cross. In religion and art, a crown symbolizes sovereignty (Rev. 19.12) and also honor, especially the reward of martyrdom (Heb. 2.9).

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