



The Prayer Life of Peasant Communities in Late Medieval Sweden: A Contrast of Ideals and Practices

Viktor Aldrin

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This study examines elaborate prayer practices among peasant communities in late medieval Sweden. The work focuses on the perspectives of ideals and practices, namely the standards of prayer, devotional prayer, and prayer in times of need and prayer cultures. The aim of this study has been to identify, explain and delineate praying among peasant communities in late medieval Sweden. Four aspects have been examined through the perspectives of ideals and practices, namely the standards of prayer, devotional prayer, and prayer in times of need and prayer cultures. The standards of prayer considered the physical and mental behavior of the praying peasant woman or man. Devotional prayers were foremost the three 'standard' prayers Paternoster, Hail Mary and Apostolic Creed, and could be used separately or combined. Prayer in times of need was possibly considered a matter of praying to saints, something that cannot be proven to have been either practiced or recommended on other, ordinary occasions where God and the Virgin Mary were considered the proper recipients of prayer. A few authentic prayers exist where peasant women and men in connection with miracles constructed elaborate prayers and to propose business-like agreements with saints. Ways to maintain the prayer cultures were through mnemonic techniques, and indulgences stipulating and confirming prayers used or to be used in connection with certain churches, days and places within the churches. The prayer life of those belonging to peasant communities was both elaborate and full of nuances.

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