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THE BIBLICAL KING SOLOMON IN REPRESENTATIONS OF WESTERN EUROPEAN MEDIEVAL ROYALTY*

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King Solomon, the famously wise ruler of the Old Testament and successor to King David, was a popular model for kings from the early centuries of Europe’s Middle Ages. He was the presumed author of four biblical books, the *Book of Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, the *Song of Songs* and the *Book of Wisdom*, which served as ethical and political guides for kings as well as lay people. An ambivalence surrounded his character that derived partly from the fact that he was influenced by his wives and lovers, and became idolatrous and turned away from God at the end of his life. Moreover, an ancient tradition held that Solomon acquired his knowledge thanks to magical practices.\(^1\) David, alongside Solomon, was one of the most favoured biblical exemplars for rulers, especially in the early Middle Ages.\(^2\) Yet, Solomon became increasingly viewed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as the example to emulate. Varied associations, some negative, meant it was impossible, however, for medieval authors to create a fixed image of him.

The highlighted aspects of the Solomonic ideal varied through the ages as Solomon was intermittently associated with peace,\(^3\) justice (1 Kings 3:16–28), wealth (1 Kings 10:14, 23), wisdom\(^4\) and, not without potentially negative connotations, involvement in magical practices.\(^5\) From the Bible, we know of several famous episodes concerning the king, such as ‘Solomon’s Judgement’, an incident in which he resolved a dispute between two women who both claimed to be the mother of the same child. Moreover, his rich kingdom and his famed knowledge were said to have drawn the attention of the Queen of Sheba, who travelled to meet with the king. Legendary objects as well as virtues were connected with him, ranging from the temple he built (1 Kings 6) and his palace (1 Kings 7), to his throne (1 Kings 10:18–20), key\(^6\) and ring.\(^7\) Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem became an archetype, one which many medieval rulers sought to imitate.

This chapter will examine the way in which King Solomon was employed as a royal exempla in the medieval west between the ninth and fourteenth centuries. A Solomonic typology was certainly not attached to every medieval ruler’s image. The instances selected in this study are, however, particularly notable examples. First, the chapter will touch on the early instances of so-called ‘new Solomons’, particularly among Carolingian and Byzantine rulers. The analysis will then focus on a
thirteenth-century group of kings: Saint Louis IX of France, Henry III of England and Alfonso X the Wise of Castile. Finally, it will consider a quintessentially Solomonic king, the fourteenth-century French ruler Charles V the Wise in contrast with one of his near contemporaries, the English king, Richard II. The following questions will be discussed: Which aspects of Solomon were selected and promoted for emulation? When and how did a monarch engage consciously in imitating Solomon as a strategy to increase his reputation through the use of biblical typology?

The tradition of Solomon incorporates scriptural and theological sources, vernacular literature, folklore, Islamic culture, magical treatises, the visual arts and political writings. Besides clerical writings, vernacular literature sought to fill the gap and interpret the mystery around the way in which the figure of Solomon develops in the Bible. In this respect, good examples of vernacular texts include the entertaining dialogue *Solomon and Marcolf*, which appeared in various languages, the closely related English text *Solomon and Saturn II*, or popular legends like that of King Solomon and Alexander the Great, and an episode in the legend of Edward the Confessor in which two pilgrims met with Solomon during their travels.\(^8\) This chapter will, however, restrict itself to exploring political, liturgical, poetical and iconographical sources connected with royalty.

In most cases, citations of the Solomonic books in the sources have no intended message about kingship and political thought. It was, of course, common for medieval authors to quote the Bible in support of their arguments,\(^9\) the words of Solomon from Proverbs being only one example. Methodologically, it is important, therefore, to separate specific allusions to the ruler as a new Solomon – which always depend on the historical context and the genre of the source – from the general citations. Those examples that feature Solomon as a supporting actor, that is, for example, as son of David or father of Rehoboam, can be discounted. Similarly, many cases in which citations associated with Solomon appear to have no particular significance need not be considered. However, caution is required: in some cases – for example, in a mirror for princes that contains indirect references to biblical figures\(^10\) – such citations might help to convey the author’s general opinion about Solomon if the king was referred to on multiple occasions or other Old Testament kings were conspicuous by their absence. This study focuses primarily on those instances when a direct comparison can be drawn between Solomon and a specific ruler with the exception of instances in which an author placed particular emphasis on Solomon. This comparison is not evident in every example, but as Elka Bakalova put it: ‘It is much more common to find a complex system of implicit guidelines which aims at activating certain associations.’\(^11\) We need to keep in mind that the use of the biblical typology could be mixed, and the rulers’ contemporaries sometimes applied numerous models at the same time, including David, Joshua,\(^12\) Melchizedek, the Magi\(^13\) or the negative example of a king like Saul.\(^14\)

