

# The Making of a King through Space and Time

## Mediatisation of Transcendence in the Coronation of King Charles III

### Abstract

This essay analyses the BBC's live coverage of King Charles III's coronation ritual, emphasising the interdependence of the British monarchy and the media. Drawing on the theoretical background of ritual as performance, it examines the King's portrayal as a transcendent figure shaping social order. It offers a close reading of the ritual's key moments according to film analysis methods. The discussion shows the coronation to be an event meticulously orchestrated between the monarchy and the media. In progressing through different spaces, the King is shown undergoing an ontological transformation linking past, present, and future. The BBC's use of various filmic techniques constructs a narrative that connects the King with divine forces. The mediatisation of the coronation ritual thus portrays King Charles III as a transcendent figure beyond time and space. At the root of British society's cosmology, he is depicted as legitimately representing and shaping British social values.

### Keywords

Coronation, Charles III, Film Analysis, Transcendence, Ritual, Media, Society, Cosmology

### Biography

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## Making the Monarchy Visible

“I have to be seen to be believed”<sup>1</sup> was the guiding principle for the late Queen’s interactions with the public, making her an expert in the art of visibility during her 70-year reign. Given that the public’s acceptance and support of the monarchy hinge on its perception, meticulous control of its image is imperative. The result has been a complex interdependence of the media and the British monarchy. With the death of the Queen, her 74-year-old son Charles was proclaimed “King Charles III”. The British monarchy is the last of the European monarchies to adhere to the tradition of a formal anointing and crowning of the new monarch, which takes place at Westminster Abbey, the venue for coronations for centuries. The coronation ritual is embedded in a specific liturgy led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the senior bishop and principal leader of the Church of England.<sup>2</sup>

The close association between church and state, with the monarch seen as divinely appointed, contrasts with the secular and utilitarian character of British politics. Additionally, a growing chorus of critical voices is questioning the legitimacy and relevance of the monarchy. Indeed, opinion polls reveal varying levels of support for the monarchy, which is as low as 40 percent among younger people and ethnic minority groups.<sup>3</sup> Yet, the coronation of King Charles III and his wife, Camilla, on 6 May 2023 was marked by a display of great grandeur and apparently elicited national excitement. Approximately 20 million viewers in the United Kingdom alone watched the live broadcast of the event.<sup>4</sup> Despite critical voices, the monarchy still appears to attract broad support among the British populace and is perceived as an integral part of the national identity.

Many distinguished guests are invited to attend the coronation, including members of the royal family, British aristocracy, church leaders, politicians, influential figures in society, and representatives of the Commonwealth and of other nations. Although these guests are present in the Abbey, many can only hear the ceremony because their seats have a restricted view. The whole of the ritual is, however, filmed by the BBC and streamed live to

1 Bates 2015, 1. Elizabeth II’s carefully selected, and always brightly coloured outfits were part of this successful strategy.

2 The British monarch is Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

3 Ryder 2023, 23–24. See also the interview with Graham Smith, leader of the republican organisation “Not My King”: Rajvanshi 2023.

4 For viewership statistics see Rhoden-Paul 2023.

both the public and the guests sitting in the nave of the Abbey. The BBC's portrayal of the coronation ritual therefore shapes its perception by the public. The most decisive part of the ritual is the "Anointing", establishing that the King is king by the will of God. Paradoxically, this pivotal moment is concealed from general view, posing a considerable challenge for its media presentation.

This article focuses on the media representation of the coronation ritual and specifically on how the king's connection to a transcendent force is conveyed. Drawing on approaches adopted in political, cultural, and historical studies and in the study of religion, the article explores the intricate interplay between the British monarch, the media, and society.<sup>5</sup> The coronation ritual is shown to epitomise the values and norms that have been shaped and reiterated by this interdependency for centuries. The theoretical background here is provided by the idea of ritual as a performance establishing a social order, while the specific case is the BBC's coverage of the coronation ritual.<sup>6</sup> To offer a close reading, selected scenes are scrutinised according to film analysis methods.

