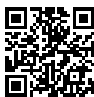
Touching Parchment

How Medieval Users Rubbed, Handled, and Kissed Their Manuscripts

Volume 1: Officials and Their Books

Kathryn M. Rudy



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Cover Charles V swearing an oath on an open book being held by a bishop, Paris, 1365. London, British Library, Cotton Ms. Tiberius B VIII/2, fol. 46v. image reproduced with kind permission from The British Library.
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3. Swearing on Relics and Gospels

Sometime before January 1078, Manasses I of Gournay, Archbishop of Reims (ca. 1069–1080) ignored a summons to come to Poitiers. Hugh of Die, the papal legate for France, was angered by this and deposed the archbishop. In response, Manasses traveled to Rome and appealed directly to the pope, Gregory VII. The pope restored Manasses to his office on the condition that he swear on the relics of St Peter that he would respond to all future summonses.[8] By uttering the words while touching the bones of the first pope, Manasses would have increased the *gravitas* of his words. According to Christian belief, relics formed a direct conduit to the living saint who dwelled in heaven. A man might swear on a particular saint's remains that he was telling the truth, that he was willing to accept the responsibility of a given office, or to show his fidelity to a particular leader. Relics authenticated and witnessed declarations.

The idea of swearing "on" something predates Christianity and is related to Old Testament ideas of testifying by placing one's hand on one's testes. This refers to the original covenant of circumcision and assumes that all oath-swearers are men. Eventually, the object on which Christians swore shifted—in part, no doubt, because they were not ceremonially circumcised, and so this gesture had a diluted meaning in a Christian culture, since Christians did not overtly express a covenant with God through the male genitalia. The Christian concept also draws on ancient Israeli oaths involving a self-curse, i.e., that "harm will befall

8 *Letters of (and Concerning) Manasses I, Archbishop of Reims, and Hugh, Bishop of Die and Papal Legate, to Pope Gregory VII (r. 1077–1080)*, trans. by John S. Ott: http://www.web.pdx.edu/~ott/manasses/index.html

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me if I do such and such." The Old Testament describes various kinds of oaths, enforced by God.[9]

Oath-swearing took place in a variety of contexts in the Middle Ages. Many people swore on relics during the "Peace of God" movement, which had started in 975 when Bishop Guy of Le Puy called knights and armed peasants to a nearby field and asked them to swear an oath to maintain peace. This act curbed the pillaging of churches in the area. Thereafter other towns would use their relics to draw crowds and to enforce similar large-scale oaths. This practice spread from southern France into Burgundy. Public displays of relics often resulted in miracles, which in turn encouraged larger crowds and audiences.[10] Crowds at such events would have witnessed a range of ritualized gestures as oaths were sworn and relics handled. With relics used in this way before numerous crowds and audiences, their function of supplying a divine presence to oaths was sealed in convention and in literature. As Lothar Kolmer has shown, written sources from the eighth through the thirteenth centuries specify, either descriptively or prescriptively, oaths sworn on relics.[11] The Bayeaux Tapestry (made in the 1070s) and four of the illustrated copies of the *Sachsenspiegel* (made in the 1330s and discussed below in Chapter 5) depict individuals swearing oaths on a reliquary.

Related to oaths and similarly endorsed by divine presence were vows, such as marital vows and monastic vows. Both oaths and vows were promissory in character. Non-promissory oaths also operated, as in jurisprudence: during a legal proceeding, an individual could testify "under oath" to the character of the accused, for example. Such a statement does not make promises about the future but asserts the truth of a narrative describing the past. While oaths, vows, and witness statements had different contexts, they shared features in the Christian European Middle Ages, in that they all constituted speech acts uttered with elevated, non-quotidian language, and often involved props that

9 For an overview with a bibliography, see https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/oath

10 Kathleen G. Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change* (Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 39–41; Daniel F. Callahan, "The Peace of God and the Cult of the Saints in Aquitaine in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 14.3 (1987), pp. 445–66.

11 Lothar Kolmer, *Promissorische Eide im Mittelalter* (M. Lassleben, 1989), p. 237, no. 22.

bridged the physical and supernatural worlds. As such, they all relied on religious magic—that is, the supernatural forces that would punish those who swore false oaths, perjured themselves, or failed to live up to their vows. These punishments could befall the false oath-swearer immediately, but it was morely likely that they would appear later, at the Last Judgment.[12] Therefore, the effectiveness of oaths rested on the parties' credulity—in this case, in a Christian afterlife.

With this supernatural context in mind, one can see why medieval Christians swore oaths on certain objects that bridged the divide between the earthly and heavenly realms. In the twentieth century, Philipp Hofmeister—who was both a Benedictine monk at the abbey of Neresheim and a professor of canon law at the University of Munich—traced the shift in oath-swearing ceremonies over the Christian Middle Ages.[13] Swearing an oath was a particular kind of speech act, which followed established scripts, involved bodily gestures, and required witnesses as well as props. Relics were an ideal conduit with heaven and added solemnity to an utterance. From the sixth century onward, Gospel manuscripts (containing the texts purportedly written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) came to fulfill this role, because scripture was understood to contain the Word made flesh, and therefore to embody divine presence. In 529 the Code of Justinian—a book that codified Roman law under the Emperor Justinian I of Constantinople—even stipulated that public officials swear oaths on Gospel manuscripts, although the reach of this book beyond Byzantium was limited.[14] It is clear from the Ordo discussed below that many ceremonies in Western Europe codified the use of relics instead. For several centuries, either Gospel manuscripts or relics could be used as objects on which to swear oaths, and often both were used together. As Hofmeister shows, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in particular, the many relics of the True Cross scattered across Europe were employed in such rituals, with

12 For a full and articulate overview of the magical qualities of Christian oath-swearing, see Lothar Kolmer, *Promissorische Eide im Mittelalter* (M. Lassleben, 1989), pp. 225–36.