**Early medieval kingship: the example of the Carolingian rulers and the Byzantine tradition**

The use of the Bible for political purposes was already current in the Merovingian period and is evident in the works of Gregory of Tours and Sulpicius Severus. The Carolingian rulers together with their advisors followed this earlier practice.\(^15\)
Not only did the leading clerics of the Carolingian court compare their kings to Old Testament figures, but popes also relied on this method of parallelism.\(^{16}\)

By way of a brief illustration, we can refer to some examples from Carolingian circles. First, it is worth mentioning Charlemagne because it was commonplace that in his court he was called – among other things – ‘David’. This demonstrates the tendency to use biblical figures in courtly rhetoric.\(^{17}\) Charlemagne, as a conqueror, was definitely not a peaceful Solomon-like king, but the Solomon analogy emerged in a letter. Alcuin wrote to Charlemagne that the chapel in Aachen ‘is being constructed by the art of the most wise Solomon’,\(^{18}\) invoking the builder-aspect of Solomon and drawing a clear parallel between them. According to this interpretation, Charlemagne’s building in Aachen was created as a second Jerusalem.\(^{19}\) On the other hand, Einhard, writing in his *Vita Caroli Magni*, did not refer to Solomon as a named biblical personage at all. This was the result of his general preference for the classical antique tradition over the biblical quotations relied on by other medieval authors. In the Bible, when the Temple was finished but prior to its consecration, God promised that if Solomon kept God’s commandments and the faith, his heir would rule. However, if Solomon was idolatrous, his heirs would be wiped from the Earth (1 Kings 9:6). As Mary Garrison noted, Einhard mentioned that Charlemagne took care of his church and the correct observance of the rites at Aachen.\(^{20}\) While not a concrete comparison between the two rulers, this could be taken as a subtle analogy between the temple building of Solomon and Charlemagne’s similar activity.\(^{21}\) Despite the letter of Alcuin and Einhard’s possible allusion, Charlemagne, however, was mostly a Davidic ruler in the eyes of his contemporaries.\(^{22}\)

Charlemagne, as David, embodied another typology: his son, Louis the Pious, was openly praised as a new Solomon, drawing on the biblical ‘father-son’ identification. Following his conquering father, Louis was proclaimed a pious king, and his kingship was characterized as a more irenic period in which the Solomonic model played a heightened role in court circles.\(^{23}\) The poet Ermoldus Nigellus’s *In honorem Hludowici* (c.826–9) described Louis as a fine example to his son, Pipin II of Aquitaine. Ermoldus’s biography and the reason for his exile by Louis are unclear; certainly he created his poem during his banishment in the hope of rehabilitation.\(^{24}\) The poem was an imaginary dialogue between Louis and Pope Stephen IV during their meeting in 816. Despite the fact that Ermoldus’s biblical language was not prominent in this work, the Solomonic comparison is important. In the conversation, the Pope not only compared Louis to Solomon, but he also stressed that the Frankish king was more powerful in his heart; he lived more chastely and while Solomon ruled only Israel, Louis was able to rule all the kingdoms in Europe.\(^{25}\) In two other examples, the authors draw an analogy between Solomon and Louis’s peaceful reigns. After Louis’s death, the monk Notker the Stammerer in his work about Charlemagne (*Gesta Karoli Magni*) stated that Louis was as peaceful as Solomon while Charlemagne was as warlike as King David.\(^{26}\)