The article demonstrates how the mediatisation depicts the ritual as a materialisation of transcendence and attributes to it a unique ontological quality of time and space that is marked by the King's invisibility in the very time and place the ritual is enacted. The mediatisation creates a distinct context defined by transcendence and linked to British coronation traditions. It conveys a transcendental force at work, transforming the new monarch into King Charles III who reigns by the will of God.

The essay is organised into distinct stages. First, it briefly explores the concept of ritual. Secondly, it delves into the British coronation ritual within

5 Owens 2019, Pankratz 2017, Kramer 2017. Tom Nairn finds the Royal Family representing the essence of the British national character and identifies the United Kingdom as a "quasi-religious state", see Nairn 2011, 90. See also Warner 2002. For the reinforcing effect of the media on public perceptions see Clancy 2019, Clancy 2021, esp. chapter 2. For the sacred meanings of the British coronation ritual and their national implications see Shils/Young 1953. Daniel Lloyd analyses the innovations in Charles III's coronation's liturgy from a theological perspective and sees questions surrounding the anointing answered by its media representation, see Lloyd 2023, 394. Others approach the coronation from a socio-political angle and evaluate its presentation by the media, see Ryder 2023, also Hackett/Caughlan 2023.

6 The film material was initially available for general viewing via the Royal family's own YouTube channel. Meanwhile, the material can be viewed at WTVR CBS 6, THE CORONATION SERVICE, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqgmLx4Q2LU>.

its socio-cultural context, emphasising the role of media coverage in shaping audience expectations in the months and weeks leading up to the event. After a short introduction to the analysis criteria, the selected scenes are scrutinised in chronological order. The sequences are “The King Entering the Abbey”, “Anointing”, “Investiture and Crowning of the King”, and “The King’s Return”. The final section discusses the results of the film analysis in relation to the categories of space and time and places these readings in a social context.

## The Coronation as a Ritual that Performs Transcendence

The British coronation ritual transforms the new King by succession into the nation’s King by the grace of God. Contained within an Anglican eucharist liturgy, the ritual unfolds as a meticulously choreographed performance involving various participants who assume distinct roles. While Jens Kreinath distinguishes three main types of theoretical approach to the analysis of ritual, he identifies “process” as the underlying idea of all rituals.<sup>7</sup> This emphasis on transformation is central to the functional approach to ritual developed by the ethnologist Victor Turner. Turner’s classic approach, with its focus on both the processual and the performative character of ritual, is an ideal tool for thorough analysis of this transformative ritual so essential to the British monarchy.

Turner characterises rituals as transformative processes comprising three distinct phases. The first phase detaches the ritual subject, referred to as “the passenger”, from existing social structures, stripping the subject of their prior status. There follows an ambivalent “liminal phase”, wherein a transition from a “before” to an “after” unfolds.<sup>8</sup> The third phase focuses on reintegrating “the passenger” into society and confirming their new status. Critical for this transformation is, for Turner, the “liminal phase”, when the ritual subject exists in a state of ambivalence, devoid of previous power.<sup>9</sup> Indicators of this powerlessness include a form of “invisibility”,<sup>10</sup> lack of

7 Kreinath 2006, xix.

8 Turner 2017, 94.

9 Turner 2017, 95.

10 Turner 2017, 95.

clothing, and the portrayal of the highest political authority “as a slave”,<sup>11</sup> deprived even of speech. Turner sees this ontological quality of the liminal phase as a prerequisite for ensuring that the new authority is utilised solely for society’s benefit. Turner observes that the pedagogical aspect of the ritual is believed to be connected to transcendent forces that enable the subject’s transformation, forces typically invoked by select specialists.<sup>12</sup> Rituals not only articulate aims but actively produce changes in the ritual subject’s status. They construct meaning and thus function as autopoietic processes.

