

**A SOVEREIGN TO OVERTHROW:  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEORIES ON KINGSHIP, TYRANNY, AND THE KING'S  
TWO BODIES IN JOHN OF SALISBURY'S *POLICRATICUS***

by

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This thesis examines the theories of kingship and tyranny proposed by the twelfth-century English cleric John of Salisbury in his work of political thought *Policraticus*, which appeared fully for the first time in 1159 CE. The tumultuous nature of twelfth-century England influenced John of Salisbury as he took up work under the Archbishop of Canterbury after studying in France. Salisbury began to consider the role of the king and the power the sovereign held during a civil war in England and the later rise of King Henry II to the throne. The theories in *Policraticus* create the image of a king who is both a divine authority in the kingdom and a servant of the people. The work further argues against tyranny and offers tyrannicide as a final solution to the problem should a dominating tyrant exist. This thesis also examines the early development of the theory of the king's two bodies, a medieval principle of kingship, as it relates to Salisbury's theorizing in *Policraticus*.

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## **PREFACE**

I would like to thank all those who supported me in the research and writing of this paper. I am extremely grateful to my thesis advisor and mentor in medieval political thought, Dr. Janelle Greenberg, for all of her support and advice throughout our studies, and I thank her for introducing me to this field. I thank my defense committee members, Dr. Elizabeth Archibald, Dr. Bernard Hagerty, and Dr. Jotham Parsons, for reading and critiquing my paper and my work. I thank my Latin professors, Dr. Andrew Korzeniewski and Dr. Mark Possanza, for preparing me to face a work that was originally produced in an ancient language. I thank Dr. Molly Warsh, Dr. Richard Oestreicher, and all of my other professors at Pitt for their time and effort in training me as writer and as a student of history. I thank my friends and classmates at Pitt for their support and for helping to remind me to take a break when I need it. Finally, I would like to thank my family for all of their support and for giving me this opportunity to do my work at Pitt.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

For as long as kings have reigned over their kingdoms, western thinkers have questioned the role of the king and the kingship in the state. From the classical period onwards, philosophers, political theorists, and lawyers alike have produced countless works that address the importance and structure of the government in western politics. The Middle Ages synthesized the concepts of antiquity and Scripture into a world of political, social, and religious upheaval. Disputes over authority and justice engaged medieval thinkers for hundreds of years. In the middle of the twelfth century amid the resolution of civil war in the reign of King Stephen and the coming to the throne of King Henry II, John of Salisbury, an English cleric and theologian, produced the first focused medieval work of political theory in 1159 CE, *Policraticus*.<sup>1</sup> A history of written political thought in Europe had existed since the ninth century, but never before had a theorist produced such a distinctly political work in the Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup>

In *Policraticus*, Salisbury examines the role of kingship in the medieval state and addresses a multitude of political and religious questions.<sup>3</sup> Salisbury is most concerned with the

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<sup>1</sup> D. E. Luscombe, "Introduction: the formation of political thought in the west," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350-c. 1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 170. John of Salisbury wrote *Policraticus*, the work, in Latin. *Policraticus* is a Latin word meaning "the Statesman."

<sup>2</sup> Luscombe, 170.

<sup>3</sup> History remembers John of Salisbury by the name of his birthplace, the town of Salisbury. Throughout this essay John of Salisbury is called simply "Salisbury." Salisbury refers to the man rather than the town, unless otherwise specified.

king's relationship to the people, his royal power, and his duty to rule justly.<sup>4</sup> Salisbury justifies the king's position through reference to antiquity, Scripture, and God's conveyance of the king's divinity. Salisbury also discusses the rights of inheritance and the execution of social duty throughout the state. Later political theorists built on the work of Salisbury and other twelfth and thirteenth-century political thinkers to develop theories in the centuries that followed.

John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, the first major medieval work on political theory, began a new stream of political thinking that continued throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and into the early modern period. *Policraticus* represents a critical turning point in the history of western thought and the history of kingship. Salisbury's work influenced later generations of thinkers, and in *Policraticus* Salisbury continues the growth of the medieval theory of the king's two bodies.

The theory of the king's two bodies, appears fully for the first time in the sixteenth century, but according to Ernst H. Kantorowicz it did originate in the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup> The theory of the king's two bodies proposes that the king of the state existed in two capacities. In one body, he is the political body of the kingdom, the sovereign governor of the realm. In his political body, the king is immortal, and he is omnipresent in the kingdom's justice system. In his other body, the king is his private, personal self, a physical man. The theory of the king's two bodies proposes that the king's "body politic" represents the continuous office of the kingship while the "body natural" describes the individual king himself, and significantly, the two bodies are inseparable.<sup>6</sup> A later application of the theory postulated that the king's two bodies could, in fact,

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<sup>4</sup> Salisbury references the king as "prince" throughout *Policraticus*. Unless otherwise noted, 'king,' 'prince,' 'sovereign,' and 'monarch' are used interchangeably in this essay.

<sup>5</sup> Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 3-7.

<sup>6</sup> Kantorowicz, 9.



be separated if the private person of the king devolved into a tyrant and endangered the welfare of the kingdom, which then called for the deposition of that king.<sup>7</sup> The theory's utility appeared when in 1649, following the English Civil War, parliamentarians constructed the king's two bodies in its most radical form to justify the execution of King Charles I.

Though Kantorowicz asserts that *Policraticus* does possess an early direction towards the king's two bodies, Salisbury's work does not make an explicit reference to the kingship's existence in two separate bodies.<sup>8</sup> Despite these shortcomings, John of Salisbury develops a theory of kingship in *Policraticus* that is essential to the later understanding of the theory of the king's two bodies. Salisbury presents a political theory that contains notions of the king's two bodies through commentary on the king's position both above and below the law, the king's public responsibility to the kingdom, and the inheritance of the throne. Salisbury also presents an early intimation of the basic principles that constitute a tyrant, which could be used to separate the king's two bodies.

In this essay I examine the concepts that John of Salisbury puts forth in *Policraticus*, and their relation to what would become the full-blown theory of the king's two bodies. The first section identifies the scholarship that exists on Salisbury's life and work and the scholarship that studies the king's two bodies. The following section delves into Salisbury's life, the writing of *Policraticus*, and the events that shaped his thinking. The historical context of Salisbury is followed by sections on the theory of kingship proposed in Book IV and then the theory of tyranny proposed in Book VIII of *Policraticus*. The next section analyzes key parts of the other

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<sup>7</sup> Janelle Greenberg, *The Radical Face of the Ancient Constitution: St. Edward's "Laws" in Early Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 219-221. Greenberg details the development of the political thought surrounding kingship in early modern England, showing the importance of medieval texts, among them the Laws of St. Edward the Confessor, to the political debates of the day. She cites many thinkers of the day, including the great seventeenth-century lawyer and parliamentarian, William Prynne.

