

BIBLICAL JUDITH IN THE IDEOLOGY OF QUEENSHIP OF THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

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*His name as Bolesław is known,
The offspring of Duke Wladislas,
As God eternal willed for us.
And Judith was his mother's name,
(A fateful sing?), as hers the same
Who Israel's salvation wrought
By cutting Holofernes' throat.
A mighty son of our Judith bore
Who conquered all our foes in war.¹*

The text quoted above is the last part of the epilogue of the first Polish chronicle, written by the Anonymous author, known as Gallus. The author compares one Judith – the Polish princess and the mother of the main character of the chronicle – Bolesław III the Wrymouth – to another Judith, the biblical hero. We can, of course, say that it is a quite poor and simple rhetorical trope, based only on the fact that both characters share the same name.

However, it should be noted that Gallus Anonymous was not the first medieval author who compared a woman called Judith to the biblical one. This flattery was also used by Carolingian intellectuals who wrote about empress Judith, the wife of Louis the Pious. Hrabanus Maurus addressed his *Commentary on the Book of Judith* and *Commentary on the Book of Esther*² to empress Judith, writing in the dedication: ‘(...)

¹ Galli Anonymi Cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum polonorum, ii: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica, nova series*, ed. K. Maleczyński (Kraków, 1952), i, pp 5, 15-6, 2; ‘Gallus Anonymus, Gesta Principum Polonorum – The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles’, trans. P.W. Knoll, F. Schaer in *Central European Medieval Texts* (Budapest, New York, 2003), pp 8-11.

² Hrabanus Maurus, ‘Expositio in Librum Judith’ in *Patrologia Latina* (quoted below as *P.L.*), ed. J.-P. Migne, 109; idem, ‘Expositio in Librum Esther’ in *P.L.*, 109. See T. Vogelsang, *Die Frau als Herrscherin im hohen Mittelalter. Studien zur „consors regni“ Formel* (Göttingen, Frankfurt, Berlin, 1954), pp 14-15; P. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers. The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (London and Washington, 1998), p. 20. Stafford claims that Hrabanus Maurus gave the same commentary with a different dedication to Ermengarde, the wife of Lothair I (who is, incidentally, the

Judith namely and Esther, you share the name with one and dignity with the other (...)'.³ Another Carolingian intellectual, Walafrid Strabo, in his poem *De Judith imperatrice, et Carolo Augustorum filio*, also used the image of the biblical Judith saying to the empress: 'You were not named Judith in vain'.⁴

Let us briefly consider this character from the Old Testament.⁵ Judith is believed to have been a widow from the city of Bethulia. The city was besieged by the Assyrians and, when the situation was critical, the brave widow, dressed in the best clothes, went to Holofernes, the commandant of the enemies, and predicted that he would be victorious. The happy general made a feast, then got drunk and fell asleep. Judith then decapitated him and with his head as a spoil came back to Bethulia.

There are a few reasons why biblical Judith is used as an example for medieval women. In medieval interpretations probably the most important of her virtues is chastity. In the Greek original of the Book of Judith it can be found that after the death of her husband, Judith did not remarry and did not have any relations with men.⁶ Furthermore, she herself underlined that Holofernes did not sin with her and disgrace her.⁷ In the Book chastity by itself is not mentioned. That was Jerome in his translation of the Bible, who added the sentence about Judith: '(...) you have loved chastity and after your husband you have not known any other [man]; therefore the Lord's hand has conformed you and you shall be blessed for ever'.⁸ Here perhaps the

great enemy of his stepmother, Judith). In another place the same author wrote that he had presented to Ermengarde only a commentary on the Book of Esther, *ibid.*, pp 25-26.

³ Hrabanus Maurus, 'Expositio in Librum Judith' in *P.L.*, 109, 540 C.

⁴ *Et si perspicitis non frustra nomine Judith, / At Judith virtute refert et religione, / Assyrius cui praedo caput submitit acerbum, / Illa gulam mortis, fidei mucrone trucidans, / Libertatis opem salvatis civibus auget.* (Walafrid Strabon, 'De Judith imperatrice, et Carolo Augustorum filio' in *idem, Versus in Aquisgrani Palatio Editi* in *P.L.*, 114, 1094 B). See E. Ward, 'Caesar's Wife. The Career of the empress Judith, 819-829' in *Charlemagne's Heir. New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. P. Godman, R. Collins (Oxford, 1990), p. 222. For relations between this author and the empress Judith see F. von Bezold, 'Kaiserin Judith und ihre Dichter Walafrid Strabo' in *Historische Zeitschrift*, cxxx (1924), pp 375-439.