The social anthropologist Stanley J. Tambiah also recognises the autopoietic function of rituals. Additionally, he attributes to rituals the ability to construct meaning and to shape reality.<sup>13</sup> Tambiah describes rituals as deeply rooted within the cosmology of their respective societies. These cosmologies are perceived as self-evident and unquestionable and form the basis of societal moral judgments. They are considered immutable and linked to transcendental forces.<sup>14</sup> These underlying transcendental forces organise and control the threatening chaos in the world – an attribute often assigned to the sovereign within the social cosmology.<sup>15</sup> By engaging the audience emotionally through elements such as music, dance, and speech, rituals have affirmative effects on society’s cosmology. Consequently, the meaning of a ritual cannot be objectively verified or falsified; it resides solely in the audience’s acceptance of its validity.

## Mediatisation under Scrutiny

The audience for Charles III’s coronation ritual was not limited to the invited guests inside Westminster Abbey. The whole nation beyond the closed doors of the Abbey was to be convinced of the success of the transformation. It is the task of the media to convey the intended meaning of the ritual to this wider audience, making the media’s role critical. The coronation of Charles III, designated “Operation Golden Orb”, had been

11 Turner 2017, 102.

12 Turner, 2017, 104.

13 Tambiah 2013.

14 Tambiah 2013, 227.

15 Stolz 2001, 62.

meticulously planned for years.<sup>16</sup> Information about the impending event was disseminated through various channels, with details of the schedule of the coronation, musical selections, and the components of the ritual.<sup>17</sup> This information transforms the public into “insiders” who possess shared knowledge of the events “true meaning” and shapes their expectations and retrospective interpretation.

The coronation ritual itself took place within the Gothic Westminster Abbey.<sup>18</sup> It was filmed by the BBC, the national broadcaster. Digital cameras strategically placed throughout the Abbey according to “Operation Golden Orb” enable precise control of multiple perspectives in real time. The resulting live stream was a meticulously planned production adhering to traditional Hollywood cinema conventions. Here, the narration is typically character-driven and follows a clear chain of cause and effect. It is served by invisible camera and sound-editing aiming at the viewer’s emotional engagement.<sup>19</sup> Daria Pezzoli-Olgati observes that through these narratives, films define, project, and simultaneously confirm societal values.<sup>20</sup> Following these conventions, the BBC’s live coverage of the coronation created a filmic narrative that was not simply a neutral presentation of events, for it engaged the audience emotionally and imbued the events with meaning.

Different spaces within the Abbey are assigned to distinct groups, figures, and actions during the ritual.<sup>21</sup> The ritual is embedded in the liturgy of the Church of England, with speech, song, and instrumental score integral to the construction of meaning. The audio-visual narrative, shaped by the camera perspectives and their dynamic assembly, powerfully conveyed this meaning.

In order to explore the way in which this meaning was communicated, I apply here a methodical film analysis to the BBC’s live coverage of the event. Four key scenes closely related to the ritual process identified by Victor Turner have been selected for analysis, with the subsequent discussion focused on spatial, auditory, and editing parameters.

16 Blackall 2023.

17 Anon. 2023; Davies 2023; Hurowitz 2023; Royal Household at Buckingham Palace 2023; Caughlan 2023.

18 Webster 2019, 196.

19 Bordwell/Thompson 1990, 70.

20 Pezzoli-Olgati 2008, 46.

21 Visual Journalism Team 2023.



Fig. 1: St. Edward's Crown being brought into the Abbey. Screen shot, *THE CORONATION SERVICE*, 00:34:27.

## Entering the Abbey

The commencement of the ritual is heralded by fanfares performed by the State Trumpeters of the Household Cavalry. Subsequently, representatives from diverse faith groups and leaders of the Commonwealth of Nations proceed into the Abbey. The clergy, knights, and military representatives lead the processions of Queen Camilla and the King, bearing the regalia on ornate pillows. Right before the most important regalia of all, St. Edward's Crown, walk four members of the Household Cavalry in their red uniforms. Behind its bearer follow representatives of the clergy presenting the Bible, Chalice and Paten as important liturgical devices. From the very beginning of the ritual, the crown, the symbol of monarchy, is embedded in the military and the church (fig. 1).

