

Dangerous Prayers: The Eucharistic Liturgies and the Forging of Sacramental Kingship in Latin Europe (c.750–c.1250)

Abstract

This project is a study of how the perception and practice of political power was often determined by slight, nearly invisible, bearers of beliefs conveyed in the liturgical manuscripts that were transported from one ecclesiastical centre to another and activated the various ways in which intellectuals understood kingship. The book focuses on the liturgical invocations of rulers during the crucial Christian ritual of the Eucharist. Manifold intercessions for monarchs and various vocalizations of their names during almost daily gatherings influenced broader views on rulership and the place of political power in the Christian tradition. This project seeks to unravel the origins of this too often overlooked liturgical ritual of far-reaching political significance in the Carolingian period. Moreover, it traces the spread of ideas in the post-Carolingian era from the Iberian Peninsula to the Danube basin until the ritual was commonly practiced throughout Latin Europe by c. 1200. This project reconstructs how selected liturgical practices, allegedly so minor as to be nearly invisible, yet in constant use and widely disseminated, determined Christian thinking about political power and the character of kingship as the unquestioned carrier of God's will for the people.

Rationale for Research

The project will describe the impact of liturgical practices on medieval political culture and, indirectly, their legacy for political order down to the present. It focuses on the ritual, hitherto overlooked in scholarship, that was deployed daily to shape the ideal of kingship in the Early and High Middle Ages (c.800–c.1200), namely, the invocations of rulers during the Eucharist. Previous attention to the liturgical invocation of rulers has focused on acclamations or laudes, votive mass formularies for the king, adventus rituals, coronation ordines and penance. Yet, the celebration of the Mass was the pivotal religious ritual in pre-modern Europe, performed every day in every cathedral, monastery, parish church, and wherever else the Eucharist was celebrated. This analysis of the various manifestations of these political liturgies will enhance our understanding of the Carolingian *Ecclesia-Imperium*, and allow us to question the master narratives concerning the political theology of the Ottonian / early Salian Church and Gregorian Reform movements. By analyzing the various invocations of rulers and prayers for kings during the Eucharist, within the context of other types of sources, this book offers a revisionist view of understanding the place of political power within the medieval Christian tradition.

Originality of the Concrete Results

The monograph that will result from the project will be the first comprehensive study of the crucial religious phenomenon of the Eucharistic invocations of rulers, performed nearly daily, which had considerable political significance. Moreover, it revises the critical edition of one of the most important texts for the Roman Catholic Church — the Canon Missae. It is the first such analysis of the liturgical material, with an examination of over 1000 liturgical items (manuscripts, fragments, palimpsests) from Carolingian, post-Carolingian, and Gregorian Europe. It focuses attention not only on the kingdoms usually covered in the textbooks on the Middle Ages (Carolingians, Capetian France, Roman Empire, British Isles, and the Papacy) but also lesser-known kingdoms (i.e., León, Aragon, Hungary, Bohemia), and ranges from the Iberian Peninsula to East-Central Europe. It is also an original approach to the pre-modern theologies of the political as shaped primarily by liturgical practices. Moreover, the book proposes the new concept of sacramental kingship, which is rooted in the medieval attempts to grasp the sacred conceptually, rather than stemming from the modern ideological assumptions, foremost among which are the secularization paradigm or a racially imbued concept of sacral kingship.