⁵ The Book of Judith is included in the Catholic and Orthodox biblical canons, but it is excluded by Jews and Protestants, who consider it to be an apocrypha. However, these different interpretations of the Book are not important for us, because for medieval churchmen, as a part of Vulgate, it was a normal part of the Old Testament.

⁶ Judith 16, 22.

⁷ Judith 13, 16.

⁸ *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, ed. R. Weber (Stuttgart, 1990), Judith 15, 10-11. In his preface to the *Book of Judith* Jerome has written: *Judith viduam, castitatis exemplum* (Jerome, 'Praefatio' in *idem, Liber Judith* in *P.L.*, 29, 40C).

strong bond between the Old Testament character and the virtue of chastity was begun. For later authors the connection between Judith and chastity was obvious: a twelfth-century theologian, Honorius Augustodunensis, wrote: 'Judith the saint widow, who cherishes chastity'.⁹ Thietmar, praising the virtues of his widowed cousin Mathilda said that 'in chastity and abstinence she was similar to Judith'.¹⁰ Furthermore, the killing of Holofernes was interpreted as a heroic defence of chastity. This conviction was popular as early as Late Antiquity. Ambrose of Milan said of Judith that 'her first victory was that she had brought the modesty untouched back from the enemy's tent',¹¹ and Isidore of Seville wrote: 'Judith, that admirable widow, who triumphed over Holofernes the chief of the Assyrian, and having defeated the enemy, she brought back her modesty unharmed'.¹²

Thus, it is obvious that chastity and widowhood are connected, but it seems that the former is even more important in the description of the character than the latter. Judith is the epitome of chastity, not only of widow's chastity. She is also used, for instance, by Christian authors of the Late Antiquity and Middle Ages as an example for virgins.¹³ We can also find a few literary situations when a virgin who defends her chastity is compared to Judith. One of them is the story, told by Gregory of Tours, about a young girl (*puellula*) who, using a sword, tried to kill a prince who wanted to rape her.¹⁴ Another is a metaphor used by Gregory of Ely, who wrote about the saint princess Æthelthryth. Gregory compared her to the biblical character of Judith, although the saint did not have to use a force to defend her chastity.¹⁵

⁹ Honorius Augustodunensis, 'Speculum Ecclesiae' in *P.L.*, 172, 896D.

¹⁰ Thietmar of Merseburg, 'Chronicon' in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (quoted below as *M.G.H.*), *SS rer. Germ. nova series* (Berlin, 1935), vii, 3, p. 401. Peter Damiani, in the letter to princess Adelheid, the countess of Turin, recalling an example of biblical women, says: *Judith quippe continentiae vidualis exemplum, dum deauratos ostroque nitentes Holofernis thalamos spreuit, fortioribus armis in mente praecincta, etiam caput ebrium audenter, impresso pugione, truncavit* (Peter Damiani, *Contra intemperantes clericos*, in *P.L.*, 145, 418C).

¹¹ Ambrose of Milan, 'De officiis ministrorum' in *P.L.*, 16, 169B.

¹² Isidore of Seville, 'De viduis' in idem, *De ecclesiasticis officis*, in *P.L.*, 83, 807 D.

¹³ See Ambrose of Milan, 'De virginibus' in *P.L.*, 16, 213C; Aldhelm of Sherborn, 'De laudibus virginitatis sive de virginitate sanctorum' in *P.L.*, 89, 157A-157B.

¹⁴ Gregory of Tours, 'Libri historiarum X' in *M.G.H., SS rer. Merov.*, i,1, (Hannover, 1937), ix, 27, p. 446, 3-8.