Amalarius of Metz (c.820), in the preface to his *Liber officialis*, emphasized the peaceful aspect of Solomon’s character and evidently connected it to Louis.\(^{27}\)

The parallel between a Carolingian ruler and Solomon was employed in the case of Louis’s successor, Charles the Bald, as well. The cultural milieu of his court – including the activity of Hincmar of Reims and Sedulius Scottus – was susceptible to the rhetoric of peace, and Charles was a particularly well-educated king among
the Carolingian rulers. Sedulius composed an *adventus* verse in 869, dedicated to Charles, and formulated an illustrious parallel for his arrival at Metz: ‘Holding the paternal sceptre, a peacemaker, like Solomon’. In the historical context, Charles the Bald, after expanding his power to Lorraine in 869, was able to reunite two of the three kingdoms. In the eyes of Sedulius, Charles – in this typology – became the Solomon who ruled over Israel and Judah; only such a peaceful monarch could prevail in two Carolingian kingdoms. In addition, the sumptuous *S. Paolo Bible* was produced under the patronage of Charles the Bald and contains a portrait of both the king and Solomon. William Diebold pointed out that a parallel could be drawn between the two compositions because the two rulers’ appearances are similar. However, Charles’s depiction might also be likened to that of other royal figures in the Bible, such as Pharaoh or Saul.

Naturally, this idealized image of kingship was familiar in the Byzantine court. The Greek antecedents go back to Eusebius who invoked several Old Testament models. For example, he pictured Constantine as a new Moses in the fourth century. In the Byzantine tradition, Solomon appeared mostly as an example of a royal builder. In Constantinople the Throne of Solomon and the *templum Salomonis* were also a celebrated aspect of the biblical king. This tendency was exemplified by the sixth-century emperor Justinian’s famous exclamation – uttered in relation to Hagia Sophia – ‘Solomon, I have outdone thee.’ Beyond the symbolic significance of Hagia Sophia, the church was also a location for Solomonic relics. According to ninth- and tenth-century sources, these included the chalice and golden table from the Temple of Jerusalem. The most famous object, however, was Solomon’s legendary throne. The *Book of Ceremonies* alludes to a mechanical throne (*automata*) in the hall of the Magnaura in Constantinople, but it is unclear whether the Byzantines considered it Solomon’s original throne or just a reproduction. While, as Shaun Tougher observes, competition between the Byzantine and Carolingian courts was certainly real, in the specific case of Old Testament models the origins and direction in which influence flowed cannot be determined with certainty.

As with the Frankish royal family, the Byzantines adopted the tradition in the ninth and tenth centuries that while the father was a new David, his son was known as a new Solomon. The most prominent example of this custom was Basil I and his son Leo VI the Wise. Basil, the founder of the Macedonian dynasty, was referred to as David, and this fact could also have influenced his son’s link to Solomon. It was well known that Basil I was descended from the lower ranks of society, and he was attentive to the education of his son. Emperor Leo VI was unusual among Byzantine rulers to the extent he built an ideology focused on the virtue of wisdom. Several writers connected Leo’s reign to Solomon in that he was concerned for the law, interested in church building and possessed great knowledge. He was a classic example of an early new Solomon, both during his lifetime and after his death, when his reign came to be remembered as a ‘golden age’. In 907, the diplomat Leo Choirosphaktes wrote that Leo could be counted in the company of Solomon and other wise men. A few years later, in 912, the patriarch Nicholas wrote to the pope to say that Leo had received his wisdom as a gift from God, like Solomon.

The Franks and the Byzantine emperors were not the only ones to use this typological pairing. The Holy Roman Emperor Otto I was called a new David and his son was viewed as another Solomon. This conception of the Saxon dynasty was reflected...
in the works of Hrotsvitha von Gandersheim, a secular canoness who used the Old Testament typology for political purposes. As Manuel Alejandro Rodríguez de la Peña discusses in his chapter in this volume, the crown of the Holy Roman emperors was made in the tenth century and includes four plates decorated with biblical figures. Between Christ, King David, King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, Solomon appears as part of the composition. This image functioned as an important model for the emperors, both at their coronation and during their rule.