<sup>8</sup> Kantorowicz, 96, 172.

books in Salisbury's *Policraticus*. I conclude this essay with an analysis of the previous principles examined in the work as they pertain to an early understanding of the king's two bodies.

## 2.0 HISTORIOGRAPHY OF JOHN OF SALISBURY AND *POLICRATICUS*

There is a significant body of scholarship that covers John of Salisbury and *Policraticus*. Cary J. Nederman, a historian of western political thought, has produced multiple works on Salisbury, including *John of Salisbury*, “A Duty to Kill: John of Salisbury’s Theory of Tyrannicide,” and “Practical and Productive Knowledge in the Twelfth Century: Extending the Aristotelian Paradigm, c. 1120- c. 1160.”<sup>9, 10, 11</sup> Nederman also edited and translated the copy of *Policraticus* which I reference for this essay.<sup>12</sup> D. E. Luscombe, a historian of medieval thought, contributed essays on the development of twelfth-century political thought which discuss Salisbury, “The formation of political thought in the west” and (with G. R. Evans, another historian of medieval thought) “The twelfth-century renaissance” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350-c. 1450*, edited by J. H. Burns.<sup>13, 14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cary J. Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, vol. 288. (Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005). Nederman provides an overview of Salisbury’s life and education and the works that Salisbury produced throughout his career.

<sup>10</sup> Cary J. Nederman, “A Duty to Kill: John of Salisbury’s Theory of Tyrannicide.,” *The Review of Politics* 50, no. 3 (1988). Nederman defends Salisbury’s theory of tyrannicide in the face of scholarship that argues Salisbury did not actual promote the doctrine.

<sup>11</sup> Cary J. Nederman, “Practical and Productive Knowledge in the Twelfth Century: Extending the Aristotelian Paradigm, c. 1120- c. 1160,” *Parergon* 31, no. 1 (June 2014). Nederman examines the introduction and application of Aristotelian thought in the twelfth century through a study of Salisbury, Hugh of St Victor, and Dominicus Gundisravi.

<sup>12</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*, ed. and trans. Cary J. Nederman. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Luscombe, “Introduction: the formation of political thought in the west,” 157-173.

*The World of John of Salisbury*, an anthology published in 1984 and edited by Michael Wilks, offers essays in multiple languages on different interpretations of Salisbury's work.<sup>15</sup> Among them are "John of Salisbury and Thomas Becket" by Anne Duggan, a medieval legal historian, "The Importance of the Organism in the Political Theory of John of Salisbury" by Tilman Struve, a medieval political historian, and "Thou Shalt Not Slay a Tyrant! The So-Called Theory of John of Salisbury" by Jan Van Laarhoven, another medieval political historian.<sup>16, 17, 18</sup> In addition, Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, both medieval historians, provide commentary on Salisbury's theory of tyranny and tyrannicide in *Policraticus* in "John of Salisbury and the Doctrine of Tyrannicide."<sup>19, 20</sup>

Finally, in 1957 Kantorowicz published the major work on the theory of the king's two bodies, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*.<sup>21</sup> Here he discusses John of Salisbury, specifically *Policraticus*, several times throughout the sweeping work, but it is often only to demonstrate that Salisbury preceded the thinkers who further developed medieval theories of kingship. I reference Kantorowicz mainly for the overall background and history of

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<sup>14</sup> D. E. Luscombe and G. R. Evans, "The twelfth-century renaissance," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350-c. 1450*, ed. J. H. Burns, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 306-340. Luscombe and Evans defend the importance of twelfth-century works on political thought.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Wilks, ed., *The World of John of Salisbury*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984).

<sup>16</sup> Anne Duggan, "John of Salisbury and Thomas Becket," in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. Michael Wilks, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> Tilman Struve, "The Importance of the Organism in the Political Theory John of Salisbury," in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. Michael Wilks, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984).

<sup>18</sup> Jan Van Laarhoven, "Thou Shalt Not Slay a Tyrant! The So-Called Theory of John of Salisbury," in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. Michael Wilks, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984). Van Laarhoven argues that Salisbury does not promote tyrannicide in *Policraticus*.

<sup>19</sup> Nederman, "A Duty to Kill." Nederman responds to Van Laarhoven in this essay and references the Rouses.

<sup>20</sup> Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, "John of Salisbury and the Doctrine of Tyrannicide," *Speculum* 42, no. 4 (October 1967).

<sup>21</sup> Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*.

the king's two bodies. I reference Chris Wickham, a historian of medieval Europe, for general knowledge of the Middle Ages in *Medieval Europe*, published in 2016.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Chris Wickham, *Medieval Europe*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016). Wickham provides a general overview of Europe from the fall of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance.

### 3.0 UNDERAPPRECIATED IN HIS OWN TIME: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SALISBURY AND *POLICRATICUS*

Henry I of England died in 1135 CE without a clear heir to succeed him on the throne of England. His son William had died in 1120 CE, when the heir-to-be was only a teenager. Henry I wished to make his daughter, Matilda, his rightful heir, but on Henry's death his nephew, Stephen, took the throne of England for himself. This confused succession led to a bitter civil war between the cohorts of Stephen and Matilda, and twelfth-century England saw a break down in its legal and political structure. The disorder caused by the uncertain succession was quelled in 1154 CE when Henry II, Henry I's grandson, ascended to the throne.<sup>23</sup> Against this backdrop, John of Salisbury, whom Henry II often invited to his court, began to research and write, *Policraticus*, his master work on political thought, which appeared around 1159 CE.<sup>24, 25</sup>

John of Salisbury himself was likely born in the 1110s in Salisbury, a town in the south of England.<sup>26</sup> After studying in France under the mentorship of Peter Abelard and William of Conches in the 1130s and 1140s, Salisbury returned to England where he took up service as a

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<sup>23</sup> Henry II was Matilda's son with Geoffrey Plantagenet, a French nobleman.

<sup>24</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman. xxix. Salisbury produced his other major work *Metalogicon* in 1159 CE. *Metalogicon* focuses on education and academic curriculum.

<sup>25</sup> Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 11. Nederman recounts that Salisbury himself claimed to have worked on *Policraticus* for nearly twelve years.

<sup>26</sup> David Luscombe, "John of Salisbury," Oxford University Press, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/view/article/14849?docPos=5>.

clergyman.<sup>27</sup> Salisbury was exiled from England on two separate occasions, both due to disputes with Henry II's administration. It was during his first exile in the late 1150s that Salisbury completed *Policraticus*. He was later elected Bishop of Chartres in 1176 CE, and he died in 1180 CE at Chartres, likely in his mid-60s.<sup>28</sup>

Salisbury was educated with and by the clergy.<sup>29</sup> His opinions on spiritual authority, which he presents in *Policraticus*, aligned with the positions of most high clergy in the twelfth century: the Church gave rulers their power, and thus rulers were below the authority of the church. Many major works on theology and politics in the eleventh and twelfth centuries stemmed from conflict between high church clergy and kings. Perhaps no single disagreement was greater than the Investiture Controversy of the late 1070s and early 1080s when bishops, popes, and monarchs quarreled about lay investiture, that is the appointment of bishops and other clerical positions by the laity.<sup>30</sup> While *Policraticus* was a work in political theory rather than an argument in favor of ecclesiastical authority, in England Salisbury found himself embroiled in a heated conflict over spiritual and secular authority.