With the beginning of the anthem "I was glad",<sup>22</sup> the King accompanied by his servants and two Bishops as his assistants enters the Abbey. The King is clad in a red velvet robe, its colour evoking the sacrifice of Christ (fig. 2).<sup>23</sup>

22 This anthem is seven minutes long. Based upon Psalm 122, it has marked the entrance of the monarch since 1626. The version used at the coronation of Charles III was composed by Hubert Parry for the coronation of Edward VII in 1902, including the cry "Vivat Rex". See Welby 2023, 3.

23 Bradley 2023, 134.





Fig. 2: The King enters the Abbey, next to him his Bishop Assistants. Screen shot, THE CORONATION SERVICE, 00:35:33.



Fig. 3: Bird's-eye-view of the King entering the quire. Screen shot, THE CORONATION SERVICE, 00:38:46.

To the rhythm of the music, the camera captures dynamic perspectives of the King's progress down the nave. Various medium shots and close-ups from different angles show the King greeting the guests in the nave with a soft smile. They are standing, bowing their heads, with many of the women curtsying as the King moves past. The dynamic of the editing actively involves the viewers in the veneration of the King. The King passes through





Fig. 4: The crowns on the altar, ready for use. Screen shot, *THE CORONATION SERVICE*, 00:41:28.

the entrance to the quire, gradually approaching the Abbey's sanctuary. As the King enters the quire, the abbey choir's exclamation of "Vivat Rex Carolus" is met with a brief bird's-eye-view shot, seeming to endorse the protective formula from a divine standpoint (fig. 3).

The King's orderly procession seamlessly integrates with the Gothic structure of the Abbey. With the King leaving the quire and moving past the Coronation Theatre, the music transitions to a calmer tone.

He moves past the Coronation Theatre and is eventually seated next to the Queen in his Chair of Estate on the right side of the Sacrarium. Meanwhile, the camera shows different perspectives on the church space and the King and the Queen and a close-up of the two crowns. These are now positioned on the altar next to the other regalia (fig. 4).

The changing camera perspectives visually link the King, the Abbey's impressive Gothic space, and the precious crowns with the final euphoric passage of the anthem, implying a transcendental connection. In his entry into the Abbey, the King is portrayed with immense dignity as he is venerated by the congregation. He is accompanied and supported by high-ranking clergy, signifying the Church of England's acknowledgment of his legitimacy. The escort by the Household Cavalry emphasises his connection to the armed forces and underscores his role as commander-in-chief. His progress through different parts of the Gothic Abbey's space is accentuated by passages in the anthem "I was glad". Text, music, and editing

link the progression through the Abbey's space with the King approaching transcendence.

## Anointing

The King embodies dignity and power in his attire and presentation. Yet his first words spoken during the ritual articulate a commitment “to serve rather than to be served”,<sup>24</sup> resonating with the Christian motif of service. As the liturgy commences, the Archbishop of Canterbury echoes the King's exact words, when he refers to Christ's ultimate sacrifice for humanity's salvation. This comparison positions the King as akin to Christ, the son of God. As the liturgy progresses, the most sacred segment of the coronation unfolds – the “Anointing”. The King undergoes this profound part of the ritual positioned on St. Edward's Chair, facing the high altar. Consecrated oil is poured from an ampulla onto a golden spoon, then the Archbishop of Canterbury applies the oil in the form of a cross onto the head, chest, and hands of the monarch. This act symbolises the external manifestation of the sovereign's spiritual status.<sup>25</sup> Due to its sacrality, the anointing is usually performed in privacy, shielded from public view. The anointing of Charles III incorporates a specially designed screen, made up of three distinct parts supported by two wooden poles each. The central part of the screen is adorned with an embroidered tree, symbolising the countries of the Commonwealth of Nations. In preparation for the anointing, the choirs sing “Veni creator Spiritus” in plainsong in English, Welsh, Gaelic, and Irish, invoking the Holy Spirit for assistance. This expression underscores the significance of the anointing for all parts of the United Kingdom. As the plainsong concludes, the camera zooms out from the choir, offering an overview of the Abbey's space and giving a sense of spiritual presence and thus the fulfilment of the anthem's plea. While the Archbishop and his assistants speak prayers over the ampulla with the consecrated oil, the orchestra begins playing Handel's “Zadok the Priest”, a tribute to the anointing of the biblical King Solomon.<sup>26</sup> Members of the Household Cavalry now enter the Sacrarium bearing the three parts of the Anointing Screen. With military precision they assemble