Saint Louis, Henry III of England and Alfonso X

From the twelfth – but especially from the thirteenth – century, the use of Old Testament figures and stories as models for kings began to flourish. Emphasis shifted away from popular ancient historical characters, such as legendary Greek heroes, to Old Testament figures, particularly kings. Three thirteenth-century kings offer particularly good examples of the different ways in which Solomon came to be used to strengthen royal authority in court circles.

The piety of the French king – and later saint – Louis IX informed the way in which the Capetian ruler was presented as one particular type of Solomonic model. As Jacques Le Goff noted, the Old Testament models employed in creating an image of Louis’s rulership are complex, especially in regard to the king’s holiness. Louis was like King David and Solomon or Josiah, but was also sometimes presented as a new Abraham, Moses or Joshua. Old Testament language was a common instrument employed by authors of mirrors of princes at Louis’s court. Vincent of Beauvais and Guibert of Tournai frequently used biblical characters to express their viewpoint about good or bad kings. Vincent cited Solomon thirteen times, mostly in the De morali principis institutione because of his wisdom. Guibert of Tournai highlighted Solomon’s justice mainly in Eruditio regum et principum, but Solomon’s wives and lovers were also mentioned as deterrent examples.

One way to understand the role of the biblical stories for the Capetians, particularly for Louis and his mother Blanche of Castile, is to single out a few examples from the visual arts. Meredith Cohen analysed the windows of the cathedral of Reims, where, with the exception of Adam, Solomon was the only Old Testament figure to appear in the medieval windows (c.1245–55). Meredith Parsons concluded that the ‘Solomon in Bed’ window referred to Louis IX. The iconography of the stained-glass windows of the Sainte-Chapelle, completed in 1248, summarized the political and cultural aspirations of Louis. It was a royal programme with an emphasis on the Old Testament. The chapel is a pictorial composition of biblical books from Genesis to the Book of Kings presented in a narrative form. In the mid-nineteenth century, the panels were restored and a number replaced. Alyce A. Jordan has reconstructed their hypothetical arrangement while following, principally, Louis Grodecki’s older numbering system. The last window departs from the biblical cycle and is generally considered to depict the story of Louis himself, who carried the relics of the Passion to Paris. Solomon appears at the top of the Book of Kings lancet as an idolatrous king, praying to an idol. This lancet is placed, as Jordan has noted, in oppositio to the lancet featuring Louis: Solomon’s failure and the subsequent collapse of his dynasty (God’s punishment for his sin) is contrasted with Louis’s dynastic continuity. This arrangement suggests that the deliberate intention was to draw a comparison that
implied that Louis was a better king than Solomon. Louis in this context carried the relics of the True Cross, while, in contrast, Solomon was shown adoring an idol.53 This schema was echoed in the earlier example from Ermoldus, who wrote that Louis the Pious had surpassed Solomon.

About twenty-seven years after the death of Louis, Old Testament typology came to feature prominently in commemorative sermons relating to the king’s canonization process. The Dominican preacher Jacob of Lausanne created five sermons for the canonization feast of Louis, of which two are significant, the Videte regem Salomonem and the Rex sapiens.54 The Videte regem begins by drawing a clear parallel between Solomon and St Louis. Following the form of a scholastic sermon, the point of departure is a biblical verse, in this case the Song of Songs 3:11, which notes the richness and wisdom of Solomon who surpassed all kings. The conception of wisdom as a holy gift appeared in the B version where Jacob emphasized that Louis bore two types of wisdom, sapientia and prudentia. This version established that for the ‘divine things’ (divinorum) wisdom was necessary while the secular offices required prudence.55 The Rex sapiens (Wisdom 6:23) also referred to the wisdom of Solomon,56 but here Solomon appears as a guilty figure who abandoned the true faith unlike Louis who always ruled with justice and divine wisdom, the same connotation implied in the stained glass of the Sainte-Chapelle.