¹⁵ Gregory of Ely, 'De vita et gestis beatae Ældryde virginis' in *Analecta Bollandiana*, cvi/3-4 (1988), p. 354. About the poem, see the introduction to this edition by P. A. Thompson, E. Stecens, pp 333-352. See also Kimberley Steele's article, 'Ladies of Ely' (in this volume), containing an interesting explanation for the use of Judith's metaphor in the poem and showing St Ældryde as a warrior by Gregory of Ely.

We have also one situation, probably even more surprising, when biblical Judith appears as a virgin: an Anglo-Saxon poem *Judith* from the tenth century tells the biblical story, but calls the heroine a 'holy' and 'valorous virgin'¹⁶. The poem refashioned the Jewish widow as a bold virgin, but, as noted Richard J. Schrader, 'she is virgin in the poem and a widow in the Bible, but in both her chastity is her armour'.¹⁷

As we can see, the virtue of chastity is a key issue, but it is not necessarily strictly connected with a woman's marital status – sometimes it can be related to a widow, sometimes to a virgin. Yet Judith could be an example of chastity not only for widows and virgins. Let us come back to Hrabanus Maurus' dedication to the empress Judith, which reads: 'Receive Judith, your namesake, example of chastity'.¹⁸ It should be noted that Hrabanus wrote to the wife, not to the widow.¹⁹ To understand this fact, we have to know that for Carolingian moralists chastity (*castitas*) did not always mean lack of sexual intercourse; apart from virginal and widow's chastity, there was also marital chastity (*castitas coniugalis*), which meant sexual moderation.²⁰ This expression is used by Hrabanus himself.²¹

¹⁶ R. K. Gordon (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, New York, 1937), pp 352-358. Old English original see: <http://www8.georgetown.edu/departments/medieval/labyrinth/library/oe/texts/a4.2.html> [2008.07.17]. About the poem see J. Tibbetts-Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their sex. Female Sanctity and Society, ca. 500-1100* (Chicago, London, 2001), pp 135-136, P. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, p. 26.

¹⁷ R. J. Schrader, *God's Handiwork. Images of Women in Early Germanic Literature*, xli, *Contributions in Women's Studies* (Westport, 1983), p. 23.

¹⁸ Hrabanus Maurus, 'Expositio in Librum Judith' in *P.L.*, 109, 540 D. It is difficult to estimate what was the relationship between Hrabanus' emphasis of chastity and the fact that the empress Judith was charged with adultery and being unchaste by her critics, so in 831 she even had to prove her innocence by taking an oath. Personally, I think that – particularly considering the rule of the chastity in the queenship ideology (see below) – it is not necessary to connect Hrabanus' words with these accusations. For the accusation of Judith and their political context see P. Riché, *Les Carolingiens. Une famille qui fit l'Europe* (Paris, 1983), pp 155-159; for Judith's critics see E. Ward, 'Agobard of Lyons and Paschasius Radbertus as critics of the empress Judith' in W. J. Sheils, D. Wood (eds), *Studies in Church History*, xxvii, *Women in the Church* (Oxford, 1990), pp 15-25; for accusations of adultery of Judith and other queens of the period see G. Bühner-Thierry, 'La reine adultère' in *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale Xe-XIIIe siècles*, xxv (1992), pp 299-312. (I would like to acknowledge Christian Harding, whose article is also to be found in this volume, for calling my attention to this aspect of the case).

¹⁹ The text was written in 836 (see T. Vogelsang, *Die Frau als Herrscherin*, p. 20).

²⁰ See P. Toubert, 'La théorie du mariage chez les moralistes carolingiens' in *Il matrimonio nella società altomedievale*. 22 – 28 aprile 1976, xxiv: *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1977), especially pp 248-249; K. Heene, *The Legacy of Paradise*.

