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“Passion relics and Patrons between Paris and Prague”

The symbolic significance of the Crown of Thorns forever changed when the relic arrived in Paris. King Louis IX of France (1214, r. 1226–1270, canonized 1297) received the Crown as part of a diplomatic exchange with Emperor Baldwin II (1217, r. 1237–1273). For the kingdom of France, the subsequent acquisition of more Byzantine reliquaries between 1241 and confirmed what the initial festivities first revealed: Christ had selected Paris as the new and eternal location for the veneration of His Passion. Over the course of the next nine years, the construction of the Sainte-Chapelle, the palatine chapel designed to enshrine the relic, would explicate its extraordinary role in the history of salvation within an integrated decorative programme of sculpture, painting, and glass. The 'Historia Susceptionis Coronae Spineae' is the most detailed account of the translation of the Crown of Thorns from Constantinople to Paris via Venice.

This study of 'text and image' will examine the content of the Historia and defends the attribution of Archbishop Gauthier Cornut of Sens (d.1241) as its author and reveal how his vision shaped the chapel's design. Having explored the influence of Cornut's strategies on the devotional culture of the Sainte-Chapelle, this paper will conclude by examining the legacy of the place of Passion relics in Gothic palatine designs with reference to Emperor Charles IV's patronage of his own Christological relics – acquired from the Sainte-Chapelle – in and around Prague.