Salisbury's life became especially difficult when Henry II chose to appoint his friend and clergyman, Thomas Becket, as his chancellor.<sup>31</sup> Salisbury's close relationship to Becket, and, by extension King Henry II, fueled his interest in the political thought of the twelfth century. Later,

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<sup>27</sup> Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 5. Both Abelard and William were esteemed thinkers of the twelfth-century academic realm in western Europe, though Nederman relates that modern scholars doubt that Salisbury aligned with Abelard's school of thought.

<sup>28</sup> Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 39. The historic date of Salisbury's death is October 25, 1180 CE.

<sup>29</sup> Clerics were the best educated and most literate demographic of the medieval population in the twelfth century.

<sup>30</sup> Wickham, 114-116. Pope Gregory VII and Holy Roman Emperor IV disputed the matter constantly in the late 1070s and early 1080s. While secular rulers believed it was their right to appoint the clergy who oversaw the bishoprics of their kingdom, popes and papal supporters argued that such power of investment was held only by the pope and archbishops. Spiritual leaders asserted that God conferred divinity upon kings through the Church, thus the right to properly appoint clergy rested with the Church alone. No major resolution to the Investiture Controversy was ever found, but the conflict did encourage both state and church leaders to develop their own positions on their proper authority in the medieval world.

<sup>31</sup> F. Donald Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 151-162.

Salisbury's immersion in both the spiritual world and the secular world led him to disagree with Henry II's taxation of the Church to fund military endeavors, siding with Becket in the later dispute.<sup>32</sup> Becket had risen under the tutelage of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1139 CE to 1161 CE, and quickly gained favor with the young king.<sup>33</sup> When Theobald died, Henry II appointed Becket as the new Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>34</sup> Salisbury served as Becket's secretary while at Canterbury. Becket quickly consolidated his power in the church, and he led a coalition of bishops that opposed Henry II's measures with the Assize of Clarendon in 1164 CE. For their opposition, both Becket and Salisbury were exiled to France.<sup>35</sup> They returned to England in 1170 CE but Becket was soon assassinated at Canterbury by a group of knights who claimed to act under Henry II's orders.<sup>36</sup> Salisbury was present at the time of Becket's murder, but served as a clergyman still in England for another decade before his passing.

Not only was Salisbury educated by those clergymen who had learned from the trials and tribulations of the Investiture Controversy, but he also experienced first-hand the civil war between Stephen and Matilda and later Henry II's government. Though John of Salisbury completed *Policraticus* prior to Henry II's conflict with the church, it is conceivable that the work grew out of discontent with the actions of the king Stephen, in the preceding decades.<sup>37</sup> While not revered in his own time, Salisbury's theories display a new concern for determining

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<sup>32</sup> Quentin Taylor, "John of Salisbury, the *Policraticus*, and Political Thought," *Humanitas* 19, no. 1 (March 2006), 136.

<sup>33</sup> Salisbury also worked under Theobald for a time.

<sup>34</sup> Logan, 153. Becket was consecrated as archbishop in 1162 CE. The Archbishop of Canterbury was the highest cleric in England in the Middle Ages. To this day, the Archbishop of Canterbury is the highest official in the Church of England.

<sup>35</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, xxix.

<sup>36</sup> Logan, 159-163. Scholars still debate whether or not Henry II actually ordered Becket's murder. Henry II is reported to have said, in some form, "Will no one of my men rid me of this contemptuous, low-born priest?" It is also recorded that Henry II mourned the loss of his old friend. Becket was made a saint in 1173 CE.

<sup>37</sup> Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 18-19.



and justifying the political identity of the kingdom, and his insights grew out of contemporary debates over authority and secular power.

#### 4.0 A SERVANT ABOVE THE LAW: SALISBURY'S IDEAL KINGSHIP IN BOOK IV OF *POLICRATICUS*

Book IV of *Policraticus* stands as John of Salisbury's most focused discussion of kingship and the kingdom's government. Central to his theorizing is the understanding that the king exists as both a sovereign above the law and as a servant of the law.<sup>38</sup> Salisbury expands upon the king's position in his government and the duty he holds for his people, while also referring to classical principles and Scripture as he does throughout his work. While much of Salisbury's theorizing in Book IV is scattered throughout the other books of *Policraticus*, here he centralizes his arguments on the king's position in the government. In this section I will describe the efforts John of Salisbury makes in Book IV to develop an ideal image of rulership and the implications of these efforts as they apply to the king's two bodies.

Salisbury explains the king's public power over his kingdom throughout Book IV. Salisbury asserts, "the prince is the public power and a certain image on earth of the divine majesty," and later, "since he [the prince/king] is the public power (as we said previously), he draws strength from all and, lest it wane in him, he must procure the safety of all the members."<sup>39</sup> He makes clear that unless this public power diminishes, the king has a duty to protect his kingdom. The king's powers and responsibilities, exist in a circular relationship.

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<sup>38</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 47.

<sup>39</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 28, 63.

Through his right to rule, the king possesses the public power. From this power he holds a duty to his kingdom to rule with benevolence and to protect the kingdom. Then through his proper action and benevolence the king has the right to rule. In this fashion, Salisbury attempts to connect the components of the kingship so that the king is directly linked to the public power. The king's image as the public power, and as the law itself, later reinforces the concept of the king's political body.

Recognizing the necessity within the kingdom for both the king and the people, Salisbury makes continued use of the classical analogy that compares the kingdom to the human body.<sup>40</sup> He says, "If the properly constituted prince administers faithfully the office undertaken, such honour and such reverence are exhibited for him as to match that superiority which the head has over the other members of the body."<sup>41</sup> The analogy's accessibility to almost any learned man of the Middle Ages makes it effective for Salisbury's endeavor. No scholar could mount an effective argument against the head's importance and supremacy to the other parts of the body. Likewise, it would be difficult to argue that the monarch was not the most crucial part of the state. Without the king there could be no law, and with no law, the kingdom would descend into chaos and destruction, just as a body without a head would be deceased. Salisbury continues his discourse through this analogy in Chapter 4 of Book IV, "every one of his [the king's] subjects would expose his own head to imminent peril for him—just as nature urges the limbs to expose themselves for the relief of the head—and would sacrifice his own skin."<sup>42</sup> Despite the confusion that could arise in Salisbury's reference to heads of subjects in the same thought, the analogy's

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<sup>40</sup> Struve, 304. Struve, a medieval political historian, expands upon Salisbury's uses of the "political organism" and the development of the concept from antiquity to the Middle Ages.