Yet why have I spent so much time discussing Judith as a symbol of chastity? Because chastity is that virtue which was especially recommended for the most important couple – the royal one – and the queen herself is shown as its protector. For example Ermold the Black, intellectual and the chancellor at the court of Pippin, son of Louis the Pious, writes to the king and the queen, ‘Live happily for a long time, conjoins/ May each of you guard the duty of purity of the other/ In a chaste marriage (*coniugii casti*) beloved offspring appears/ who carries the name of the fathers to the splendour of heavens!’²² The expression *castitas coniugalis* (marital chastity) is also important in the *Second life of St Mathilda*,²³ which is believed to be a description of Ottonian ideal of the queen.²⁴ However, to see the true importance of chastity to the ideology of queenship, we should look at queens’ *ordines* – the rites of queens’ coronations. We can find the motif of chastity in the text of the first known *ordo* written by Hincmar of Reims,²⁵ especially in the benediction of marriage,²⁶ which was an integral part of this rite.²⁷ In the later *Benedictio reginae* in *Pontifical romano-germanique* we can find, among others, a prayer for a queen ‘that, [whilst] remaining

Marriage, Motherhood and Woman in Carolingian Edifying Literature (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), pp 79-89.

²¹ *Qui ergo matrimonio juncti sunt, castitatem conjugalem servant, nec se meretricum vel concubinarum prostibulo coinquent, sed vir solam conjugem suam legitimam, et mulier solum maritum suum legitimum noverit.* (Hrabanus Maurus, ‘De ecclesiastica disciplina’ in *P.L.*, 112, 1249D-1250A.)

²² Ermold the Black, ‘Ad Pippinum Regem II’ in *M.G.H., Poetae Latini aevi Carolini ii* (Berlin, 1884), pp 91, 211-214.

²³ ‘Vita Mathildis reginae posterior’ in *M.G.H. SS*, iv (Hannover, 1841), 5, pp 286, 45-6; 6, p. 287 (cc 44-46). For the commentary see P. Corbet, *Les saints Ottoniens: Sainteté dynastique, sainteté royale et sainteté féminine autour de l’an Mil* (Sigmariningen, 1986), pp 184-191.

²⁴ P. Corbet, *Les saints Ottoniens*, especially pp 155-234. A. C. Stinehart calls the Lives of St Mathilda ‘Königinsspiegel’ (the Mirror of the Queen); see A. C. Stinehart ‘Renowned Queen Mother Mathilda: Ideals and Realities of Ottonian Queenship in the Vitae Mathildis reginae (Mathilda of Saxony, 895?-968)’ (<http://etext.virginia.edu/journals/EH/EH40/steinh40.html>) [04.01.2006].

²⁵ *Te quaesumus, omnipotens Deus, ut per huius creaturae pinguedinem, columbae pace, simplicitate, ac pudicitia decoram efficias* (‘Coronatio Iudithae Karoli II filiae’ in *M.G.H., Leges regum Francorum*, ii, (Hannover, 1890), p. 426, cc 41-43. About this *ordo* see J. L. Nelson, ‘Early Medieval Rites of Queen-Making and the Shaping of Medieval Queenship’ in A. J. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge, 1997), especially pp 306-308; J. A. Smith, ‘The Earliest Queen-Making Rites’ in J. B. Brauer, M. E. Marty (eds), *Church History*, lxvi (1997), especially pp 22-27.

²⁶ *Benedic, Domine, has dotes, et accipientes tua benedictione dotare digneris, ut coniugii fidem et thorum immaculatum servantes sanctorum patriarchum adscisci mereantur consortio* (Coronatio Iudithae Karoli II filiae, p. 426, cc 3-5).

²⁷ J.A. Smith, ‘The Earliest Queen-Making Rites’, p. 25.

always pure in the royal alliance of marriage, she should be able to bear the palm nearest to the palm of virginity'.²⁸

All the early rites of queens' coronations are connected with marriage celebrations²⁹ and even if being a queen was something more than just being a king's wife (which is proven by the fact of a ceremony of queen's coronation on a top of a ceremony of her wedding), the marriage with the king remained crucial to the idea of queenship and the source of a queen's power.³⁰ It means that virtues connected with marriage, especially chastity, are essential for a queen. As we can see in words of Ermord the Black quoted above, chastity is also fundamental for a queen as a mother of royal children. Furthermore, as Geneviève Bührer-Thierry shows, preserving the order in the royal family both reflects and creates the order in the state and the cosmic order, so the lack of chastity in royal family or the adultery committed by a queen could have very serious consequences.³¹

