

The True “Solomon”: The Ecclesiastical and Political Personas of Saint-King Louis IX

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Abstract: In this project, I proposed to ascertain the relationship between the ecclesiastical nature of Saint Louis (King Louis IX of France) and his role as a political figure in history. I accomplished this through in depth research of artistic representations and architectural commissions of the saint-king throughout the Gothic period. I consulted numerous primary sources, such as manuscript illuminations and sculptural works, as well as secondary sources, such as books and journal articles in pursuit of this goal. As a result, I found that a close connection existed between the roles of Louis IX as both saint and king. Most works of art depicted him in both roles. The title of an essay even refers to Saint Louis as a greater incarnation of King Solomon, linking him with a Biblical ruler renowned for his wisdom and prosperity. Such a practice was common in political artwork from the Middle Ages, which often made allusions to kings or prophets in the Bible in order to advance ideas of piety and the notion of divine sanction on the part of their own rulers. The inference here then, is that King Louis IX and many of his successors used his religious affiliations to further his reputation and political standing, as well as that of the entire French dynasty. My presentation at the Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Forum will summarize my findings through the exploration of case studies of the Royal Chapel of Ste. Chapelle and the illuminated manuscript of the Hours of Jeanne d’Evreux.

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