<sup>41</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 33.

<sup>42</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 37.

physical aspects helps to recall the naturalness of kingship.<sup>43</sup> Describing human heads, skin, and limbs gives a physical image to Salisbury's concept, just as classical philosophers had done centuries earlier.

Though Salisbury never expressly states a theory of the king's two bodies, Book IV, and later along with Book VIII, offers his most useful theorizing for defending such a principle. He begins Chapter 4 by decreeing, "That the authority of divine law consists in the prince being subject to the justice of the law."<sup>44</sup> The nature of this statement is paradoxical. As the divine authority on earth himself, the king is the law of land. So, to be also "subject to the justice of the law," as a servant of the kingdom like any other who cannot impede or break the laws without incurring the wrath of the law, means that some understanding of the king in two different capacities must exist in Salisbury's mind. To place this argument in a geometric perspective, if the 'law of the kingdom' is a straight horizontal line, then the sovereign, as the divine authority must be represented as Point A, above this line. However, if it is to be understood that the king is also a subject of the law, then a separate Point B must represent the king on the horizontal line that is the law. And then of course it is apparent that Point A and Point B, though both representing the king, are separate points. Thus, though never explicitly mentioned, an early explanation for the king's existence in multiple capacities is inherent in Salisbury's theorizing on the king's relationship to the law.

Salisbury's ideas requiring the monarch's obedience to the law like any subject in the kingdom appear throughout Book IV. He claims at the end of Chapter 1, "it is the case that the prince ought to imagine himself permitted to do nothing which is inconsistent with the equity of

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<sup>43</sup> In this case, the subject's "own head" denotes 'his own self/person/body.'

<sup>44</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 35.

justice.”<sup>45</sup> Salisbury makes this remark with a reference to Justinian, a Roman Emperor at Byzantium in the sixth century, who professed that the king’s obedience to the law should precede his devotion to his royal power.<sup>46, 47</sup> In this instance, Salisbury again separates the components of kingship into two pieces: one that gives the law, and another that follows the law. Salisbury’s ideal king must adhere to both the duty to dispense the law and his responsibility to comply with the law.

Book IV also unwittingly represents the possible shortcomings of Salisbury’s ideas on kingship while also opening another line of thought on the king’s existence in multiple capacities. The ruler presented here by Salisbury is over-idealized, relying heavily on great benevolence for the kingdom to function properly in the real world. Intentional application of Salisbury’s theories does not exist in historical medieval governments because theories, by definition, are suppositions rather than tested truths. Salisbury argues in Chapter 2, “for indeed the uncorrupted judge is one whose determination is on the basis of the assiduous contemplation of the image of equity.”<sup>48</sup> In history, “uncorrupted” kings, who practice “assiduous contemplation,” are difficult to find, as Salisbury later shows in Book VIII on tyranny.<sup>49</sup> Still, these possible difficulties in applying Salisbury’s theory also introduce a concept that lends itself to the king’s two bodies. In his ideal state, Salisbury’s monarch is always a just and devoted leader, but the actual reigns of kings throughout history do not always align with Salisbury’s thought. Salisbury himself does not shy away from examining historical rulers, for example the corrupt and oppressive Roman emperors Caligula and Nero, or Salisbury’s own king, Henry II,

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<sup>45</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 29.

<sup>46</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 29.

<sup>47</sup> Wickham, 44. Justinian ordered the revision of the empire’s legal code in the late 520s and early 530s CE, and these codes came to be known as the *Corpus Juris Civilis*. These codes are considered to be some of the most important legal productions of the first millennium.

<sup>48</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 31.

<sup>49</sup> See section [Tyrrannicide, a Dark and Dangerous Principle] on tyranny and tyrannicide.

whom he praises later in Book VI.<sup>50</sup> In this way, Salisbury envisions the king in one sense as this image of equity and justice, while at the same time recognizing the actual personal actions of individual kings, along with their possible inadequacies.

In Book IV Salisbury provides his most analytical discussion of the ruler's power and duty in his kingdom. He determines the king's public power and its sources, presenting the king's place at the top of the kingdom's hierarchy as absolutely essential to the welfare of the kingdom. He utilizes classical analogies comparing the kingdom to a body to rationalize the king's authority and the kingdom's devotion to him. Salisbury's attention to the king's position as both a superior to the law and a servant to the law himself, remains his most important contribution in Book IV to a later understanding of the theory of the king's two bodies. While this piece of *Policraticus* develops Salisbury's best view of good kingship, Book VIII develops his most critical views on tyranny.

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<sup>50</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 118, 203.

## 5.0 TYRANNICIDE, A DARK AND DANGEROUS PROPOSITION: BOOK VIII OF *POLICRATICUS*

John of Salisbury makes his most radical claims of *Policraticus* in Book VIII. Salisbury sets about defining what actions and behaviors constitute a tyrant, and the theoretical necessity for the killing of a tyrant, known as tyrannicide.<sup>51</sup> Salisbury's theories sharply diverge from many other medieval opinions on kings in this section of *Policraticus*. Salisbury aggressively defends the notion that honor and virtue can exist in the assassination of a tyrannical ruler by citing Scripture and, also, the actions and reigns of rulers from antiquity and the early Middle Ages. While Salisbury admits that tyrants can exist outside the umbrella of temporal leadership, he refrains from detailing examples of ecclesiastical tyranny. Due to its hard stance on tyrants, Book VIII is the most revolutionary piece of *Policraticus*. In this section I will describe Salisbury's development of his theory on tyrants and tyrannicide and their relevance to the theory of the king's two bodies.<sup>52</sup>

Salisbury offers his clearest definition for a tyrant at the beginning of Chapter 17 in Book VIII. He contrasts a tyrant with a proper prince, "the tyrant is...one who oppresses the people by violent domination, just as the prince is one who rules by the laws."<sup>53</sup> Later in the same chapter,

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<sup>51</sup> Tyrannicide is a form of regicide, the killing of any monarch.

<sup>52</sup> For more in-depth analysis of Salisbury's opinions on Tyranny, see Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse's "John of Salisbury and the Doctrine of Tyrannicide" (1967) and Cary J. Nederman's "A Duty to Kill: John of Salisbury's Theory of Tyrannicide" (1988).

<sup>53</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 190.

