

How seriously did  
people take claim that  
kings ruled with god's  
blessing essay



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People did not seriously take claim that kings ruled with God's blessing; it was more widely accepted that kings ruled to preserve the obfuscating feudal society, rather than for divine right. As Petit-Dutaillis articulates the kings' function was purely for political ideology with financial principles and national social amalgamation to uphold a feudalistic society; which was seen at best the only effective configuration appropriate for a violent, disfiguring and destructible world. It would be more supplementary sensible to argue that 'it was essential' for people to 'have a public authority', as to destroy the emergence of 'tyranny' there 'must be kings'.<sup>[1]</sup> However, it undoubtedly must be acknowledged that there are arguments harmonizing that people seriously claimed kings ruled with God's blessing, these aspects of arguments must also be carefully analysed. As the question is fairly vague in its wording, by only highlighting people, it must be discussed through groups of people from separate backgrounds within a feudal society such as: the monarchy itself, the Pope and his clergy representatives, the nobility and peasants.

At first it is best to evaluate the altercation supporting that people took claim that kings ruled with God's blessing from the point of view of the monarchy in which Jones and Herrin are promoters. Jones elucidates that kingship, was portrayed by the monarchy as having the divine prerogative to administrate the wishes of God and that no earthly power could influence the king's 'absolutism'. This is certainly true by using King Richard II of England (1367-1400) as an exemplar, in which he commemorated himself as being 'the protagonist of sacred majesty', concerning the importance of his obsession with sacred kingship by displaying 'the sun on his banners and standards'<sup>[2]</sup>

, and also requesting the creation of the Wilton Diptych; a small diptych depicting the reign of Richard being blessed by the Virgin Mary along with other popular saints. Herrin also coincides by enlightening the model that the monarchy portrayed itself of obtaining 'imperial power' through 'God's will and served as His representative on earth', this ideology was widely spread throughout Western and Eastern Christian Europe, as for example, it was evident in the Byzantium Empire; as emperor's accentuated that their 'power was designed to implement divine rule'.<sup>[3]</sup> Both Jones and Herrin are supported by an anonymous 'tractates', accredited to date back to 1100AD, in which the anonymous manifestly records 'the power of the King is the power of God'.<sup>[4]</sup> The origin of this primary source must be scrutinized however, as Kantorowicz noticeably expresses doubt about the authorship of the 'tractates', as the biographer himself was a 'Norman cleric' who was 'instituted by the king', this suggests the Norman priest would of be in favouritism for the king suggestive of the kings' ascendancy with God highlighting his: superior authority.<sup>[5]</sup> However this will be discussed later presently. Although it seems indisputably comprehensible that later medieval monarchy seriously imposed kings ruled with God's blessing, supported moderately by the Catholic clergy, there are different aspects which must be explored.

The Pope and his clergy representatives gave the impression they corroborated kings ruled with God's blessing, possibly suggesting that people within the Catholic commune from dissimilar economic classes were also convinced of the king's divine rule. This becomes palpable as the church in both England and France held claim of the king's 'biological privilege'

because of its celestial importance of being blessed to do God's bidding; to govern His Catholic land and persons through 'divine right'. [6] This is substantiated by the Norman anonymous, who has been mentioned before, interprets kings of being a 'persona mixta' and 'not an ordinary person', or put plainly having not only an earthly presence but also a spiritual one blessed by God. The king was portrayed of having the power devised as the same of Christ, a figurehead who was not only anointed within the living world but also 'anointed in heaven and therewith of God'. [7] Although it may authenticate to be true that the church took a zealous standpoint that kings ruled with God's blessing, it must indubitably be argued whether the clergy representatives worked in the best interests of the monarchy, and did not represent how seriously the entire Catholic church believed in the king's divine rule; especially the Pope. Thus there is the assortment of how the church benefited from having a so patently entwined affiliation with the monarchy, through economic and political aspects, that the Pope sanctified the king's reign to preserve this beneficial bonding relationship, thus holding power in Europe. This is most unquestionably true as the king was widely alleged to not have 'eternity' sacred power whilst being a 'terrestrial king' but only becomes blessed by God through the churches 'anointment and consecration', in other words the church subjugated whether the king's reign was blessed by God; signifying the church's dominance of kingship for its own subject gains. [8] As Pope Boniface VIII (c.