Throughout the Middle Ages it was a conventional expectation that rulers follow the tenets of Christianity, particularly those relating to ruling in peace and showing mercy. Following John of Salisbury’s influential Policraticus, authors of mirrors of princes started, from the mid-thirteenth century, to prioritize the virtue of sapientia. This virtue was described as a gift from God, as in the sermon of Jacob of Lausanne. While sapientia was mostly a theoretical and contemplative virtue, to be prudent was a practical skill of increasing political importance.57 Aristotelian language influenced conceptions about royal knowledge: besides theology, rulers had to complete their learning with other scientific disciplines and acquire scholarly learning (prudentia). This virtue’s importance increased and the emphasis shifted to prudentia: it was not only the product of divine knowledge but also an obtainable skill, and for fourteenth-century rulers it became a crucial aspect to be better educated.58 Louis IX and his period marked the transition towards this outlook.

King Solomon could also be used in concrete political situations, as was the case in the sermon Pope Boniface VIII delivered as part of Louis’s canonization process on 11 August 1297 in Orvieto. He began the sermon with an Old Testament reference: ‘And King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom’ (1 Kings 10:23) (Magnificatus est ergo rex Salomon, super omnes reges terrae, divitiis et sapiential). The pope transformed the citation so that St Louis surpassed the greatness of Solomon. Both of them were called rex pacificus. The political reason for this allusion was the earlier conflict between the French king, Philip IV the Fair, and Boniface. It is clear that the pope was using this analogy as a condemnation of Philip who lacked those virtues in contrast to his grandfather. Although the canonization itself was a sign of the rapprochement between the pope and the French king, as M. Cecilia Gaposchkin has pointed out, Boniface’s criticism was observable in this process.59

Louis’s contemporary, Henry III of England, showed a greater personal predilection for the figure of Solomon. Henry was not only drawn towards the biblical king,
but he supported the cult of an earlier ‘new Solomon’: the saintly king Edward the Confessor who was a crucial model of the wise ruler available to Henry. The ideological and dynastic rivalry between France and England continued for centuries, and until the canonization of St Louis, the Capetian dynasty lacked any saint-king. Nonetheless, the English royal house had a national saint from the twelfth century, Edward, who was compared to Solomon in hagiographical literature. Henry was one of the most generous English royal patrons, a tendency which is reflected in the lost images of Winchester and in the Painted Chamber of Westminster. The Painted Chamber’s structure and the arrangement of frescoes was established by Paul Binski. Henry’s interest in biblical kingship appeared in the Old Testament stories and the painting of the two militant guardians of Solomon in Bed (Song of Songs 3:7–8) in a complex composition (c.1263–72). The most striking feature in the Westminster and Winchester paintings is that King Solomon does not appear, yet the composition alludes to him. Behind Henry’s bed was depicted the coronation of Edward the Confessor surrounded by the guardians. Henry himself completed the depicted scene and was shown to be the next new Solomon. The king also ordered a new throne, the iconography of which invoked the Throne of Solomon: the leopards of Henry’s throne invoking the lions of Solomon.

The magical part of the Solomonic image also came to the fore in royal image-making in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and appeared spectacularly in the reign of the Castilian king Alfonso X the Wise. Alfonso strongly emphasized his cultural patronage via commissions of magical treatises and translations such as the *Picatrix* (1256–8) and the *Liber Raziel* (c.1259). The pseudo-Solomonic books – like the *Liber Raziel* – contain allusions to Solomon, and legends attributed their authorship to him. However, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* collection of poems, traditionally attributed to Alfonso himself, implied that it contained several citations of Solomon. The king’s iconographical programme referred to Solomon as well. The *Siete Partidas* statutory code cites Solomon several times. In one sense this is not surprising because Solomon was a general symbol of justice and law, yet allusions to Solomon in law books were certainly not universal, which makes this case notable. Alfonso X ordered the translation of nineteen magical books, and in the *Liber Raziel*’s prologue Solomon is portrayed as an expert in science and nature. This was an evident allusion to Alfonso as the wise, Solomonic king. However, the increasing role of Solomonic wisdom can be found especially among ‘wise kings’ of the fourteenth century.