Salisbury goes on, “they [tyrants] wish to have power over everything, disdain[ing] what precedes and follows this power.”<sup>54</sup> In contrast, the ideal prince should be a man whose devotion to his divine duty and his people is unquestioned, and who should “properly aspire to the purity of the angels.”<sup>55</sup> Salisbury’s definitions of tyranny are very general, making them at once timeless in their application and wide-ranging enough to apply to any section of society that can involve an abuse of power. Salisbury used such broad phrasings because they could pertain to an array of misbehaviors by one of his exemplary tyrants. He cites the vileness of the Roman emperor Caligula and the overly-luxurious lifestyle of his later successor Nero, while also referencing the biblical Nimrod and many of the kings of Judea as major tyrants in history.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the use of both classical and scriptural examples of tyrants confers legitimacy on Salisbury’s theories. In the Christian medieval world statesmen, clerics, and academics alike revered the Bible and philosophies of antiquity above all others. Just as great kings, such as Augustus Caesar or David, existed in both antiquity and the bible, so too did tyrants, often within the same lineages and successions as their commendable counterparts. Salisbury uses his definitions of tyranny to explain the relevance of his discussions on similar topics throughout history and into his contemporary period.

Salisbury introduces his theory of tyrannicide almost simultaneously with his definitions of tyranny itself. Salisbury is straight-forward in his approach to dealing with a tyrant in Chapter 17, “the tyrant, as the image of depravity, is for the most part to be killed.”<sup>57</sup> His phrasing “for the most part” is intentionally ambiguous, as a means to protect his theory from being applied as

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<sup>54</sup> Salisbury, Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 192. This quote also defends Salisbury’s interconnected understanding of the king’s power, duty, and right to rule.

<sup>55</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 182.

<sup>56</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 203, 206-207. Caligula reigned as Roman emperor from 37 CE until his assassination in 41 CE. Nero reigned from 54 CE until 68 CE when he committed suicide after being declared a public enemy.

<sup>57</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 191.



principle for killing any leader for any reason, but it does little to negate the seriousness of Salisbury's claim. To kill the king, God's anointed ruler on earth, was one of the most treasonous crimes of the Middle Ages. Salisbury does not feign ignorance of his claim's gravity. Rather, he defends his authority to offer such ideas with his connection to the church when he asks, "if in human and divine law the tyrant is to be slain, who supposes that the tyrant within the priesthood is to be loved and esteemed?"<sup>58</sup> Salisbury does not mean to say that he himself is a sort of tyrant, but rather that as long as the possibility of murdering a king exists, so too does the murdering of any tyrant, whether of similar, higher, or lower social standing.

In some cases, tyrannicide is not only an honorable and just 'last resort', but it is essentially the divine will of God. In Chapter 17, Salisbury reasons that tyrannicide must be legal according to the laws of the church.<sup>59</sup> Citing a plethora of sources from antiquity, Salisbury determines in Chapter 18, "it has been permitted to deceive them [tyrants] and it has been honourable to kill them if they could not be otherwise restrained."<sup>60</sup> Salisbury then titles Chapter 20, "That by the authority of the divine book it is lawful and glorious to kill public tyrants."<sup>61</sup> To label such an action as "honourable" or "glorious" contrasts the societal standards of Salisbury's present day. An attack on the monarch was an attack on the image of God's divinity.<sup>62</sup> Under no circumstance could one rightly defy God's anointed king. Still, Salisbury asserts in Chapter 21 that God himself can take part in the killing of tyrants, "sometimes He [God] uses His own

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<sup>58</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 201.

<sup>59</sup> Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, 696.

<sup>60</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 205.

<sup>61</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 206.

<sup>62</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 137. In Chapter 25 of Book VI, Salisbury says, "a crime of the utmost seriousness and approaches sacrilege because, just as the latter assails God, so the former attacks the prince who is agreed to be a sort of deity on earth." The Middle Ages were beset with dispute between popes and temporal rulers about where the divine right to rule came from. Whether a monarch was directly anointed by God or by the church on earth matters little to this understanding of kingship, as in either case the king was still understood to be an image of divinity on earth.

sword, and sometimes He uses a sort of human sword in the punishment of the impious.”<sup>63</sup> Therefore, Salisbury proposes that a mortal man who takes just murderous action towards another does so with the backing of God’s divine will. Salisbury also makes great use of classical sources to display many instances in which tyrants were, in fact, murdered justly for the good of the kingdom.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Salisbury uses the “authority of the divine book” [the Bible] to defend the justice of his theory on tyrannicide. The Bible was interpreted throughout history in any fashion that could be of value to the interpreter, but its power in the medieval world was unquestioned, having been reproduced for centuries since the fall of the Roman Empire as Christianity spread across Europe. Hence, Salisbury again falls back upon Scripture and antiquity as his main references for the justification of tyrannicide.

Salisbury does not fully remove the divinity of kingship from tyrants to justify their killing. On the contrary, he defends the divine right of kings, even when they devolve into tyrants. He begins Chapter 18 by acknowledging this divinity of tyrants, “I do not deny that tyrants are ministers of God, who by His just judgement has willed them to be pre-eminent over both soul and body. By means of tyrants, the evil are punished and the good are corrected and trained.”<sup>65</sup> Salisbury points out that some tyrannical behavior is necessary, by comparing it to the dark, “unattractive” colors of an otherwise beautiful painting.<sup>66</sup> Just as those dark colors provide the necessary contrast to make the brighter colors stand out in the hypothetical painting, so too does tyranny highlight the positives of a truly law-abiding king. Salisbury then concludes his theory on the necessity of tyranny by again spurning it, “even the power of tyrants is in a certain

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<sup>63</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 210.

<sup>64</sup> Conveniently for Salisbury, many of the cases of tyrannicide he cites, often from the Roman Republic/Empire, were enacted against non-Christian rulers, thus leaving some separation between them and the divinity of God.

<sup>65</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 201.

<sup>66</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 202.

sense good, yet nothing is worse than tyranny.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, tyrants are necessary evils, but they are still tyrants all the same.

As a man of the church himself, Salisbury was never likely to attack a papal authority, or any other ecclesiastical authority, as ‘tyrannical.’ In Chapter 17, Salisbury makes his opinion on the right of the church clear, “I leave untouched the Roman Church, which on the authority of God is the parent and nurse of faith and moral character and, protected by privilege, cannot be judged and censured by men.”<sup>68</sup> This is not to say that recognition of the potential for ecclesiastical tyranny does not exist in *Policraticus*. On the contrary, Salisbury believes that tyranny amongst spiritual leaders is just as bad as that of secular rulers.<sup>69</sup> Despite such claims, Salisbury holds close to his belief in the authority of the church by failing to name an outright ecclesiastical tyrant in Book VIII.

Salisbury’s description and analysis of tyranny and kingship in Book VIII develop principles that foreshadow an understanding of the king’s two bodies. The office of the kingship, the monarch’s public, political body could not devolve into tyranny. The office had existed for centuries by the divine right of God, and Salisbury makes very clear in Chapter 18 of Book VIII that he does not mean to call for a lack of authority to be afforded to the king’s divinity.<sup>70</sup> However, tyrants did and continue to exist, and occurrences of tyranny have persisted for as long as there have been princes and kings to become tyrannical. This point again is serviced by Salisbury’s naming and description of tyrants in the Bible and in antiquity. Rather than putting blame to an entire history of Roman emperors, for example, his decision to single out Caligula and Nero unwittingly gives favor to the notion that a king also exists as a private person who can

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<sup>67</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 202.