Yet if we remember Gallus Anonymus' phrase about the Polish princess (Judith, the mother of Bolesław III), we can notice that it is not a chastity which makes this character similar to the biblical one. The author says that when the widow from Bethulia had defeated the enemy and saved the country, Polish Judith gave birth to a son 'who conquered all our foes in war'.³² Furthermore, if we take another look at Hrabanus Maurus' text, we may notice that the name of the empress Judith and the virtue of chastity are not the most important – although both underlined – reasons for recalling biblical Judith. Therefore, let us see, which aspect of this character was the most important one. In his dedication to the empress Hrabanus, recalling Judith and Esther (another biblical woman important in queenship's ideology³³), says: 'Indeed,

²⁸ C. Vogel, R. Elze (eds), *Le pontifical romano-germanique du dixième siècle* (Città del Vaticano, 1963), i, lxxxviii, 2, p. 268, cc 17-18. This is in fact a quotation from Coelius Sedulius ('Carmen Paschale' in *P.L.*, 19, 543D), see P. Corbet, *Les saints Ottoniens*, p. 187.

²⁹ P. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, pp 126-127.

³⁰ J.A. Smith, 'The Earliest Queen-Making Rites', p. 34; P. Stafford, 'Powerful women in the Early Middle Ages: Queens and Abbesses' in *The Medieval World*, ed. P. Lineham, J. T. Nelson (London, New York, 2003), pp 408-412.

³¹ *Vita Mathildis reginae posterior*, 6, p. 287, cc 20-51.

³² G. Bührer-Thierry, 'La reine adultère', especially pp 299-305.

³³ Knoll, *Gallus Anonymus, Gesta Principum Polonorum*, p. 11.

³³ Biblical Esther is probably even more important than Judith in medieval ideology of queenship, so she is more often discussed in the historical literature. See L. L. Huneycutt, 'Intercession and the High-

because of eminent merits of [their] virtues, they may be imitated by both men and women, for they conquered spiritual enemies with power of the soul, and corporal ones with maturity of intellect. And so now [for] your praiseworthy prudence, [which is] not minor and has already defeated its enemies partially: if its good beginnings are kept and if it always improves by itself, it shall overcome all its foes successfully'.³⁴ Recalling the man, 'who defeated death by his blood' (i.e. Jesus Christ), Hrabanus came back to the widow from Bethulia to say: 'Therefore, receive Judith, your namesake, example of chastity, and with a triumphant laud acclaim her with eternal praises. And over the others praise Him, who has ascribed such a virtue to her that she conquered the unconquered among all humans [and] surmounted the insurmountable'.³⁵ Here Hrabanus once again mentioned Esther, then invoked the name of Jesus, 'who made those holy women triumph'.³⁶ It should be noted that Hrabanus Maurus put emphasis on the fact that biblical Judith, with God's help, was victorious and because of that she was an example to all involved in fighting with visible and invisible enemies – an example for the empress who, thanks to her virtues, had already overcome and would overcome future enemies.³⁷

While studying the aforementioned *ordines coronandi*, it appears that the example of Judith is to be found in similar context to the one found in Hrabanus's text. In the *ordo* written by Hincmar of Reims, Judith is not only mentioned among examples of biblical women, together with Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, Esther, Anna and Noemi,³⁸ but also in the sentence: 'Holy Lord (...) who with this oil have gladdened the face of your maid Judith for the liberation of your servants and the confusion of enemies, we beg you (...)'.³⁹ The victory of Judith is underlined here, but for Hincmar she was not only an example of a queen – in fact, she as a queen herself, because she had been anointed

Medievals Queen: The Esther Topos' in *Power of the Weak. Studies on Medieval Women*, ed. J. Carpenter, S.-B. MacLean (Urbana, Chicago, 1995), pp 126-146; F.-R. Erkens, "'Sicut Esther regina". Die westfränkische Königin als consors regni' in *Francia* xx/1 (1993), pp 15-38; for Esther in the context of a coronation *ordo* in Germany see T. Vogelsang, *Die Frau als Herrscherin*, pp 32-36.

³⁴ Hrabanus Maurus, 'Expositio in Librum Judith' in *P.L.*, 109, 540C.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 540D-541A.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 541A.

³⁷ See: P. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, pp 25-26.