13 Philipp Hofmeister, *Die christlichen Eidesformen. Eine liturgie- und rechtsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Zink, 1957); for a discussion of Justinian, see pp. 36–67.

14 For a discussion of Justinian, see Hofmeister (1957), pp. 39–40; and Ganz (2017), p. 94. For a discussion of the Code's transmission, see Charles M. Radding and Antonio Ciaralli, *The Corpus Iuris Civilis in the Middle Ages: Manuscripts and Transmission from the Sixth Century to the Juristic Revival* (Brill, 2007), pp. 133–68.

the subject instructed to place one hand on the Cross relic and the other on the Gospels.[15]

As a general trend, however, from the tenth century—when the Peace of God took place—until the fourteenth century, relics became less prominent and Gospel manuscripts became more commonly used. Kolmer attributes the waxing use of the Gospel to the increasing importance of the written word in general, and of the Word of God in particular. The punishment for failing to keep an oath would be meted out by God, and the Gospel was understood to be directly bound to God, whereas the saints (as approximated by their relics) functioned as middlemen.[16] In the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as I will show below, new manuscripts were made for oath-swearing. This new genre contained inchoate civic legal codes and oaths, and upon these books individuals swore civic oaths. Oath-taking rituals further expanded to include organizations such as brotherhoods and universities (for which, see Chapter 5).[17] Finally, personal prayer books often contain marks of wear indicating that they have been used for swearing oaths (discussed in Volume 3). These later book types borrow imagery—as well as the gestures for using that imagery in the context of a speech act—from missals and Gospel manuscripts. Each new object for oath-swearing builds upon the previous objects' imagery—and its gestural language—to maintain historical continuity and the authority that accompanies age.

I. Swearing on Gospels

According to legend, Charlemagne put three fingers on the image of St John in the Vienna Coronation Gospels during his coronation ceremony on Christmas Day, 800.[18] However, Lawrence Nees points out that much of the story about Charlemagne's coronation was only invented in retrospect: the story supplied "foregrounding of the distant

15 For examples, see Hofmeister, *Die christlichen Eidesformen*, pp. 62–67.

16 Kolmer, p. 238.

17 Discussions of several examples appear in Rudy, *Postcards on Parchment* (Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 287–98.

18 The version of history presented to tourists re-affirms the manuscript as Charlemagne's coronation prop, as in *The Secular and Ecclesiastical Treasuries* (Residenz Verlag, 1991), pp. 166–68.

future."[19] Because Charlemagne was the first European emperor since antiquity, commentators constructed an elevated backstory rich in detail and sprinkled with sumptuous objects. The manuscript upon which he was said to have sworn his oath is one of the most highly crafted books made around 800, with gold and silver letters on purple-dyed parchment,[20] and imagery based on that of classical antiquity, which, according to received wisdom, was designed to connect Charlemagne with the Roman emperors. Brandishing all of the trappings of an imperial production, the manuscript has been ripe for lore for nearly a millennium: even in the twelfth century, commentators claimed that this manuscript had been found in Charlemagne's tomb when Otto III had opened it in the year 1000, although this cannot be the case, since the Evangelists were used as models for illuminators in the ninth century. In the biggest fabrication of them all, this most unusual and impressive manuscript, famed according to scholarly literature to have survived from the court of Charlemagne (r. 768–814) at Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), may have actually been made after Charlemagne died in 814.

The Vienna Coronation Gospels were recast as a relic of Charlemage. The manuscript made the ruler more tangible, since it putatively touched the famous leader. Reciprocally, the story made the object more valuable, charged with an even brighter aura, when it was elevated from "dazzling purple manuscript" to "relic of the most important leader in European history." Both man and book were irrevocably changed through the act of touching, even fictional touching. Even though the story was fabricated, probably to support the memory and grandeur of Charlemagne at the time of his canonization in 1165, the book served as a tangible link with the emperor's coronation and helped subsequent generations to picture its sumptuousness and gravitas.

Although Charlemagne probably did not handle it in his ceremony in 800, the manuscript did function as a coronation Gospel for the Holy

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19 Ideas in these paragraphs draw on Lawrence Nees, "Prolegomenon to a Study of the Vienna Coronation Gospels: Common Knowledge, Scholarship, Tradition, Legend, Myth," in *Rome and Religion in the Medieval World: Studies in Honor of Thomas F.X. Noble*, edited by Valerie L. Garver and Owen M. Phelan (Ashgate, 2014), Chapter 12, unpaginated.

20 Maurizio Aceto, Angelo Agostino, Gaia Fenoglio, Ambra Idone, Fabrizio Crivello, Martin Grießer, Franziska Kirchweger, Katharina Uhlir, and Patricia Roger Puyo, "Analytical Investigations on the Coronation Gospels Manuscript," *Spectrochimica acta. Part A, Molecular and Biomolecular Spectroscopy*, 171 (2017), 213–21.

Roman Emperors to take their oaths upon, possibly beginning in the twelfth century and continuing until 1792. In 1794, the manuscript was taken from Aachen and brought to Vienna, and since 1801 it has been on display in the Treasury (*Schatzkammer*) of the Hofburg Palace, Vienna. In other words, it has been kept in the context of imperial regalia rather than in a library. What is clear is that the manuscript is both a relic of Charlemagne and a Gospel book, even if its status as relic is entirely fictional. In the later Middle Ages and in the Early Modern period, the manuscript's fictional early history provided coronations with a sense of continuity that reached back to Charlemagne's own fingers.