**The widespread image of learned kings: the wise kings of the fourteenth century**

It is essential to mention the most Solomonic ruler of the fourteenth century, Robert the Wise of Naples. Samantha Kelly’s detailed analysis proves how important Solomon was to Robert: the Angevin ruler deliberately used this model in speech and referred to himself as Solomon’s successor. This self-conscious and extensive use of King Solomon in Robert’s self-representation is a distinctive case. It is not necessary to go very far, however, to find other rulers from this period who compared themselves – or were compared – to Solomon. Among them was the Emperor Charles IV of Luxemburg. Pope Clement VI and in 1378 the archbishop of Prague in the funeral of the emperor drew the comparison with the latter in his sermons.
To show how the Solomonic ideal crystallized, we will examine the third ruler of the Valois dynasty, Charles V the Wise. Jean-Patrice Boudet drew a parallel between Alfonso X and Charles V on the basis of the translation of astrological treatises at court, something which characterized the rule of both kings. Many of the astrological works translated at Charles’s court, were attributed to Solomon. Other manuscripts where Solomon was an active figure were also commissioned. Charles inherited political conflicts at the beginning of his rule that included the revolt of Étienne Marcel and the Jacquerie, in addition to the Hundred Years War. In dealing successfully with this difficult situation, Charles increased his reputation. He made an effort to increase Valois’ prestige with his royal library and via the activity of the scholars, philosophers, translators and artists at his court. After his death, his reign came to be regarded as a ‘golden age’.

Solomon appears in the prologues dedicated to the French king or in connection with his portrait in manuscripts. Hence, the Solomonic image was presented to Charles’s inner circle and of course directly to the king himself. Charles ordered a translation of the work *De proprietatibus rerum* by Bartholomaeus Anglicus from Jean Corbechon in 1372. In his preface – which preceded the text of Bartholomeus – Corbechon cited the words of Solomon, and, after enumerating other ancient sages (Aristotle, Charlemagne, Alexander the Great, etc.), he returned to a particular emphasis on Solomon and wisdom, and highlighted that Charles V was a well-educated king. On this basis he labelled him a new Solomon. In another work commissioned by Charles, a translation of Guillaume Durand’s *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, the translator who was the Carmelite theologian Jean Golein, wrote a prologue about the ideal of the *rex sapiens* where his central figure was Solomon. Mentions of Solomon by name in this latter exceeded any other paragon of intelligence seven fold. Citing Solomon could be meaningful, especially if the author neglected other model figures: Charlemagne appears in only one paragraph and Alexander the Great only three times. The only biblical figure cited in addition to Solomon is Josephus. Thus, the central wise king in this introduction is evidently Solomon. In justifying his work, Jean drew a direct comparison between Charles V and Solomon. At the end of the translation he added his own tract (*Traité du sacre*), which was a commentary on the coronation rite and an explanation of French ideology. Here Jean drew further attention to Solomon, the latter appearing as a model, again, seven times more than other figures.

Charles V is also notable for the portrait images that appear in the codices he commissioned. The king was depicted several times in dedication portraits as a learned ruler debating with scholars or reading a book. In the example in Figure 2.1, taken from a translation of the *Policraticus*, King Solomon appears in the miniatures alongside Charles himself.

In the *Policraticus*’s (1372) dedication portrait Charles is reading a book, a reference to the message of the manuscript: a king had to be literate. In folio 12r, Charles is depicted sitting in front of the Latin Church fathers and philosophers, a group of wise men among whom is to be found Solomon. Charles is sitting on his throne; he is crowned and wears distinctive blue clothing to indicate he is a king. Solomon is also depicted wearing a crown and similar blue clothing, while the other figures do not wear crowns or distinctive blue garments. Below, a crowd of people stare upward at the two rulers and at Christ at the top of the image. The miniature is accompanied by the inscription: ‘Blessed is the land whose king is a wise man.’ Both Charles and
Figure 2.1 Charles V of France, called the Wise. King of France (r. 1364–80), member of the Valois dynasty. Representation of Charles V in his library. Mary Evans/Iberfoto
Solomon appear as wise rulers and as the only kings. They are positioned on the same level, and Charles, sitting on his throne with lions (the throne of Dagobert), gazes at the masters collecting their knowledge (symbolized by books) in a basket. He appears an educated king and a successor to the learned Solomon. If we compare this miniature with the preface, written by the translator, Denis Foulechat, it is apparent that Solomon is the central figure. Here Foulechat highlighted the importance of a king’s knowledge, which show the ideological background of the royal court. He enumerates several wise models (such as Plato and Saint Ambrose), but Solomon and his words are cited six times, more than any other exemplars. As Iva Rosario has pointed out, Emperor Charles IV, Charles V’s uncle, is depicted resembling the priest-king Melchizedek in two manuscripts, the Vyšehrad Antiphonal and the Missal of John of Středa. The miniature of Solomon and Charles V suggests, by contrast, that the French king did not aspire to create a similar ‘crypto-portrait’ of himself as Solomon; he was content to draw a clear comparison.

