

Johanna Dale, Pawel Figurski, Pieter Byttembler (ed.), Political Liturgies in the High Middle Ages. Beyond the Legacy of Ernst H. Kantorowicz, Turnhout (Brepols) 2021, 250 p., 9 b/w fig. (Medieval and Early Modern Political Theology [MEMPT], 4), ISBN 978-2-503-595672, EUR 80,00.

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Three quarters of a century have passed since Ernst Kantorowicz opened the field of »political theology« with his »Laudes regiae« of 1946 and demonstrated that close attention to liturgy is a basic way of illuminating the subject. So many scholars have followed him that at least five bibliographies treating liturgical studies now exist. Thus, it is even truer today than it was when Kantorowicz wrote in 1946 that »it is really no longer possible for the mediaeval historian [...] to deal cheerfully with the history of mediaeval thought and culture without ever opening a missal«. Granted that the present reviewer has long dealt »cheerfully« with medieval history without ever having opened a missal, the importance of liturgical study as a means for approaching medieval thought and culture cannot be gainsaid.

The title of the book under review referring without qualification to »the High Middle Ages« is somewhat misleading, for most readers would understand that chronological term to encompass the period between 1050 and 1300, whereas five of the eleven articles included treat centuries before then. A misnomer of a different sort comes in the heading of an essay, »Mass Riot«, for the author does not mean masses of people rioting but rather »rioting during mass«.

As is customary in collections of this variety, the locales treated are geographically dispersed and the subjects greatly varied. It is hard to imagine a reader lending equal attention to »[Middle] Byzantine Liturgies«, »Strategies of Writing History in Medieval Southern Italy«, and »Liturgy and Group Formation in Central-Medieval Denmark«. Over-specialization abounds. When an author announces that he will engage in a »brief digression« (p. 102) and then digresses for seven pages, one wonders what he might have done if he hadn't been »brief«. The first essay in the book, by Pawel Figurski, often has many more words in the footnotes than in the text, as well as puffed up language such as »the medieval world's sacramentality«. The essay is based entirely on early-medieval and Polish sources and reads like the introduction to a doctoral dissertation. (Which it quite possibly was.)

On the other hand, some contributions may be strongly recommended. One is Bartłomiej Dźwigala's, »Palm Sunday and Easter 1118 in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem«. Here the author



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shows how Arnulf of Chocques, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, used the liturgy of Holy Week and Easter to favor his preferred candidate, Baldwin of Bourcq, for the succession to the Latin Kingship over that of Eustace of Boulogne, who had a stronger hereditary claim. Fortunately for Arnulf, Baldwin was on the scene, whereas Eustace was distant, but the determining factor was Arnulf's use of the awe created by liturgy to have Baldwin recognized as king. He employed a solemn funeral liturgy for his predecessor »as a first step in staging the process of succession«. Then the Patriarch drew on the liturgical »Jerusalem Ordinal« to direct processions with the bearing of palms and olive branches. When he proffered a relic of the crown of thorns, it was »venerated through a triple genuflection and prostration performed by the whole gathering«. The political-liturgical rituals that followed during the Paschal Triduum were equally solemn and exultant.

Vedran Sulovsky's, »The Barbarossaleuchter: Imperial Monument and Pious Donation«, has the virtue both of presenting a wealth of relevant information and engaging in dialogue with prior scholarship. The »Leuchter« was an ornate octagonal chandelier installed by Frederick Barbarossa in the Palatine Chapel in Aachen. Before Sulovsky, the authority on the subject had been Ernst G. Grimme, who wrote that the chandelier was meant to be »complete« only when the ruler was present directly beneath it; in other words, it was meant to stand for a symbolic crown. But Sulovsky finds no evidence for this view and proposes instead that the chandelier simply was mounted as a »material representation of heaven«. A bonus of the article is that it includes excellent color reproductions of three glorious high-medieval wheeled chandeliers.

The last article in the book, Cecilia Gaposchkin's, »Liturgy and Kingship in the Sainte Chapelle«, treats devotions in the royal chapel located within the palace complex on the Île de la Cité inhabited by the Capetians. Gaposchkin concentrates on the liturgy for a new feast, that for the relic of the Crown of Thorns acquired by Louis IX and celebrated in the Sainte Chapelle as of 1240. As she demonstrates, this liturgy »emphasized above all themes of eternal kingship« and hence resonated with earthly royalty. As she writes »to the extent that the liturgy was commissioned by the crown but disseminated beyond the court, the office served explicitly as a mechanism of royal propaganda«. Moreover, a striking illustration of the pervasiveness of political imagery in the Sainte Chapelle is that a reliquary of John the Baptist gave the saint a crown even though he never was a king. All told, the author offers plentiful evidence to show that the liturgy used in the home chapel of the French monarchy fully articulated »the transfer of the Church's transcendental sacrality to the monarch and his kingdom«. Kantorowicz's interest in the »transformations, implications and radiations« of »mediaeval political theology« is here fully borne out in exemplifying a sort of Karisma.



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