Because instructions for imperial coronations were recorded in the Mainzer Ordo, which was written in the second half of the tenth century, we have an opportunity to understand the ceremony more fully.[21] The ordo specifies the words to be spoken aloud, as well as the "stage directions" for the multi-day ceremony. After uttering specific prayers, the archbishop asked the emperor-elect a series of questions. In response to each question, the emperor-elect would answer, "Volo" (I will), confirming his willingness to defend the church, the faith, the empire, and the office. After that, the emperor-elect would then make a touching gesture while uttering his oath:

> Rex, positis duobus digitis manus sue dextere super altare, dicat. Volo et in quantum divino fultus fuero adiutorio et precibus fidelium christianorum adiutus valuero, omnia premissa fideliter adimplebo, sic me deus adiuvet et sancti eius. [The emperor-elect, placing two fingers of his right hand on the altar, should say, "I will, and to the extent that I will be divinely supported by the help and prayers of faithful Christians, I will faithfully fulfill all the premisses, so may God help me and his saints."][22]

21 The text, which survives in 12 manuscripts, has been edited by Vogel Cyrille, Reinhard Elze, and Michel Andrieu, eds. 1963–1972. *Le Pontifical Romano-Germanique du Dixième Siècle*, Vols 1–3 (Biblioteca apostolica vaticana). Vol. I, No. LXXII. The Mainzer Ordo is analyzed and contextualized by Andreas Büttner in *Der Weg zur Krone: Rituale der Herrschererhebung im spätmittelalterlichen Reich* (Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2012).

22 G. H. Pertz, ed. *Monumenta Germaniae historica: scriptorvm*, 20 vols (A. Hiersemann, 1963–1964), Leges (MGH LL 2), p. 386. https://www.dmgh.de/mgh_ll_2/index.htm#page/386/mode/1up

As this instruction makes plain, the emperor-elect did not touch a manuscript during his oath, but rather touched the altar, which would have contained relics of the saints he was imploring. The ordo of ca. 975 therefore had no provision for a Gospel manuscript as prop. Likewise, according to the Royal Frankish Annals, when Tassilo II, Duke of Bavaria (c. 741-c. 796) swore an oath close to the time of Charlemagne's coronation, he insisted that he swear upon the relics of four different saints.[23] This suggests that in this period, swearing on relics (and not Gospels) was the norm, and the account also suggests that increasing the number of saints could amplify the holiness of the event.

Like a relic, a book can be both precious and utilitarian at the same time. In particular, liturgical texts can both be hallowed objects and sites of practice. A book can have multiple uses, some of them activated by handling plus reading, some activated by handling alone. Some gospel manuscripts have signs of wear that indicate that they were touched ceremoniously. One manuscript used in this way is a Carolingian Gospel Book of St Amand, which has elaborate Evangelist portraits at each of the four major openings (Cologne, Schnütgen Museum, Hs. G 531).[24] Staring at the four openings with the author portraits with a soft focus reveals that the edges have been darkened from this type of use (Fig. 12; Fig. 13; Fig. 14; Fig. 15). They have been touched repeatedly. Whereas page-turning usually darkens the bottom corner of each folio, the traces of dirt in the lower edges of this manuscript tell a different story. One can imagine that someone swearing a statement would approach the book open on a lectern, utter some prescribed words, and lay his hand on the bottom of the page in order to seal the statement.

Dirt levels on the Cologne manuscript's four decorated openings reveal that users favored Mark, Luke, and especially John, but largely ignored Matthew, which has survived in a cleaner state than the openings of the other three Evangelists. This may be because the Gospel

23 Kolmer, p. 236, citing *Annales Mettenses priores*, edited by B. von Simson, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum* (1905), p. 49. The purpose of the oath was to swear fealty to Pepin. It is possible, however, that the account of Tassilo's oath was written later.

24 I thank Jos Biemans for directing me to this manuscript. The manuscript dates from ca. 860–880, and measures 26 x 19.2 cm in its binding, which was made in Cologne ca. 1160–1170.

Fig. 12 Opening at the beginning of the Book of Matthew, Evangeliarium, St. Amand, c. 860–880. Cologne, Schnütgen Museum, Hs. G 531, fol. 11v-12r.

Fig. 13 Opening at the beginning of the Book of Mark. Evangeliarium, St. Amand, c. 860–880. Cologne, Schnütgen Museum, Hs. G 531, fols 62v-63r.

Fig. 14 Opening at the beginning of the Book of Luke. Evangeliarium, St. Amand, c. 860–880. Cologne, Schnütgen Museum, Hs. G 531, fols 97v-98r.

Fig. 15 Opening at the beginning of the Book of John. Evangeliarium, St. Amand, c. 860–880. Cologne, Schnütgen Museum, Hs. G 531, fols 151v-152r.

of St. Matthew actually condemns swearing.[25] In Matt. 5:33, Jesus says, "But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King." Comparably clean pages at the incipit of Matthew appear in other Gospel manuscripts used for oath-taking. As we will see later in Chapter 5, some Christians refused to swear on Gospels for this reason.

Because the pattern of wear across Mark, Luke, and John differs significantly in the *St Amand Gospels*, one can deduce that these openings had somewhat different ritual functions. Mark has a darkened area just under the image of the Evangelist, revealing that many individuals placed a hand (or a few fingers) there. Most people touched only the lower border, but enough people reached more deeply onto the page to flake off the metallic paint of the Evangelist's footstool and pock his hem. (The smaller dark area near the bottom of the column may have resulted from the officiant grasping the book and finding the relevant opening, rather than the oath-taker touching that spot.) The pattern is different at the Luke and John openings, where there are two large areas of darkness: one under the respective Evangelist, and one in the lower corner of the facing text page.[26] This would be consistent with an oath ceremony involving two persons. One can imagine two right-handed people standing shoulder-to-shoulder at the foot of the book, and both touching its lower margin. One would touch the area under the image, and the other would reach his hand across his body to touch the lower corner of the text page. At Luke in particular, cumulative iterations of this ceremony have deposited a thick crust at the lower corner of the recto page. So penetrating is this layer of grime that it is visible on the verso (Fig. 16). Such use-wear evidence in the *St Amand Gospels* suggests that different ceremonies required different book openings. It also suggests that the cumulative handprints on the book helped to guide future users, who slotted their hands in where others' had previously touched. The older a manuscript is, the more difficult it is to pinpoint

25 Jacob Mann, "Oaths and Vows in the Synoptic Gospels," *The American Journal of Theology* 21.2 (1917), pp. 260–74, notes that Matthew's Gospel prohibits swearing.