The development of Charles V’s image as a ‘new Solomon’ after his death is similar to the growth of St Louis’s post-mortem reputation: both rulers became the subject of explicit comparisons with the biblical ruler. The memory of Charles was tinged by a certain nostalgia, which transformed his reputation at the court a few decades after his death. This reassessment was owed in part to the madness of his successor, Charles VI, and, in particular, to what was, from a French perspective, a disastrous phase in the Hundred Years War. Philippe de Mézières, one of Charles’ most important former advisers, praised his wisdom and labelled the king ‘the wise Solomon’ (le saige Salomon) in his Songe du vieil pèlerin in 1389. Around 1380, the court poet Eustache Deschamps also mentioned this idea, citing Charles alongside the illustrious exemplars of the past. Charles could be compared to Solomon with regard to his learning. The idea also appeared in another ballade, written for Charles’s funeral. In this nostalgic era, contemporaries started to draw explicit comparisons between Charles and the wise Solomon; Charles thus became similar to the Old Testament king in his talents and activities.

The long-term impact of Charles V’s Solomonic legacy can, as Nigel Saul highlighted, be seen at the court of Richard II of England. Saul noted that Richard was familiar with the wisdom-related image making of Charles. Richard’s epitaph, with the inscription ‘prudence’, and the De quadripartita regis specie manuscript both demonstrate an awareness of the importance of Solomonic image making in the king’s self-representation. The family connections are also significant: Richard’s second wife was Isabelle of Valois, grandchild of Charles V. Despite the ambivalent character of Richard’s rule, contemporaries used biblical typology to refer to the king. Evidently, Richard was not a typically wise Solomonic-king like Charles V. He was certainly not as interested in the patronage of books and education. However, in some cases we can find Richard as Solomon in contemporary writings.

It is important to recognize that in Richard’s case, the magi typology was more common, a famous example being the Wilton diptych’s iconography. Only his commission of the De quadripartita regis specie represents Richard as possessing Solomonic wisdom; other sources tended to exclude any mention of wisdom on Richard’s part. We can however note a specific and repeated use of the Solomon-image. This was applied to Richard’s sumptuous court, which led to a comparison with the wealth of Solomon. For instance, Roger Dymmok, a Dominican friar, writing in his De duodecim errores et hereses Lollardum (1395), a work dedicated to Richard, referred to him as a rex...
He told the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:4–7). In terms of the political usage of the Old Testament, this was not a conventional story to employ, especially in this period. The Queen of Sheba travelled to Jerusalem to meet Solomon and ascertain the truth regarding rumours of his knowledge. She brought numerous presents to fascinate Solomon. When the Queen saw the luxury of Solomon, she was convinced. Surprisingly, the final part of Dymmok’s description highlighted Solomonic wealth in the context of courtly art, food and clothes. Thus Dymmok, by comparing the wealth of Richard to that of Solomon, ‘protected’ his king by drawing a positive biblical parallel. Here, we see the curious use of a biblical citation to interpret and defend a contemporary political situation, even though the reality of Richard’s extravagance was distasteful in the eyes of many contemporaries. Richard’s immense household was famous for its luxury – one example being its extravagant clothing, something that was regarded as wasting the kingdom’s money. On other occasions biblical comparisons focusing on Richard II seem more ambivalent. The chronicler Adam of Usk called Richard ‘Rehoboam’, Solomon’s son, who lost his kingdom after the death of his father. Rehoboam (1 Kings 12) was a symbol of a king who did not want to follow good counsel and was the archetype of the child-king. This comparison is all the more significant if we remember the fact that Richard was deposed in 1399. The parallel between Solomon and Richard could be described as inconsistent: lacking Solomon’s wisdom, Richard at least matched his luxury.