24 THE CORONATION SERVICE, 00:56:46.

25 See Visual Journalism Team 2023.

26 Composed in 1727 by Georg Friedrich Händel, the anthem is based on 1 Kings 1:39–40.



Fig. 5: The soldiers assemble the Anointing Screen. Screen shot, *THE CORONATION SERVICE*, 01:22:35.

the parts around St. Edward's Chair, creating a separate square space within the Sacrarium (fig. 5).

The open side of this newly constructed space faces the altar, and the embroidered central part of the screen is directed at the congregation. Simultaneously, the King's assistants commence disrobing the King. The entire scene is covered by three long shots, with the camera moving around the screen

One last time, the camera attempts a glimpse of the King being disrobed. As the King's jacket is removed, the choir chants "Zadok the Priest", prompting the camera rapidly to zoom back to a respectful distance. The camera and, consequently, the audience remain explicitly excluded from the occurrences behind the screen. Following the rhythm of the music, the camera then alternates perspectives between the singing choir, the guests, the Abbey's interior, and the Anointing Screen in the background. By visually connecting the music with the events in the Abbey, the camera establishes a link between the song's protagonist, the biblical King Solomon, and the contemporary King Charles III. As the last lines of the anthem, "God save the King, may the King live forever", repeat,<sup>27</sup> a close shot depicts the soldiers removing the screen around St. Edward's Chair, to reveal an empty chair (fig. 6).

27 *THE CORONATION SERVICE*, 01:25:30–01:25:38.



Fig. 6: When the soldiers remove the screen, St. Edward's Chair is revealed to be empty. Screen shot, THE CORONATION SERVICE, 01:25:40.



Fig. 7: The "naked" King submits to the priests' prayers. Screen shot, THE CORONATION SERVICE, 01:26:05.

The mystery surrounding the King's whereabouts is resolved when he is shown kneeling between two priests in front of the altar. He is dressed only in plain black trousers and a simple white shirt, appearing almost "naked", without any outward signs of power. The kneeling King submits to the priests' prayers while his clothes are being carried away (fig. 7).

The removal of the King's clothes, symbols of his worldly rank, signifies the conclusion of his purely profane status. The anointing transforms



him into a sacred being, blessed by God and infused with the Holy Spirit. This transcendental climax of the coronation ritual is visually conveyed by being excluded from sight. It transpires within a separate, provisional space constructed and secured by the King's guards. The occurrences within this exclusive space are left to the audience's imagination. However, this imagination proves unreliable when after the screen is removed, the King is no longer found in the presumed place in his chair. The transformation is thus depicted as beyond imagination, rooted only in the sacred connection to God, facilitated by the priests. The lyrics of the accompanying anthem link the current events with the biblical ages, positioning the concept of "monarchy" as beyond time. Through the alignment of contrasting camera perspectives with the content and rhythm of the music, cinematic strategies convey the King's transcendental transformation according to audience viewing conventions.

