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# *Thureth*

## Introduction

The speaker of this brief poem identifies itself (an inanimate object, and thus by prosopopoeia) as a *halgungboc*, a term that is unique as a compound but that transparently refers to a book of consecration. “Book of consecration” is not, however, a stock liturgical concept; the Old English term would surely have surfaced elsewhere if it were. Catholic liturgy is a well documented and indeed well preserved ritual tradition, with such distinct book genres as the Missal and the Pontifical, the former being a compendium of rites used in Mass while the latter is a book of rites to be performed by bishops, which does involve rites of consecration. As it happens, *Thureth* survives in a manuscript bringing together (along with a few law codes) several Pontificals, two of which incorporate coronation liturgies that could serve as the referent of the *halgung* in the poem. As the book’s division into quires most closely associates the poem with the first of these, Dobbie proposes it is this liturgical work that is referenced in the poem.<sup>1</sup>

The name Þureð (in diverse spellings) makes a number of appearances in the documentary record; most scholars identify him with a Yorkshire earl. The Þureð named in the poem commissioned the

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<sup>1</sup>*Minor Poems* p. lxxxix.

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*halgungboc* (l. 3) and donated land to the church (ll. 8–9).

For more on the speaking text in Old English poetry, see Lois Bragg, *The Lyric Speakers of Old English Poetry* (ch. 2) and James W. Earl, “King Alfred’s Talking Poems.”

## Manuscript

London, British Library, Cotton Claudius A. iii, fol. 31v (s. x/xi; unique).

## Text

Ic eom halgungboc;    healde hine dryhten  
þe me fægere þus    frætewum belegde.  
Ðureð to þance    þus het me wyrcean,  
to loue and to wurðe    þam þe leoht gesceop.  
Gemyndi is he    mihta gehwylcre  
þæs þe he on foldan    gefremian mæg,  
and him geþancie    þeoda waldend  
þæs þe he on gemynde    madma manega  
wyle gemearcian    metode to lace;  
and he sceal ece lean    ealle findan  
þæs þe he on foldan    fremað to ryhte.