³⁸ *Coronatio Iudithae Karoli II filiae*, p. 426, cc 10-11. The same combination of women from the Old Testament is given by Marbod of Rennes, who calls them 'seven stars of the Old Testament' and shows as an example for matrons (Marbod of Rennes, 'Decem capitula' iv, in *P.L.*, 172, 1701B; see also L. L. Huneycutt, 'Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen', p. 130).

³⁹ *Coronatio Iudithae Karoli II filiae*, p. 426, cc 31-41.

by the same oil, which is used during the coronation ceremony. Similarly, Hincmar wrote about the anointing of Esther,⁴⁰ who indeed was a queen, but it is beyond doubt that she had not been anointed. It appears that Hincmar believed that anointing was an important rite, which bestowed true power and the divine grace. Regarding the anointment of Judith and Esther, he explained the roots of their virtues and showed the similarity between those two characters and a queen subjected to a ceremony of coronation.

To find Hincmar's inspiration, the Book of Judith should be examined. The widow prepared herself to a meeting with Holofernes:

*[She] removed the sackcloth she was wearing and taking off her widow's dress, she washed all over, anointed herself plentifully with oils [unxit se myrro optimo – in Vulgate], dressed her hair, wrapped a turban round it and put on the robe of joy she used to wear when her husband Manasseh was alive. She put sandals on her feet, put on her necklaces, bracelets, rings, earrings and all her jewellery, and made herself incomparably beautiful to beguile the eye of any man who saw her.*⁴¹

A similar passage can be found in Esther's story. There a Jewish girl prepares herself for a meeting with the Persian king, Ahasuerus.⁴² In both cases the use of oil is undoubtedly a cosmetic procedure and is not connected with the coronation rite;⁴³ yet for Hincmar it was enough to show both women as anointed, like new queens used to be.

On the other hand, the suggestion of the Reims' bishop may have rooted in the tradition of the Bible's interpretation. In the commentary on the passage from the Book of Judith quoted above, contained in the *Glossa Ordinaria* (probably the most influential medieval commentary on the Bible, which is in fact a late collection of the earlier biblical interpretations) it can be read: "Incomparably beautiful". For it is just

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 426, cc 40-41.

⁴¹ Judith 10, 3-4. Translation is based on *The New Jerusalem Bible*, ed. H. Wansbrough O.S.B, (New York, London 1985).

⁴² Esther 2, 12-13.

⁴³ The coronation of Esther took place afterwards and it is related a few sentences later (Esther 2, 17).

that who burns with love of God, shall be considered worthy of esteem by everyone; hence: "Upon your right hand the queen has stood in gold of Ophir".⁴⁴ The last sentence is a quotation of the psalm 44, which is not only about a queen (often believed to be a representation of the Virgin Mary), but also has a connection with queenship ideology. For example, Hrabanus Maurus quoted this psalm's in his commentary on the Book of Esther, in which he discussed her coronation.⁴⁵ Sometimes this psalm's scene was even represented as a picture of real, contemporary female rulers. For instance, Benzo of Alba wrote openly to margrave Adelaide of Turin: 'you are certainly that queen who appeared to the psalmist upon God's right hand in a colourful robe'.⁴⁶ As can be seen, the phrase from the Book of Judith, which probably inspired Hincmar to see Judith as an anointed queen, has a certain connection with a Psalm 44 in medieval tradition, and, through it, with queens and the idea of queenship. Yet, no matter how Hincmar's ideas were influenced, it is obvious that, whilst writing about the anointing of Judith and Esther, Hincmar wanted again to show how close the relationship between those two characters and a crowned queen was.

We find nothing similar in a queen's blessing in the *Pontifical romano-germanique*, but here the motif of Judith as a victorious woman and a defender of people is expanded. In this *ordo*, used for example at the German court, we can see the prayer:

Eternally almighty God, source and origin of all goodness, who do not turn away from female frailty to condemn it, but rather courteously choose to accept it; and [you], who decided that the weak of the world should be chosen in order to shame the strong; [you], who wished that once, by your glory and power, triumph had been passed over from the most cruel enemy into the hand of the woman Judith of the Jewish tribe; look with favour, we beg you with our humble prayers, upon this servant of yours, X, whom we are choosing for a queen with suppliant devotion; multiply the gifts of your blessings, and always and everywhere enclose her within the power of

⁴⁴ 'Glossa Ordinaria' in *P.L.* 113, 736D.