26 Klaus Schreiner, "Litterae Mysticae. Symbolik und Pragmatik heiliger Buchstaben, Texte und Bücher in Kirche und Gesellschaft des Mittelalters," in *Pragmatische Dimensionen mittelalterlicher Schriftkultur*, edited by Christel Meier et al. (Wilhelm Fink, 2002), pp. 277–37, esp. pp. 315–22, discusses the Book of John as a powerful sacred text used in all manner of thaumaturgic rituals.

exactly when its grime accumulated. This is the case in the *St Amand Gospels*, but one can surmise that the book was in continual use for its first three centuries. It was written and illuminated ca. 860–80, and then ca. 1160–1170 it received its current binding. It is possible that the manuscript incurred its marks of wear shortly after it was made in the ninth century; however, it is more likely that it became an oath-swearing object only later, perhaps shortly before it was rebound. Its rebinding may have corresponded to its repurposing, 300 years after its production. As we have seen in the case of the Vienna Coronation Gospels, a manuscript's antiquity could give it more gravitas, with a historical gap that could be filled in with an awe-inspiring backstory. It is also possible that Gospel manuscripts take on an oath-swaring role in the late eleventh century, just as the missal was developed (discussed below, in Chapter 4). Whereas before this period, the Gospel manuscript had a central liturgical function, after the development of the missal, the Gospel may have adopted a more ceremonial function, such as for oath-swearing. Furthermore, this period also saw an increased theatricality exhibited around books, and the Gospel manuscript may have been swept up in this theatricality. Touching the Gospel manuscript would

Fig. 16 Second opening in the Book of Luke. Evangeliarium, St. Amand, c. 860–880. Cologne, Schnütgen Museum, Hs. G 531, fols 98v-99r.

have appeared as a more overt gesture than merely touching the altar, with relics hidden within it.

Emperors would swear on the Gospel during their coronation, but the manuscript could also play a role in other speech acts, such as vassalage rituals. For example, when Notker, the abbot of Saint Gall, swore an oath of vassalage to Otto I in 971, the final step involved a Gospel. A record of the event survives in the *Casus S. Galli*, which details the words and gestures. The emperor uttered the words, "Now you will be mine." Then, "after receiving him by the hands, he kissed him. Soon thereafter, a gospel-book having been brought in, the abbot swore fealty."[27] In other vassalage ceremonies, such as that of Tassilo, Duke of Bavaria, who swore his fealty to Pepin the Short in 757, the duke placed his hands on relics instead of the Gospels.

The presence of the Gospel ripens the environment. The object itself is physically charged, powering its standing as a proxy for the divine. For example, Durandus describes the ceremony for consecrating a bishop, which would involve handling a Gospel manuscript:

> When a bishop is ordained, the bishops from the same ecclesiastical province must be assembled, with the metropolitan; and two bishops place and hold the codex of the Gospels over the ordinand's head and neck… the rest of the bishops who are present touch his head with their hands. The Gospel book is held over his head; first, so that the Lord will confirm the Gospel in his heart. Second, so that he will understand the labor and the burden to which he is now subjected, because whoever is preeminent in this world, that is all prelates, has more worries associated with them than the joys of being honored. Third, to note that he should not show reluctance at bearing the weight of preaching the Gospel and the things that surround it. Fourth, to admonish him and submit himself to the customary yoke and to obey the Gospel.[28]

In Western Christendom, images were not consecrated, but liturgical books were blessed. They contained images, which by extension would be blessed. Blessed images, books, holy water, and so forth, were "sacramentals" that had a charged status.[29] During the ceremony

27 Quoted in Le Goff, p. 243.

28 Durandus, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments: A New Translation of Books 2–3 of the* Rationale divinorum officiorum, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (University of Scranton Press, 2010), p. 125.

29 David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 89–91.

for consecrating a bishop, the established bishops put the Gospel manuscript above the new bishop's head to symbolize his submission to the authority of God and to demonstrate his willingness to bear the weight of scripture. He submits to the physical book.

Some Gospel manuscripts contain added texts which explicitly expand the function of the book to ritualized social bonding. The *York Gospels* (York Minster, Ms. Add. 1) were written in the scriptorium of St Augustine's monastery at Canterbury around 1000 and then brought to York by Archbishop Wulfstan around 1020. The volume contains some testaments of land ownership from the eleventh century, as well as a letter from King Cnut (r. 1016–1035), which shows that the book held an important position as a keeper of the legal record from an early date. It also contains oaths taken by the Minster's various priests in the late Middle Ages and was used by them for swearing.[30] Because the book had such an impressive origin story, it embodied sufficient gravitas to seal oaths. It is even possible that such books were made with this legal function in mind.

That seems to be the case with the *Arenberg Gospels* (New York, Morgan Library and Museum, M.869), which are contemporary with the *York Gospels*. It too was used for swearing oaths and reveals how the manner of touching books was locally specific.[31] Written in Caroline minuscule in Canterbury between 1000 and 1020, the *Arenberg Gospels* were furnished not with the normal four, but rather with five full-page images. Those images were made using colored line drawings with some areas of solid color, which are typical of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Shortly after it was finished, someone brought it to Cologne. Extensive dirt and inscriptions reveal how its German recipients used the exotic book. Its four full-page images of the Evangelists are relatively clean, indicating that these portraits, unlike those in the Gospels in Cologne, were not used for laying on layers of hands (Fig. 17). Instead, a full-page image near the beginning of the manuscript representing Christ Crucified bears signs of extensive user contact (Fig. 18). This Crucifixion

30 Matthew Collins, Matthew D. Teasdale, Sarah Fiddyment, Jiří Vnouček, Valeria Mattiangeli, Camilla Speller, Annelise Binois, Martin Carver, et al. "The York Gospels: A 1000-Year Biological Palimpsest," *Royal Society Open Science* 4.10 (2017), pp. 1–11, with further references.