## Crowning and Investiture

Following the anointing, the King is gradually adorned in a golden tunic and robe, receiving royal regalia, some placed on his body, others offered for him to touch. The investiture concludes with a long shot featuring the King seated on St. Edward's Chair, prepared to be crowned. The garments and regalia connect him to his British monarchical predecessors, with the golden priestly robe symbolising his elevated and sacred status. The Archbishop of Canterbury proceeds to crown the King with St. Edward's Crown, raising it high above the King's head for all to see before carefully placing it on his head. Stepping back, the archbishop declares, "God save the King!", signifying the successful completion of the crowning (fig. 8).

The King is then enthroned on the Imperial Chair at the centre of the Coronation Theatre, symbolically taking possession of his empire. Kneeling before the King, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the King's heir pay homage. Subsequently, the archbishop invites the congregation and all citizens to pledge allegiance to the King and to his heirs and successors.<sup>28</sup> A medium shot from the King's left side captures the King's heir, Prince William, and his family standing in the background as the congregation affirms the King's

28 Welby 2023, 28.



Fig. 8: The King is crowned; the Archbishop of Canterbury shouts, “Long live the King!”. Screen shot, THE CORONATION SERVICE, 01:39:55.



Fig. 9: The King’s heir and his family are shown as the congregation proclaims, “May the King live forever!”. Screen shot, THE CORONATION SERVICE, 01:50:22.

new status, proclaiming, “God save King Charles, long live King Charles, may the King live forever!”<sup>29</sup> (fig. 9).

This presentation of collective allegiance bridges the past, present, and future, connecting the monarchy with eternity. With the King seen seated

29 THE CORONATION SERVICE, 01:50:12–01:50:22.





Fig. 10: Camera perspective from an extreme height, visually implying divine presence. Screen shot, THE CORONATION SERVICE, 02:31:53.

on his Imperial Chair, the call for his eternal existence carries clear political implications.

## The Return of the King

After the subsequent crowning and enthroning of Queen Camilla, the liturgy concludes with Holy Communion. With the end of the liturgy the King and Queen withdraw, accompanied by their assistants, through the right-hand door of the altar screen into St. Edward's Chapel, behind the altar. Simultaneously, the orchestra and choir start to perform the anthem "Te Deum". Within the chapel, the King changes into his Robes of Estate.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, the clergy and sword-bearers position themselves in the Coronation Theatre in anticipation of the King's return. The final words of the anthem plead for God's support and guidance.<sup>31</sup> The camera perspective transitions to an extreme high shot from the Abbey's lantern above the crossing (fig. 10), creating an impression of divine presence.

<sup>30</sup> Welby 2023, 40.

<sup>31</sup> The exact wording is "Oh Lord, in thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded." Welby 2023, 40.



Fig. 11: The King returns in his full imperial splendour. Screen shot, *THE CORONATION SERVICE*, 02:34:06.

Fanfares break into the tense and gloomy atmosphere during the King's absence. He returns through the left door of the altar screen adorned in the purple Robe of Estate and wearing the precious Imperial State Crown, symbolising his sovereign powers. Carrying the Sovereign's Orb and the Sovereign's Sceptre with the Cross, the King is led by the Lord President of the Council bearing the Sword of Offering (fig. 11).<sup>32</sup>

Upon the King's entering the Sacrarium, the organ plays the national anthem, with the choir and congregation singing "God Save the King". The King's return answers the previous musical plea for support and is met with the enthusiastic singing of the national anthem. The lyrics affirm his connection to God and invoke eternal protection. The communally sung anthem enacts the congregation's belief in the King's redemptive capacity. After the national anthem, the rhythm of a cheerful march accompanies the King's progress through the quire. Before he leaves through the quire screen passage, a long shot displays the symmetrical order of the King's procession, with saluting guards forming a barrier. Their straight line enhances the shot's perspective. The high altar is the vanishing point in the background, presenting its sacred powers as the starting point for the King's procession back into

32 The orb and the sceptre were made for the coronation of Charles II in 1661 and have been used for coronations ever since. Visual Journalism Team 2023.



