

Public Abstract

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This dissertation examines the writing of religious writers during the Anglo-Saxon period in England (410-1066). The purpose of this work is to better understand how religious writing also functioned as political writing. Ecclesiastics such as monks and bishops were the primary authors during the period and wrote many types of works, such as histories and sermons. My research seeks to explore how a work such as a history was in fact designed to shape the role of government, especially the function of kings. I proceeded by examining a wide range of works, including sermons, histories, and biographies and connecting the content to contemporary political situations. I did this by first examining what behavior was praised and what was condemned, and then connecting this praise and blame to what was happening politically during the time of writing. What I discovered was that there was a clear link between many writers and contemporary politics, and that these men used their writing to shape the concept of kingship. Ecclesiastics understood kingship to be a sacred office and one that was deeply connected to the salvation of the people, but also an office with a sacred duty for war. My work helps us to better understand the role that kings played during the early Middle Ages, and how ecclesiastics used writing to advance their political vision.