31 Richard Gameson, "Manuscript Art at Christ Church, Canterbury, in the Generation after St Dunstan," in *St Dunstan: His Life, Times, and Cult*, edited by Nigel Ramsay, Margaret Sparks, and Tim Tatton-Brown (1992), pp. 190, 200–03, 208–16.

page, which is integral with the quire structure, was no doubt part of the original production.[32] It prefaces the unusual historiated Canon tables.[33] Users gave it a second role—to bear witness to hundreds of oaths.

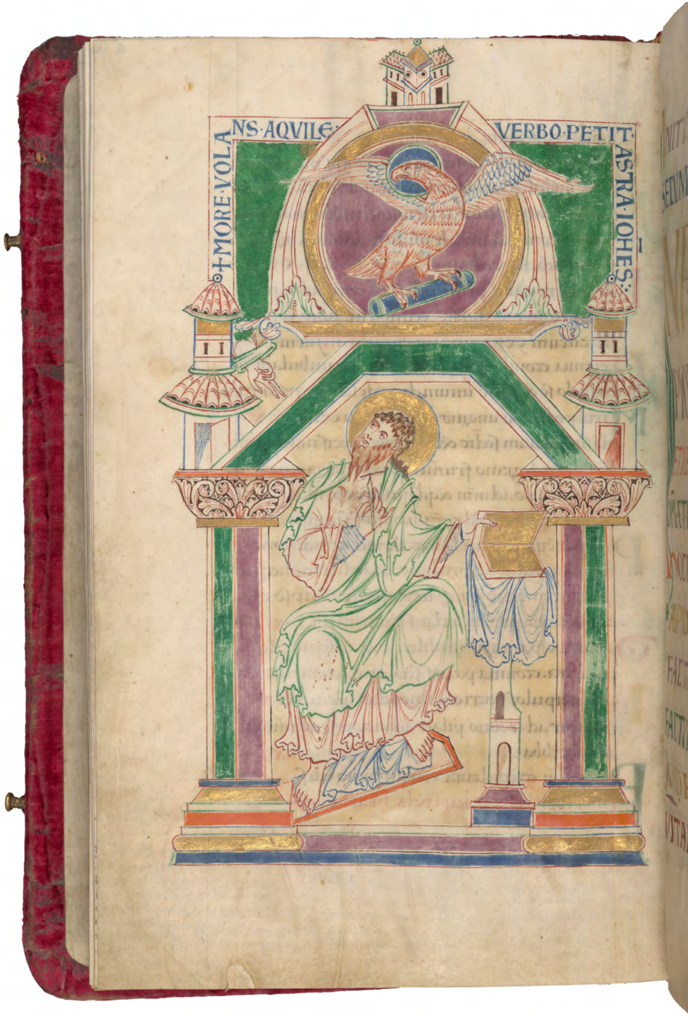

Fig. 17 Evangelist portrait of John, full-page drawing, *Arenberg Gospels*, Canterbury, ca. 1000–1020. New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, Ms. M.869, fols 126v.

32 The Crucifixion page, fol. 9, forms a bifolium with fol. 16.

33 Jane E. Rosenthal, *The Historiated Canon Tables of the Arenberg Gospels* (Columbia University Dissertation, 1974).

Fig. 18 Crucifixion page, full-page drawing with painted elements. *Arenberg Gospels*, Canterbury, ca. 1000–1020. New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, Ms. M. 869, fol. 9v.

The Crucifixion page has been heavily handled and follows the pattern of many people dry-touching the image once. Some people touched the body of Christ at the center of the image, while others merely touched the borders, with a large concentration of people touching the lower border. This left a thick layer of dark crud at the bottom of the image, a

layer so thick and unsightly that someone attempted to scrape some of it away. Because of the curvature of the book and the inaccessibility of the gutter, the person scraping left a patch of dirt where his tool could not reach.

Generations of local users have exploited the blank spaces in this manuscript to copy out oaths and decrees, beginning with the decrees issued by Pope Gregory VII in 1073 and 1075 to canonize Archbishop Heribert of Cologne. A German scribe has written this onto available space he found on fol. 14. Other texts added to the blank space refer to the church of St Severin in Cologne. In fact, throughout the manuscript, scribes from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries added oaths for officials; these are mostly concentrated on fols 1–9, 14, and 124–125v. The contrasting parchment of the first eight folios indicates that, having run out of space, the book's keepers added a quire to accommodate more oaths. Oaths on these pages appear in a generalized template, so that the person swearing the oath could fill in his name as appropriate.

Since St. Severin in Cologne was a collegiate church, each canon's benefice was linked to an altar, at which he was to say Mass. In some canonries, the canons were only paid if someone was sitting in their stall during the office, so they often employed lower-level clerics—vicars—to conduct some of their duties, including singing the office. At first these vicars were personal employees of the canons, but their positions became official.[34] In the oath for one of these vicars, on folio 4r (Fig. 19), he swears allegiance to the church of St Severin, to his canon, and to his deacon. The oath begins, "I am [fill in name], vicar of the altar of St [fill in name]." In this way, the oaths were not person-specific but role-specific, and could be used in perpetuity. Such oaths reiterate the hierarchy of the various roles and institutions within the church. All the deacons, canons, and vicars would have to proclaim this hierarchy and to reiterate their place within it, while touching the main manuscript treasure of the church of St Severin. Hundreds of these low-level vicars must have sworn this oath, or one of the others on folio 4r, because this folio is particularly worn and sullied at the lower corner, so much so that some of the text became abraded and had to be re-inscribed.