<sup>68</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 198.

<sup>69</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 217.

<sup>70</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 201.

do wrong as anyone else might. Salisbury, indeed, proposes that a king who turns away from his duties to his kingdom will himself meet an untimely end, “that prince who, moved by love of children or the flesh, diminishes divine honour by forgetting charity may fear his own destruction.”<sup>71</sup> That being so, the monarch’s first priority then ought to be his public duty of rulership over his kingdom, with his personal desires coming second.

Salisbury further supplements this notion of individual tyranny by explaining that tyrants exist in all walks of life. He proposes that tyranny can affect any person or institution. In applying his understanding of oppressive behavior to sections of society beyond just the kingship, Salisbury softens the radical tone of Book VIII. Salisbury’s academic and political status, as well as his status in the church, guided his motivations for depicting tyranny in this fashion. It took a remarkably brave soul to propose any sort of measure against the wishes of the king, and Salisbury proves he was certainly a courageous man by proposing tyrannicide. Consequently, Salisbury then had good reason for applying his theory of tyranny upon all of society rather than directly on the monarch. This tactic draws back some of the harsh nature of that same theory. Additionally, Salisbury’s learned background at university and as a cleric gave him considerable access to historical examples of tyranny and ignoring these cases from antiquity and Scripture would have negated the legitimacy of Salisbury’s argument.

Book VIII of *Policraticus* presents of view of tyrannical behavior and tyrannicide that is both wide-ranging and progressive, especially in the twelfth century. Salisbury presents an image of tyranny that can only be described as condemnatory when he says, “respect for the honourable and the just rarely or never exists in the sight of tyrants,” and later, “nothing is more harmful to man than man, and among them there is none more harmful than a secular or ecclesiastical

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<sup>71</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 214.

tyrant.”<sup>72</sup> Though Salisbury does indicate that tyranny is a constant, and sometimes necessary, threat to the kingdom, he does not refrain from positing the most aggressive of measures for handling such an evil. Tyrannicide was as revolutionary and damnatory of a solution to poor kingship as any in that time, and it would continue to hover about the minds of revolutionaries for centuries to come.

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<sup>72</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 192, 217.

## 6.0 A SCATTERED THEORY: SALISBURY'S PRINCIPLES THROUGHOUT THE OTHER BOOKS OF *POLICRATICUS*

Though John of Salisbury's most straight-forward theorizing on sovereignty and tyranny occurs in Books IV and VIII, he offers more sporadic speculation of these concepts throughout the other books of *Policraticus*. The work contains many ideas that do not relate as closely to kingship as others do, but he layers his fundamentals of kingship throughout. Salisbury comments on Scripture, the duties of the people, and the roles of soldiers among many others. Nevertheless, Salisbury returns to his principles on authority, law, tyranny, and antiquity across his sections of *Policraticus*.

Salisbury prepares natural law as the grounding of his development for the relationship of the king and the people in Book I. He states, "What is suitable by nature pertains to everyone equally; what is a matter of duty, to individuals."<sup>73</sup> In this statement, Salisbury compares the roles of the king and his people in two ways. Most clearly, his assertion that "nature pertains to everyone equally" proposes that all of the people in the kingdom owe their allegiance to natural law. Additionally, Salisbury's claim on "duty," though concerning "individuals," acts as a reminder that all of those people have specific responsibilities within the kingdom, just as the king has the responsibility to rule justly. Furthermore, "No one will usurp that which is

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<sup>73</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 10.

another's, remaining inclined towards love of all without distinction."<sup>74</sup> Through this theorizing, the kingdom ought to act as one cohesive unit.

The king's public power exists because of the public itself, and therefore his greatest concern ought to be his public duty as Salisbury proclaims, "the public power treats harshly those who endeavour to put aside the public hand."<sup>75</sup> Likewise, the public safety exists because of the king, and the public ought to obey him, as Salisbury describes, "There is no one who does not rejoice in liberty and who does not desire the strength through which it may be protected."<sup>76</sup> Of course, that "strength" comes from the sovereign. Salisbury frequently calls to mind a sort of symbiotic relationship between the sovereign and the people of his kingdom. In Chapter 29 of Book VI, Salisbury claims, "the prince becomes mild as a result of the innocence of the people and innocent princes restrain the passions of the people."<sup>77</sup> The implication of this statement is clear: this system of government is only viable if each part is held accountable to the other. Thus, the people can incur the king's wrath quickly if they are unruly, and the king can lose the support of his people if he does not rule with "innocence."

Just as he does in Book IV, Salisbury makes continuous use of the analogy that the sovereign is like the head of a body, often presenting differing opinions towards the head. Referencing Plato in Book V, Salisbury relates, "When the magistrate oppresses subjects, it is just as if the head of the body had swollen up so that it is impossible for the members of the body to endure it."<sup>78</sup> This instance places the monarch's action in a poor light, proposing that the king's corruption is felt across the entire state. Salisbury claims then, "a head is useless to them

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<sup>74</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 11.

<sup>75</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 25.

<sup>76</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 163.

<sup>77</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 143.

<sup>78</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 76.

[the public] unless he [the king as the head] faithfully coheres with the members.”<sup>79</sup> Salisbury later contemplates Plato’s words, and explains that this “body” of the kingdom requires “tenacious unity” and “a virtual joining together of souls.”<sup>80, 81</sup> As mentioned previously, Salisbury’s appreciation for this classical analogy is apparent throughout *Policraticus*, and especially in Book IV, and its use applies a natural tone to the principles that Salisbury puts forth.

Salisbury presents concepts related to tyranny and tyrannicide throughout the other books of *Policraticus*. He offers a precursor to his more developed theories on tyranny when in Chapter 17 of Book VII he uses an identical definition of a tyrant to that he uses in Chapter 17 of Book VIII, “the tyrant is he who oppresses the people by violent domination.”<sup>82</sup> In the first chapter of Book I, Salisbury already lays the groundwork for his analysis of a tyrant, “inner goodness decays as the desires are extended to the deceptions of various external things.”<sup>83</sup> This statement signals the deterioration that characterizes a king’s devolution to a tyrant as he focuses more on his own personal pleasures than on his moral obligations as a sovereign. Salisbury argues in favor of moral righteousness and honor against personal pleasure in multiple forms across the books of *Policraticus*. The most radical passage of the work, outside of the tyrant-centric Book VIII, is that in Chapter 15 of Book III, when Salisbury relates, “it is not only permitted, but is also equitable and just to slay tyrants.”<sup>84</sup> The gravity of such a claim cannot be

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<sup>79</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 76.