The role of King Solomon as a royal exemplar changed through the centuries. Nevertheless, he remained, among other things, the quintessence of the wise king archetype. This chapter has aimed to present the diverse and analogic features of this model. Solomon appeared in several aspects of royal representation: in connection with coronations, courtly art and literature, political writings and canonization.

Why did Solomon become such a popular model in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? It is quite impossible to determine the origins, but the increasing role was connected with the recovery of Old Testament imagery that took place from the twelfth century and the increasing importance of the *rex sapiens* ideal, specifically, which took place from the thirteenth century. Medieval rulers started to imitate Solomon – alongside King David especially in the early period – when they found that, with the help of their courtiers, his figure could increase their prestige. Which aspect of Solomon was accentuated depended on the personal characteristics of the king and the current political situation. Sometimes the ruler’s desire to come across as a wise and Solomonic king was only achieved posthumously: knowledge, status as a sacral king and wise decisions became more important than any failure in the king’s lifetime.

The Solomonic ideal for rulers did not disappear after 1400. For example, in the early modern period Solomon appeared in the east in Suleiman the Magnificent’s rule in the sixteenth century. Suleiman was associated with Solomon by many Islamic scholars, both because he was named after him – first among the Ottomans to be so – and because of his wisdom. The Tudors and the Stuarts also knew of the use of Solomon to increase their power in a symbolic way. Henry VIII employed references to him as did James VI & I. Solomon was a popular model for rulers for centuries. It is not as easy to determine the end of his symbolic role as it is in a case such as the magi typology.
Notes

* The author is preparing a study of King Solomon as a royal model in the late Middle Ages for her PhD dissertation project.


4 In addition to the four biblical books already mentioned see, for example: 1 Kings 4:29–34; 1 Kings 10:1–13.


21 Garrison, “The Franks as the New Israel?” 156.
25 This is an allusion to 1 Kings 10:1–13, the meeting of the Queen of Sheba and Solomon. The pope was recalling the words of the queen: Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: The Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and the Astronomer, trans. Thomas F.X. Noble (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 148–149.
29 Nelson, Charles the Bald, 219–220.
30 Anton emphasized that this resemblance was unique because Charles the Bald was compared to David as well as Solomon: Hans Hubert Anton, Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit, Bonner historische Forschungen, 32 (Bonn: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 430–432.
37 Tougher, The Reign of Leo VI, 126 n. 109.
38 Tougher, The Reign of Leo VI, 110.
40 Tougher, “The Wisdom of Leo VI,” 177.
45 Le Goff, Saint Louis, 448–463, 813.


72 Françoise Autrand, Charles V, le sage (Paris: Fayard, 1994).


76 For example, “[c]’est aussi Salemon non mie tant seulement estudioit en divers livres mais en ordena plusieurs par son estude.” BnF, MS fr. 437, fol. 2r.

77 “[c]ommande mon dit souverain seigneur a moy son tres petit clerc frere Jehan Golein de lordre de Nostre Dame du carme . . . que je li mette et translate de latin en francois le livre que on appele le rational des divins offices. car il considerant que Salemon vouloit enquierir de toutes choses par les queles il se gouvernoit temporelment, de quoy la royne de Sabha s’esbahiti forment pour lordenance des ministrans mais plus se peust esmerveillier se elle veist la noblesce de France et lordre des ministrans a Dieu ordenez par les roys de France.” BnF, MS fr. 437, fol. 2v.


82 Ibid.

83 Sherman, The Portraits, 76.


88 Nigel Saul, Richard II (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 357.

89 Doina, Les Rois mages, 302–305.


93 Roger Dymmok, 295.


95 Saul, Richard II, 336.


97 Buc, “Pouvoir royal,” 692–693.


**Key works**