⁴⁵ Hrabanus Maurus, 'Expositio in Librum Judith' in *P.L.*, 109, 649C. See: T. Vogelsang, *Die Frau als Herrscherin*, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Benzo of Alba, 'Ad Heinricum IV' in *M.G.H. SS*, xi (Stuttgart, 1854), v, 12, p. 654, c. 51. See also M. Bernards, 'Die Frau in der Welt und der Kirche während des 11. Jahrhunderts' in *Sacris erudiri. Jaarboek voor Godsdienstwetenschappen*, xx (1971), p. 58.

*your right hand, to let her, strongly protected from every side by the shield of your defence, prevail triumphally in fighting against wickedness of visible and invisible enemies.*⁴⁷

It can be seen that *ordines*, just like Hrabanus Maurus in his commentary on the Book of Judith, puts the emphasis on Judith's victory over visible and invisible enemies, but here we can also see a new motif, as already shown in the abovementioned chronicle of Gallus Anonymus – the triumph is connected with saving the nation.⁴⁸ Esther is also shown in the *ordines* as a saviour of her people.⁴⁹ Both characters appear in the same context for example in the *Life of St Genevieve*. In this text, when Genevieve's home city of Paris was endangered by the Huns, the virgin encouraged pious matrons to be 'like Judith and Ester' through fasting, prayer and vigils, so that 'a disaster [might be] avoided'.⁵⁰

The view of biblical Judith, which was common in the early Middle Ages, was strictly connected with duties of medieval queens and this connection was often underlined by the medieval authors. If sometimes, incidentally, a she-ruler is – like Polish princes or Carolingian empress – a namesake of the biblical character, it is rather an excuse than a main reason to mention the widow from Bethulia. This connection between the queen and the biblical Judith was so strong that – as noted by Anastasius Bibliothecarius in his letter from the Fourth Council of Constantinople – in Byzantine *laudes* (praises for rulers) it used to be cried: 'Long live Eudoxia the most pious! Long live the new Judith! Long live the new Helen! Long live the new Pulcheria!'.⁵¹

Yet, to understand fully all the analogies between a medieval queen and biblical Judith, we must closely study how her victory and defence of Israel was interpreted

⁴⁷ *Le pontifical romano-germanique*, ed. C. Vogel, R. Elze, i, lxxxviii, 1, p. 267, cc 9-20.

⁴⁸ See: J.A. Smith, 'The Earliest Queen-Making Rites', p. 26; J. L. Nelson, 'Early Medieval Rites of Queen-Making', pp 308, 312.

⁴⁹ J. L. Nelson, 'Early Medieval Rites of Queen-Making', pp 308, 312.

⁵⁰ 'Vita Genovefae virginis parisiensis' in *M.G.H., SS Rer. Merov.*, iii (Hannover 1896), 12, p. 219, cc 17-18.

⁵¹ Anastasius Bibliothecarius, 'Interpretatio Synodi VIII Generali' in *P.L.*, 129, 118D and 129C. It was also cried: *Eudoxiae novae Judith aeterna memoria! Novae Helenae aeterna memoria! Novae Pulcheriae aeterna memoria!* (ibid., 170C).

by medieval commentators, who recommend her so readily as an example for queens. For example, the abovementioned Honorius Augustodunensis wrote in his *Speculum Ecclesiae*, 'Judith (...) rescues the people of God from imminent mortal danger'.⁵² Seemingly this sentence does not tell us anything new – God's people are, of course, the Israelites. Nevertheless the Church – the new Israel – also has a right to this title and certainly Honorius refers to this tradition. The unknown author of the *Posteriorum excerptionum libri tredecim continentes utriusque testamenti allegorias* drew direct parallels between Judith and her various actions to the Church and he underlined that she was the symbol of the Church.⁵³ Between those explanations there is also the one which calls to mind the triumph over enemies and salvation of the people: 'Judith cut Holofernes's head with his sword, and the Holy Church destroys its enemies with their own malice'.⁵⁴ Isidore of Seville, who made a much more laconic explanation of symbolic meaning of Judith and Esther, asserts briefly and clearly that: 'Judith and Esther are the figures of the Church, they punish enemies of the faith and save the people of God from destruction'.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Hrabanus Maurus in his *Commentary on the Book of Judith*, which he gave to the empress Judith, wrote repeatedly that the biblical widow was the figure of the Church – the word *Ecclesia* (the Church) can be found there more than 80 times. He successively analysed biblical Judith's actions to show what they might tell us about the Church, yet the crucial aspects, i.e. triumph and liberation of the people, are to be found already in the dedication. There it is written not only that the stories of Judith and Esther 'in allegorical sense translate the mystery of the Holy Church',⁵⁶ but also, again using both characters as examples for the empress Judith, Hrabanus invoked Christ, 'who made those holy women triumph, and [who made] his universal Church, to which figure they were alike, triumphant with eternal victory'.⁵⁷ Finally, in the introductory address to the empress in the preface to the commentary on the Book of