<sup>80</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 76-77.

<sup>81</sup> Luscombe and Evans, “The twelfth-century renaissance,” 326. Luscombe and Evans postulate that Salisbury’s attention to the body analogy come from his studies under William of Conches, who also references Plato in his works.

<sup>82</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 163.

<sup>83</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 9.

<sup>84</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 25.



understated. Salisbury tests his own courage in proposing the destruction of the king, and by extension the very representation of divinity on earth and the law of the land.

The king's proposed simultaneous superiority and obedience to the law appear frequently, often at times to demonstrate the hypocrisy of a poor ruler. Salisbury asks in Book VI, "Who is more iniquitous than he whose or justice condemn justice...Above all, he destroys law by law and is beyond the law, even while he burdens others with the law."<sup>85</sup> In Salisbury's view, this abuse of power is a terrible mockery of the legal system. The king's responsibility to his people requires his proper upholding and creation of laws that benefit the kingdom. Only a tyrant would "burden" his people with a law that he, himself the king, imposes for his own personal benefit. No form of tyranny is as severe as this one with Salisbury claiming in Chapter 15 of Book III, "although there are many forms of high treason, none of them is so serious as that which is executed against the body of justice itself."<sup>86</sup> Of course, killing a king would be high treason as well, but Salisbury states that it is the king himself who can commit the worst case of high treason by corrupting law, thereby making the king the greatest possible enemy of the kingdom.

Devotion to God is valued above devotion to any earthly person, even the monarch, which further defends Salisbury's claims in Book VIII that God can desire the killing of an unfaithful sovereign. Salisbury begins Chapter 9 of Book VI, "faith is owed to God in preference to any man whomsoever, and man is not served unless God is served."<sup>87</sup> Indeed, if radical action against the king was necessary, the actors could fall back upon this principle of God's preference

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<sup>85</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 105.

<sup>86</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 25.

<sup>87</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 117.

over all others, including the king, to defend their deeds. Still, this statement comes in conflict with Salisbury's positions defending the king's role as God's image on earth.

In his normal fashion, Salisbury frequently references sources from antiquity to defend his positions, contemplating the ideas of ancient philosophers and praising ancient rulers. He shows an affinity for the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan in Chapter 8 of Book V, and he uses the works of Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, and Virgil among others to support his arguments.<sup>88, 89</sup> Salisbury's attention to the ideologies of the ancients shows both the trust he held in the philosophies of antiquity and the long history of this theorizing that he builds upon.

Interestingly, in Chapter 18 of Book VI, Salisbury praises his contemporary king Henry II for bringing peace to England following the anarchy of Steven and Matilda in the middle of the twelfth century. This is the same king who later exiled Salisbury and his cohort. Salisbury even claims, "Henry's grandson [Henry II], if the merits of his virtue remain in harmony until the end with the grace already given, will for all times be the best King of Britain."<sup>90</sup> Salisbury's reverence for the young king is evident, but this statement was written no more than five years after Henry II took the throne.<sup>91</sup> Salisbury's demonstrated admiration for Henry II in *Policraticus* deteriorated in the 1160s during Henry II's ordeal with Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, as discussed in a previous section.<sup>92</sup> Anne Duggan, an expert on medieval legal history and Becket specifically, puts forth that Salisbury was conflicted initially, torn between a devotion to his king and to his close friend and leader of the English church.<sup>93</sup> However, Salisbury eventually became a firm supporter of the archbishop in the late 1160s as his second

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<sup>88</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 79-81. Under Trajan (r. 98-117 CE), the Roman Empire's territory reached its greatest size.

<sup>89</sup> David Bloch, *John of Salisbury on Aristotelian Science*, (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2012), 27-44.

<sup>90</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 119.

<sup>91</sup> Henry II rose to the throne of England in 1154 CE. *Policraticus* was published in 1159 CE.

<sup>92</sup> See section [Underappreciated in His Own Time] on historical context of Salisbury.

<sup>93</sup> Duggan, 429-430.

exile from England wore on, explaining his loss of support for Henry II.<sup>94</sup> Salisbury was willing to make such a strong claim in *Policraticus* about the prestige of Henry II's reign, because the king's reign to that point had only lasted for half of a decade, and having lived through a period of civil war in the late 1130s, 1140s, and early 1150s, Salisbury met any relative peace in England with praise.<sup>95</sup>

Salisbury litters the books of *Policraticus* with many instances of principles that posit a medieval understanding of the king's public power and opposition to tyranny. While Books I, II, III, V, VI, and VII are not as much focused on such principles as Book IV and VIII, they do demonstrate Salisbury's continued emphasis on the sovereign's role and function in the government. Along with those more centralized themes, Salisbury's theorizing throughout *Policraticus* contains sparks of the ideas that would later form the theory of the king's two bodies.

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<sup>94</sup> Duggan, 431-433.

<sup>95</sup> Luscombe and Evans, 327. Luscombe and Evans assert that Salisbury was unaware of Henry II's later tyrannical behavior.

## 7.0 A HIDDEN CONCEPT: EARLY PRINCIPLES OF THE “KING’S TWO BODIES” IN *POLICRATICUS*

Salisbury’s theories were never specifically directed towards establishing the king’s existence as both a public entity and a private person, but his ideas do lay the groundwork for a comprehension of the king’s two bodies and their theoretical separation. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, a medieval political historian and an expert on the king’s two bodies, relates that an explicit understanding of the theory of the king’s two bodies does not make an appearance in historical record until the mid-sixteenth century in England.<sup>96</sup> Despite *Policraticus* predating this historical appearance of the king’s two bodies by four centuries, Salisbury’s work touches on key elements of the theory. In this section I will expand upon the theoretical uses of Salisbury’s concepts in *Policraticus* that I mentioned in earlier sections as they apply to a primitive understanding of what would become the theory of the king’s two bodies.