34 I am grateful to Berthold Kreß for this information about canons and their surrogates.

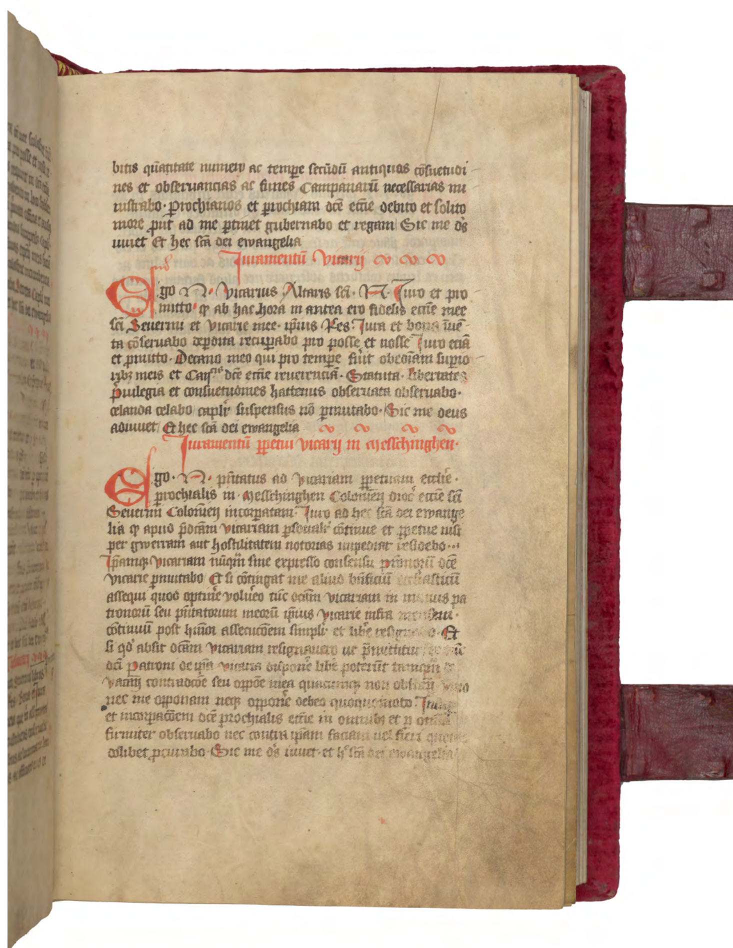

Fig. 19 Added oaths. *Arenberg Gospels*. New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, Ms. M. 869, fol. 4r.

Among the various additions to the manuscript, layered over time, someone has inscribed what appears to be an oath directly on the back of the Crucifixion miniature (Fig. 20). At some point later in its history, someone scraped the text off. It is still faintly visible. The original rubric mentions the church of St Severin, and is written in a large, formal script. It is likely that the person who inscribed it here not only took advantage of a blank surface, but also wanted to place this inscription as physically close to the depicted body of Christ as possible: on the other side of a thin, semi-transparent membrane. This would no doubt have given the

oath more power.[35] Although this manuscript was made in England in the eleventh century, it contains many additions from later centuries, indicating that it was used continually as an oath-swearing book until the eighteenth century. The book's foreignness may have enhanced its status as an object of legal standing.

Fig. 20 Scraped inscription on the back of the Crucifixion miniature. *Arenberg Gospels*. New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, Ms. M. 869, fol. 9r.

35 I discuss a similar case of a testament inscribed on the back of a Crucifixion image in Rudy, *Piety in Pieces* (Open Book Publishers, 2016), pp. 70–75, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0094.

II. Proffering the Book

Images that depict swearing ceremonies shed light on another set of marks imprinted on many manuscripts, revealing that they were used in such ceremonies. Whereas many codices used for swearing rituals—such as the Carolingian Gospels discussed earlier—have handprints in the margin that are consistent with the manuscript's having lain in a cradle or on a pillow during these ceremonies, others have more complex marks. Specifically, they are worn at both the upper and lower margins, in a pattern that would have resulted from their being held open for the oath-swearer, as is pictured, say, in the Coronation Book of Charles V of France (r. 1364–1380), the densely illustrated manuscript that the French king commissioned in 1365, after the coronation.[36] It contains two cycles of miniatures depicting the step-by-step sacring rituals of both his coronation and that of his queen, Jeanne of Bourbon. The king, who even wrote the colophon in his own hand, played a large role in shaping this manuscript. Its historical underpinnings are clear: the manuscript contains an abbreviated copy of the Register from ca. 1230, which describes the French sacring ritual from the time of Saint Louis. Wrapping together past, present, and future, the manuscript contains vestiges of the ritual of France's most important saint-king, a description of a recent event, a prescription for future events, and perhaps most importantly—as Carra Ferguson O'Meara demonstrates—a testament to the legitimacy of Charles's rule.[37]

One of the illuminations depicts the king putting his hand on a book, held open by the Archbishop of Reims, while both stand near an altar that frames the other regalia of kingship: most notably, a crown and sword that were used later in the ceremony (Fig. 21). Charles carefully places his hand on the bottom margin of the open book, while the bishop extends the book into the space directly above the cathedra, a charged void between the worldly and ecclesiastical realms. Charles's secular entourage stands on the left of the cathedra, while the religious

36 The Coronation Book (fols 35–80) was formerly bound with a twelfth-century pontifical (fols 3–34, 81–197), but now forms a separate volume. A facsimile was made in the late nineteenth century: E. S. Dewick, ed. *The Coronation Book of Charles V of France; Cottonian Ms Tiberius B Viii* (Vol. 16) (Henry Bradshaw Society, 1899). It has also been the subject of a sustained study: Carra Ferguson O'Meara, *Monarchy and Consent: The Coronation Book of Charles V of France: British Library Ms Cotton Tiberius B.viii* (Harvey Miller, 2001).

37 O'Meara, *Monarchy and Consent*, pp. 16–17, pp. 19–35.

officials stand on the right, with the book separating the two, as if it were the instrument for bridging the secular and the ecclesiastical. Charles's hand alone reaches across the divide, to swear the oath upon the open book, presumably a Gospel.[38]

Fig. 21 Charles V swearing an oath on an open book being held by a bishop, Paris, 1365. London, British Library, Cotton Ms. Tiberius B VIII/2, fol. 46v.