1235-1303), in 1301, idealised the church's pre-eminence over independent kings by arguing that the church is only 'one body and one head, not two heads like a monster', [9] highlighting the church's stance of being one

dominating rule; not seriously making an allowance that kings ruled with God's blessing. The relationship with the monarchy and the church can be concluded by the example of Kantorowicz's analysis of, again, the primary source authored by the anonymous Norman cleric, in which he argues the cleric's appraisal of the 'Kings two bodies' was due to his 'good knowledge of theological literature' which the monarchy would utilize for own personal power injunction. Kantorowicz follows on to highlight the cleric's incontestable elevated position as a 'member of the Duchy's high clergy' indicating the close relationship between kings and church.[10] Jones also adds, by again using King Richard II of England as an example, that Richard increased expenditure to the church and allowed clergy administrators to take a more active role within his court which in return the church fêted Richard's reign as being stoutly blessed by God, this put Richard in such a potent 'absolutism' which was never enjoyed before by any other previous English king. 'The king sought more consistently the companionship of monks' in the later part of his reign.[11] Although the process of how the church manipulated kings for power expansion has been explored, there are other examples of how the church questioned kings' blessed rule. Following on with another factor was the potent influence the church had on the wide-ranging populace such as the nobles and peasants, not just on the monarchy itself. It must be understood that the Catholic Church was a universally important part of people's way of life; being the centre of the community, in which taking into consideration, would sway peoples ideals on how serious they took claim that kings ruled with God's blessing.

The church thrived, particularly in Western Europe, as the emergence of 'ecclesiastical' monasteries held overshadowing influence in political and economic matters by learning the practice of independent 'legal responsibility' and finance which were only subject to the 'pontifical authority' and not the king. Finucane follows on to argue on how the church's monasteries and cathedrals became great powers of influence for the Catholic populace by commemorating past dead individuals as 'martyrs' and 'saints' who previously rebelled the king's authority; which soon became places of pilgrimage. A good example is of Thomas Becket (c. 1120-1170), who notably defied King Henry II of England (1133-1189), was 'canonized' making Canterbury Cathedral the most 'popular pilgrimage centre in England'. An addition to this case is also the rebel leaders Simon de Montfort (c. 1208-1265), who fought 'against the king's army', and Thomas of Lancaster (c. 1278-1322), who was executed by Edward II of England (1284-1327), both promptly were 'canonized as saints' and became admired pilgrimage sites.[13] Therefore it is contended that the popularity of these certain pilgrim sites, holding rebel saints, suggests people did not seriously take claim that kings ruled with God's blessing but rather other notable figures were more favoured religiously.

In contrast, it must be considered that kings' blessed rule was taken seriously by the nobility classes in which King is an advocate. King demonstrates that nobility lords were unremitting in their 'loyalty to the king' because they believed in the 'importance of his sacred rule', which was most highly publicised through the coronation of a king with anointment of 'most holy oil' and principle righteous promises of serving both 'God and

the king's subjects' by safeguarding the best interests of the feudalistic social order; which benefitted the noble class undoubtedly. In which Abdy agrees by adding persons in influential power below the king expressed willingness to take a 'oath of fealty', a homage in which they put upon themselves of becoming 'your man from this day forward of life and limb' and 'shall be true and faithful'.<sup>[15]</sup> To look at this from an aristocratic view point one can argue that most seriously the king ruled with divine authority because of his zenith supremacy upon the top of a feudalistic society also his influence over the church and nobility classes on political, financial and social concerns. However these arguments are better classified to be moreover too passé and does not highlight a clearer picture of more an accepted point of view about the nobles and peasants; which follows. The arguments supporting that the nobility classes seriously took claim that kings ruled with God's blessing is wrong. Oneself can argue that example events such as the barons constitution writing of the Magna Carta, imposed upon King John of England (1166-1216), is self evidence that the nobility seriously did not claim kings' sacred rule. Nobles took a stance against the King forcing him to give up his 'ancient royal rights of vis et voluntas' (force and will), clearly identifying nobles disregarded the King's rule as being nothing like 'holy', 'sacred' or a 'right' but purely a political, as they demanded power spread evenly upon the nobles.

[16] Contemporaries of that time, such as Roger of Wendover (c. 1200?-1236) who wrote in 1215 describing the Magna Carta, the nobles demanded 'aforesaid liberties' from a King who was 'inferior in strength'.<sup>[17]</sup> Both Hindley and Petit-Dutaillis argue that barons although underneath the king in

the feudalistic system they still held an exceedingly lucid claim to power which could easily undermine the kings' reign. Therefore the monarchy could neither have ' the ability nor the strength uphold' a feudalistic society alone without the existence of the nobility; undermining his scared rule.[18]