An image of the king’s political body develops from the king’s public power in *Policraticus*. In Chapter 2 of Book IV, Salisbury demonstrates a perception of the king’s existence as a public body asserting, “in him [the king] the public persona is borne since he

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<sup>96</sup> Kantorowicz, 7. Kantorowicz and English legal historian Frederick Maitland were two of the preeminent pioneering historians in the study of the king’s two bodies, though Maitland’s work was more critical of the theory as a fabrication of early modern lawyers. Kantorowicz’s *The King’s Two Bodies* remains the best reference for a history of the king’s two bodies from the Middle Ages to the early modern period. Kantorowicz credits Maitland with noting the first clear intimation of the king’s two bodies in Edmund Plowden’s *Reports* in the 1550s CE.

punishes all injuries and wrongs, and also all crimes, with moderate equity.”<sup>97</sup> That public persona is, as the political body of the king, inherent in much of Salisbury’s political theory. Kantorowicz recognizes Salisbury’s focus on the public body, “He [Salisbury] is interested in the *persona publica*, that portentous notion introduced from Roman Law upon which political theory in the later Middle Ages and thereafter hinged.”<sup>98</sup> It was the king’s political body that held omnipresence in medieval courts, at once giving and upholding the laws of the kingdom. Even in Salisbury’s own time and state, this trend in medieval politics took hold. Henry II implemented a system of courts and justices that ran throughout England, all the while carrying the force of the king’s law.<sup>99</sup> While *Policraticus* did not influence Henry II to make these reforms, similar concepts concerning the king’s political body and authority over the law exist in both *Policraticus* and the court systems of late twelfth-century England. From an understanding of the king’s public, political body arises the idea of a private body.<sup>100</sup>

Salisbury does not demonstrate a clear theory of the king as a private person in *Policraticus*. Kantorowicz argues that most medieval thinkers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries do possess a certain capacity for recognizing the king’s power and person existed as separate entities, but these thinkers do not develop much theory on the king’s private person in their works.<sup>101</sup> Still, Salisbury’s ideas signal the existence of a private capacity for the king long before a complete theory of the king’s two bodies formed.

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<sup>97</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 31.

<sup>98</sup> Kantorowicz, 96. *Public persona* can also be translated as “public character/personality.”

<sup>99</sup> Van Caenegem, “Government, law and society,” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350-c. 1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 191. While *Policraticus* did not influence Henry II to make his legal reforms, similar concepts concerning the king’s political body and authority over the law exist in both *Policraticus* and the court systems of late twelfth-century England.

<sup>100</sup> See section [A Servant Above the Law] on the king’s position above and below the law.

<sup>101</sup> Kantorowicz, 96, 172. Kantorowicz examines Salisbury alongside Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (r. 1220-1250), Bracton, a thirteenth-century English political theorist, and Thomas Aquinas, a thirteenth-century Catholic priest and theologian, all of whom published theories of kingship in the thirteenth century.

The succession of kings lends itself well to the theory of the king's two bodies and the notion that the king exists simultaneously as a public person and as a private person. Theoretically, if a king dies, and his son succeeds him, then the kingship, that is the political body of the king, has continued and transferred to the original king's heir, despite each the original king and the successor being a physically separate person. The king's two bodies are inherent in this version of kingship and succession, because the king is at once a political entity who lives on, and a new individual person risen to that throne. Now, despite this line of thinking and its application to the king's two bodies, Salisbury does not propose in *Policraticus* that one king's death, and another's coronation constitutes a separation of public and personal kingship. Rather, it's Salisbury's mentions of inheritance when discussing the proper actions of the king that carry a supposition of the king's multiple capacities.

Salisbury's elaborations on his comprehension of the throne's inheritance contain important principles for the later development and expansion of the king's two bodies. In Chapter 11 of Book IV he explains, "the father was, therefore, to be succeeded temporally by the son, if the justice of the father was copied."<sup>102</sup> The conditional nature of this approach prepares it well for an understanding of the king's two bodies. If the "justice of the father" is understood to be the proper execution of the predecessor's kingly duty, then the sort of office of the kingship that characterizes the king's public, political body is that justice which is copied. Thus, the rising individual's right to rule is contingent upon taking hold of the kingship with proper action. In this way, an individual, personal body exists to rise and maintain the political body. Earlier in Book IV, Salisbury insists that the continuity of a kingship should not rest upon birth, but upon a presumptive king's ability to lead. He says, "kingship and priesthood are not generated of flesh

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<sup>102</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 56.

and blood, since in founding either one, respect for lineage should not prevail apart from respect for the merits of the virtues, but the desire for the benefit of faithful subjects should be prevalent.”<sup>103</sup> Salisbury’s assertion “kingship and priesthood are not generated of flesh and blood” develops the theory that the kingship exists without a physical king, which is essential to the king’s two bodies. If Salisbury were to propose that kingship *is* “generated of flesh and blood,” then the distinction between the public body and the personal body of the king would be rendered non-existent. However, in passages like those mentioned here, though Salisbury never invokes the king’s two bodies, he recognizes that lineage does not alone give an heir the right to rule. This advances concepts that show early extrapolations the theory.

Book VIII of *Policraticus* and the work’s other mentions of tyranny and its solutions do not defend the existence of the king’s two bodies as much as they provide a justification for the separation of those bodies. Debates on the separation of two bodies did not reach their heights in England until the seventeenth century, but Salisbury’s sections on tyranny provide the medieval rationale for such a radical proposition as tyrannicide.<sup>104</sup> Chapter 15 of Book III, and Chapters 17, 18, and 20 of Book VIII all postulate the murdering of a tyrant as a path to the salvation of the kingdom. Furthermore, Salisbury often labels the act “just,” though he does explain that tyrannicide ought to be a last resort, after exercising the utmost patience with a tyrant.<sup>105</sup> Even during the most straight-forward appeals for tyrannicide, at no point does Salisbury offer the removal of the kingship from the kingdom altogether as a solution. By this method of thought, during a period of tyranny the office of the kingship remains intact, only having been corrupted

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<sup>103</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 33.

<sup>104</sup> Greenberg, 205-208. Application of the king’s two bodies, and their possible separation, fueled the political arguments of polemicists during the English Civil War of the 1640s. The radical parliamentarians successfully separated the two bodies when they removed King Charles I from the throne and executed him in 1649 CE.

<sup>105</sup> Salisbury, ed. & trans. Nederman, 209.

by the tyrant who was called king. Salisbury also claims that tyrants in other parts of the kingdom ought to be removed for the welfare of the state, but he never implies that the roles they occupied in that state ought to be eradicated as well. In *tyrannicide*, Salisbury makes his most audacious remarks of *Policraticus*, and unbeknownst to him, an early solution to the corruption of the king's two bodies.

John of Salisbury does not intend to propose an early formulation of the theory of the king's two bodies. In fact, Salisbury would have likely disagreed with later theorists who used his work as a justification for that principle. The theories that Salisbury proposes in *Policraticus* are vague, but they do contain glimmers of the thinking that would be built upon in the centuries to come. In their application to the king's two bodies, Salisbury's principles are at their most fruitful in his discussions on the public power and person of the king, the inheritance of kingship, and *tyrannicide*. His theory of law requires the king to occupy multiple positions in relation to the legal system: one as the authority of the law itself, and one subject to the same law. Salisbury's conception of inheritance and corruption mark the kingdom's throne as a necessary role and duty granted by devotion to justice and honor, rather than just a birthright that connects kingship eternally to a single lineage. In *tyrannicide*, Salisbury rests an answer, albeit a last resort, to the problem of tyranny, an issue affecting a man, not of the divine kingship granted by God. In their fullest formulation the king's two bodies are centuries younger than John of Salisbury and *Policraticus*, but Salisbury's work holds a place as a distant, and influential, ancestor in the history of the theory of king's two bodies.



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