38 As O'Meara, *Monarchy and Consent*, p. 131 points out, the oath Charles V took was the same as that taken by Charles the Bald, with an additional phrase about the inalienability of the Crown of France. Charles V therefore swore to defend the Church, to guard the peace, to judge with equity and mercy, and to expel heretics.

Use-wear analysis attests that, although Gospel manuscripts were the type most frequently used for oath swearing from the period from ca. 900 to ca. 1300, missals were also appropriated for this function after 1300. For example, the heavy damage visible in a missal made in 1455–1474 for the Use of Clermont is consistent with its having been used for oath swearing (Fig. 22).[39] The missal's canon page has expanded to a two-page spread, with the traditional image of Christ Crucified on the left, and God in Majesty on the right. The latter image is surrounded by the Evangelists' symbols, evoking the Gospel books on which oaths had traditionally been sworn. The extensive damage in this opening follows a different pattern of wear than that of the Amand Gospels, where the marks were confined to the bottom and sides.

Fig. 22 Christ Crucified, and God in Majesty, full-page miniatures in a missal for the Use of Clermont, 1455–1474. Clermont-Ferrand, Bibliothèque municipal, Ms. 65, fols 216v-217r. Cliché: IRHT-CNRS

In the Clermont Missal, the extraordinary degradation concentrated in multiple areas of the opening requires an explanation: this book

39 For a description and bibliography, see http://initiale.irht.cnrs.fr/codex/1641/4894.

may have been proffered by an officiant to an oath-swearer in a set-up like the one depicted in the Coronation Book of Charles V, where the bishop holds out the book to the king. Likewise, the abrasion in the Clermont Missal seems to have been made by two people touching the book simultaneously: one who held the book open from the bottom and proffered it, and the other who reached into the open book to touch it. In this scenario, the officiant gripped the open book forcefully, so that his thumbs were tightly braced against the lower borders. Just where in the lower borders and with how much force the officiant would grasp the book would have depended on the amount of force required to counteract the torque of the book plus the pressure of the oath swearer's hands as he reached into the open book from the upper border. The officiant's bracing force could have conceivably levied sufficient heat, moisture, pressure, and lateral surface friction on the parchment book block to cause significant amounts of the decoration in the lower borders of the opening to wear off, and even to degrade the parchment substrate. These lower sections were so damaged that a modern conservator has replaced the tattered parchment with clean, modern parchment.

Here, then, is my proposed scenario of degradation: as a corollary to officiants' gestures, oath swearers have responded by reaching into the book from the top edge to touch the painted representations of Jesus and God the Father in particular. The pattern of wear across the images is diffuse. This would be consistent with multiple oath swearers each touching the figural imagery once during the ceremony, each in a slightly different place with a slightly different gesture. Each touch was a one-off, neither practiced nor routinized. Moreover, the vertical gauges in the paint in the upper registers may have been caused by oath swearers who inadvertently scraped their hands, rings, or nails across the page as they withdrew their hands. Users do not normally touch the upper borders of manuscripts in regular instances of reading and handling, nor do they damage the lower central border of folio-sized manuscripts, since page-turning normally takes place only at the lower corners. The two-person ritual I have outlined would explain the specific and extensive damage visible in the Clermont Missal.

Just as the makers of the Cologne Gospels might have anticipated the book's use for oath swearing (and therefore led to their including an image of Christ Crucified, which is anomalous for this type of book),

the expansion of the missals' Canon iconography to include a two-page spread, as the Clermont Missal possesses, may have been a response to people using missals for swearing oaths. Imagery in missals changed significantly during the period from the eleventh century, when this book type emerged, until the Protestant Reformation. Whereas the earlier iconography of the Canon showed only a Crucifixion, the expanded iconography included an image of God Enthroned and surrounded by the Evangelists' attributes, which recalls the imagery in a Gospel manuscript. This expansion of the iconography in a missal may have been warranted by its extended duties, especially considering where oath swearing took place. While some oath-swearing ceremonies occurred at an altar, some were conducted beneath church portals.[40] Conducting oath rituals there resulted in public proclamations that could accommodate any number of witnesses. All of this would be framed by ecclesiastical architecture, often sculpted and featuring a carved tympanum overhead. Many Romanesque French examples depict the *Majestas Domini*, a subject that reached its peak in French architectural sculpture in the mid-twelfth century, just when the same subject began to be depicted next to the Crucifixion in French missals.[41] Missals may have absorbed the *Majestas Domini* motif from the portals under which the ceremony was taking place. The expanded iconography thereby acknowledged this non-liturgical function for the missal. The full opening of imagery would have supplied a large and palpable divine witness while also creating a bigger surface for the officiant and oath swearer to touch. Such imagery would make the ceremony more visible from a distance and possibly more theatrical.

40 On settings for court proceedings, see Barbara Deimling, "From Church Portal to Town Hall," in *The History of Courts and Procedure in Medieval Canon Law*, edited by Wilfried Hartmann and Kenneth Pennington (Catholic University of America Press, 2016), pp. 30–50; and Helen Gittos, *Liturgy, Architecture, and Sacred Places in Anglo-Saxon England. Medieval History and Archaeology* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 272–73, who discusses legal transactions under church portals. For a thematic survey of iconography of Romanesque portals, see Marcello Angheben, *Les portails romans de Bourgogne: Thèmes et programmes* (Brepols, 2021).

41 Éliane Vergnolle, "'Maiestas Domini' Portals of the Twelfth Century," in *Romanesque Art and Thought in the Twelfth Century. Essays in Honor of Walter Cahn*, edited by Colum Hourihane (Index of Christian Art, Department of Art & Archaeology, Princeton University, in association with Penn State University Press, 2008), pp. 179–99.