Fig. 12: Passing through the quire screen, the King gradually progresses to the world outside. Screen shot, *THE CORONATION SERVICE*, 02:37:31.

the world. A subsequent frontal medium shot shows the quire screen in the background, separating the nave from the sacred space behind (fig. 12).

Moving through the small passage, the King gradually progresses back towards the world, reintegrated into society as their new sovereign. Varied camera perspectives capture his relaxed face in close-ups and medium shots. The dynamic of the camera mirrors the King's movements while he proceeds through the nave to the exact rhythm of the music.<sup>33</sup> Along the way, the King is greeted by guests, bowing their heads with some women curtsying. The dynamic interplay of changing camera perspectives and uplifting music engages the audience, eliciting their confirmation of the ritual's success. A final long shot depicts the King stepping out into the world, leaving the clergy behind. His successful journey through the coronation ritual is complete, transforming him into King Charles III by the grace of God.

## The Coronation Ritual as a Journey through Space and Time

The mediatisation of the coronation ritual of Charles III portrays the King as connected to a transcendent force. This idea is achieved by the BBC's live

33 *THE CORONATION SERVICE*, 02:37:06–02:37:12.

coverage using established techniques of filmic narrative. The impressive Gothic architecture of Westminster Abbey, where the ritual unfolds, is used as a visual backdrop conveying order and grandeur. By its historic importance, the Abbey establishes a link between the contemporary event and every previous coronation held there. It also provides designated spaces for different groups, with the nave, quire, Coronation Theatre, and sanctuary each embodying distinct levels of sacredness. These different zones provide for the unfolding phases of the coronation ritual. Architectural screens, acting as transformative passages, separate and delineate these zones. During the most decisive part of this journey, the anointing, when the King is to be imbued by the Holy Spirit, he is invisible, presenting a great challenge for its medial depiction. Here, the King's transcendental contact is conveyed by the camera engaging in a visual dialog with the Anointing Screen's material border, its explicit boundary integrated into the audience's experience. The significance of the ritual's pivotal phase is communicated to the audience in advance by the media. The audience is thus already informed of the sacredness of the event occurring within this provisional space. It also knows about the political implications of its design, which symbolically depicts the Commonwealth of Nations. With the exception of the newly created Anointing Screen, each of the many facets of the King's ritual journey is steeped in the long traditions of the British monarchy. Regalia, vestments, and music were designed for the coronation ritual, and with only minor modifications they have persisted for centuries. These traditions, along with their historical significance, are effectively conveyed to the public through pre-ritual media coverage. Thus, the audience's expectations have been primed to construct the intended meaning in their imagination.

The mediatization of the British coronation ritual not only establishes a historical continuum linking the monarchy back to biblical times but also projects its significance forward into future generations. It also presents the King as one link in the perpetual monarchical chain stretching from the very centre of Westminster Abbey out into the world and connecting different parts of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth of Nations. While he progresses through the distinct spatial spheres within the Abbey, the King is presented as also advancing through different ontological spheres, being transformed from the late Queen's heir, King Charles III by succession, to King Charles III by the grace of God. The BBC's live coverage provides an audio-visual narrative, portraying Charles III as a transcendental king connected to divine forces. Positioned as the transcendent facilitator of an

all-encompassing order, King Charles III is depicted as an integral part of society's cosmology and the legitimate representative of the existing social structure, thus rightfully shaping societal values.

The media serve to create and maintain this narrative of the British monarchy as legitimated by godly powers. They thus function as a crucial facilitator of the upholding of societal structures and power dynamics. Far from fulfilling their democratic function of "holding power to account"<sup>34</sup> or "reflecting an authentic picture of the entire nation back on itself",<sup>35</sup> with regard to the monarchy the British media yield to power and appear to internalize the narrative they promote. Conflating the religious notion of a transcendent ruler with the identity of the nation and its societal framework, they extend the idea of being religiously legitimated onto themselves. Being part of this society this idea seems too great a temptation to resist.

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34 Ryder 2023, 23.

35 Ryder 2023, 25.



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