⁵² Honorius Augustodunensis, 'Speculum Ecclesiae' in *P.L.*, 172, 896D.

⁵³ 'Posteriorum excerptionum libri tredecim continentes utriusque testamenti allegorias' in *P.L.*, 175, 744A-748D.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 748B.

⁵⁵ *Judith et Esther typum Ecclesiae gestant, hostes fidei puniunt, ac populum Dei ab interitu eruunt* (Isidore of Seville, 'Allegoriae sacrae Scripturae' in *P.L.*, 83, 116A).

⁵⁶ Hrabanus Maurus, 'Expositio in Librum Judith' in *P.L.*, 109, 540B-540C.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 541D-542A.

Esther, Hrabanus wrote: 'This Esther, in a figure of the Church, liberated the people from danger'.⁵⁸

Judith, like Esther, was a symbol of the Church and what made her most similar to the Church was her victory over enemies and salvation of her people. These virtues also make a she-ruler similar to Judith: victory over enemies and salvation of the people are the properties common to the Church, biblical Judith and a queen. It should be remembered that, undoubtedly, the most important Church figure in Christian theology, the Virgin Mary, is the third woman who is presented in the *ordines* as an example for future queens.⁵⁹

The abovementioned *Benedictio reginae* is also strictly connected with marriage, which – according to Saint Paul⁶⁰ – symbolized a chaste union between Christ and the Church. It is seen in the wedding blessing in the *Pontifical romano-germanique*, where it can be read: 'God, who by so excellent mystery consecrated the marital bond, that you show in the marriage the sacrament of Christ and the Church (...)'.⁶¹ These words were also heard by a queen during her marriage, which was a part of the coronation ceremony. And not only then – it is not a coincidence that Sedulius Scottus in his *De rectoribus Christianis* treatise about Christian rulers, in the section about a queen, he says: 'A milky beauty and charm neck are shining/ But the chastity shines even more./ Like Christ joined himself the Church in chaste love/ Wife to a husband adheres'.⁶² If a king is the Christ figure, which is the central thesis of medieval political theology and ideology of monarchy,⁶³ another hypothesis may be advanced: a queen, the new Judith, personifies the Church in the same way as a king personifies Christ.

⁵⁸ Hrabanus Maurus, 'Expositio in Librum Edith' in *P.L.*, 109, 635C.

⁵⁹ See D. Iogna-Prat, 'La Vierge et les ordines de couronnement des reines au IXe siècle' in *Marie. Le culte de la Vierge dans la société médiévale*, D. Iogna-Prat, É. Palazzo, D. Russo (Paris, 1996), pp 101-107. Relations between Holy Mary as a Queen and the human queenship in the iconographical context discusses: R. M. Wright, 'The Virgin in the Sun and in the Three' in *Women and Sovereignty*, vii: *Cosmos. The Yearbook of the Traditional Cosmology Society*, ed. L. O. Fradenburg (Edinburgh, 1992), pp 36-59.

⁶⁰ Ephesians 5, 31 – 32.

⁶¹ *Le pontifical romano-germanique*, ii, celi, 12, pp 416, cc 20-22.

⁶² Sedulius Scottus, 'De rectoribus Christianis' in *P.L.*, 103, 302A.

⁶³ The subject of king's imitatio Christi has been studied by many texts, but probably the most crucial is the classic book of Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, (Princeton 1957).

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