It is possible that many kinds of books were repurposed for oath-taking. For example, a deluxe copy of the Bible Historiale has been marked by targeted touching on its frontispiece (HKB, Ms. 78 D 43; Fig. 23).[42] The Bible Historiale is a version of Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, translated into French by Guiard des Moulins (b. 1251, according to the prologue in his *magnum opus*). Around the central quatrefoil with the *Majestas Domini*, a user has targeted two of the evangelists' portraits: Mark and John, precisely those touched most often in oath-taking rituals. The manuscript was made in Paris in the 1370s, probably for a noble patron, given the size and luxury of the book. Whether its commissioning owner was the person who used the elaborate frontispiece to add solemnity to a series of promises is ultimately unknowable. He or she may have also touched the presentation scene, showing Petrus Comestor presenting his book to Archbishop Guillaume of Sens (Fig. 24); or touched the scenes of God creating the world in seven days. In particular, he or she touched God measuring the universe with a compass (Fig. 25), the division of the waters above and below the firmament (Fig. 26), the creation of the sun and moon (Fig. 27), and the creation of beasts of the field and Adam (Fig. 28). None of the numerous other miniatures in the manuscript has been rubbed. Putting this use-wear evidence together helps to paint a portrait of an early owner who used his or her fingers to reiterate divine authority, ecclesiastical authority, and the supernatural origins of the Gospels and of the universe itself, someone who called upon these forces when sealing an oath.

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The book—primarily the Gospel book, but also the missal—gradually replaced relics in solemn ceremonies where parties needed God to witness their vows and promises. Just as relics were "enfleshed" in reliquaries, which made them more visually appealing and relatable, so too did the abstract words in the "Word made flesh" take on a human, relatable form through their illuminations. Those swearing oaths, witnessed by the authority of liturgical books, sought a tangible bond with divine persons in heaven—the evangelists, Christ, Mary,

42 For an overview of this text and author, see Rosemarie Potz McGerr, "Guyart Desmoulins, the Vernacular Master of Histories, and his Bible Historiale," *Viator*, 14 (1983), pp. 211–44.

Fig. 23 Opening folio of *Guiard des Moulins*, *Bible Historiale Complétée*, with God in Majesty surrounded by the evangelists' symbols. Paris, ca. 1370–1380. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. 78 D 43, fol. 1r.

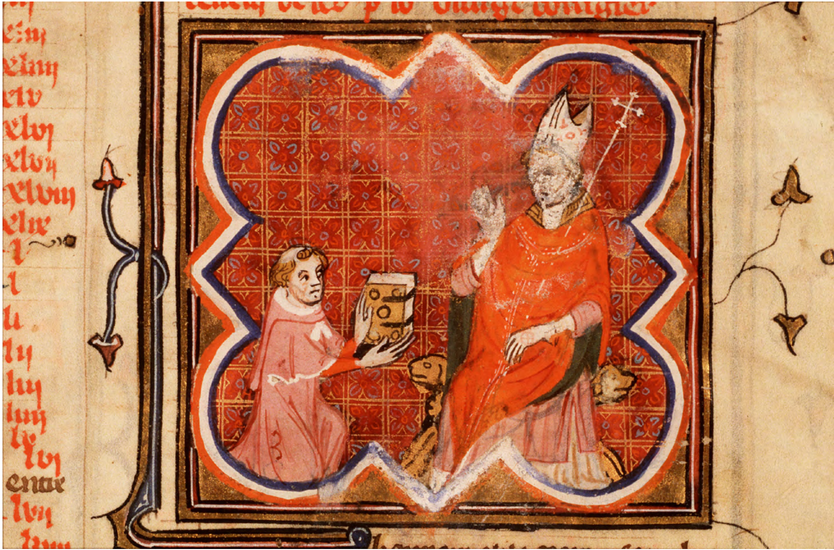

Fig. 24 Presentation scene: Petrus Comestor presenting his book to Archbishop Guillaume of Sens, in Guiard des Moulins, *Bible Historiale Complétée*. Paris, ca. 1370–1380. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. 78 D 43, fol. 2r.

Fig. 25 God measuring the Universe with a compass, in Guiard des Moulins, *Bible Historiale Complétée*. Paris, ca. 1370–1380. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. 78 D 43, fol. 3r, detail

Fig. 26 Creation: division of the waters, in Guiard des Moulins, *Bible Historiale Complétée*. Paris, ca. 1370–1380. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. 78 D 43, fol. 3v, detail

Fig. 27 Creation: sun and moon, in Guiard des Moulins, *Bible Historiale Complétée*. Paris, ca. 1370–1380. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. 78 D 43, fol. 4r, detail

Fig. 28 Creation: beasts of the field and Adam, in Guiard des Moulins, *Bible Historiale Complétée*. Paris, ca. 1370–1380. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. 78 D 43, fol. 5r, detail

or God—by physically touching their representations in books, rather than the words. The many people involved in these rituals, whose fingerprints have cumulatively worn the volumes, carried lessons about book-handling away with them. Lay people appear to have adopted these gestures when using their personal prayer books (as will be discussed in Volume 3).

Through their darkened parchment, manuscripts divulge how they were handled, but only when that handling was repeated and caused cumulative (and visible) damage. That damage speaks to an ephemeral, gestural language that sealed speech acts through props and gestures. These marks might be difficult or impossible to ascertain when the ceremonies involved closed volumes, but frequently the ceremonies called for an open book, where creamy parchment would record the tracks of sweaty, greasy, or dirty hands. Sometimes these marks show that one actor handled the page at a time, and other marks reveal that two people—such as an officiant and an oath swearer—handled the book simultaneously, each fulfilling a different role. This was the case with proffered volumes.

The Clermont Missal is anomalous in the extensive pawing it received on both upper and lower margins, indicating that it was used ceremoniously outside a strict liturgical context. Namely, it was proffered. In addition to these handprints, further marks on the page reveal that priests and bishops handled missals in another way that resulted in severe degradation of the paint and parchment: by kissing them. This theatrical gesture with the book will be taken up in the next chapter.