Cover photo: Duke Chapel in afternoon.
Credit: Historia Nova editor Tyler Donovan

# Historia Nova

## An Undergraduate Historical Review

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# Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We would like to begin with an apology for the delay of this issue of Historia Nova and we would like to thank and appreciate the authors for their patience in working with us to bring to you this edition. Here we would also like to thank the many history professors and graduate students here at Duke University and Dr. Malachi Hacohen, Director of Undergraduate studies, who have graciously lent their time to support, advise, and encourage our enterprise.

This past year has been like no other in recent memory. Us students of history look often to the past but seldom find ourselves in such a tangible historical moment. One can wonder how generations into the future may look back and analyze our actions today, which, of course, cannot be detached from the generations that came before us. This edition of Historia Nova looks at many of the events that have shaped who we have and how we think. What is special about these pieces and why we at Historia Nova saw their value was how they aimed to challenge traditional narratives and conceptions, creating instead a "new history". This is especially vital in this field as the more that can be discussed, the closer we may arrive at a "truth" or clearer picture. After, the art of history lies in the debate.

In this edition you will find a discussion on the syncretism of elements of Germanic Paganism into early Christian charms among Anglo-Saxons, an analysis of the Weimar Constitution and its role in adverdently and inadvertently ushering in the rise of Nazism, a history of Jansenism in the centuries of religious turmoil in France, and a dispute of the traditional ideas of women's roles in Viking society. Moving from Europe, we also feature a challenge of the existing framework and paradigms in studying African religions in the West and an examination of symbolism and narratives in Ethiopian illuminated manuscripts with superb images.

These pieces will certainly call on you, the reader, to question, analyze, or even abandon many preconceived notions. This, as always, is our goal at Historia Nova; to question history is to understand it. We earnestly hope you enjoy this long overdue edition of Historia Nova and we encourage any reader to reach out, ask questions, and submit manuscripts.

Sincerely,
Historia Nova Editorial Board

# Our Mission

Historia Nova features exceptional historical analysis from undergraduate students at institutions across the United States and around the world. Our publication reveals the field's dynamism and challenges the ways in which history is interpreted and continually re-interpreted by scholars. We hope you enjoy this Spring Volume. For more information about our organization at Duke University please refer to our website at (https://history.duke.edu/new-events/undergraduate) or email us at (dukehistorianova@gmail.com).

# Letter from Duke University's History Department

BY MALACHI H. HACOHEN, DUKE UNIVERSITY

It is a great pleasure for me to introduce, as the History DUS, this volume of Historia Nova, the Duke History students' scholarly journal. Covid emergencies created a hiatus in publishing earlier volumes, so it feels especially good to see publication resuming, and recognize that the pandemic has not dampened the research creativity of undergraduate students at Duke and around the US.

We have dedicated this volume to publications from outside Duke as we are mindful that we should provide a platform for students from schools that do not always have a similar journal. This coming fall, we hope to bring a volume displaying Duke students' work. In addition to the work displayed in the journal, we are also proud of our Senior Theses that leads to graduation with distinction. Those theses represent longer works that can make their way into professional publications. Historia Nova is student edited and managed. I am most grateful to Brenden Li and his coeditors, Cassandra Stecker, David Mellgard, Julia Shenot, Patrick Duan, and Tyler Donovan. Our graduate editors, Anderson Hagler and Nathan Finney, and the President of the Duke History Union, Karan Thadhani, have lent support to this publication, as well. Faculty and graduate students have served as referees offering valuable comments toward improvement. I would like to thank Dirk Bonker, Jehangir Malegam, John Martin, Jakob Norberg, Lesa Redmond, and Tom Robisheaux.

Enjoy the sweep of history from Augustine to the Vikings to Weimar Germany, from Anglo-Saxon charms to Ethiopian manuscripts to African religions in the Western academy. Have a good summer, and we shall see you in the fall.

Malachi H. Hacohen
History DUS

# Historia Nova Executive Team

## Special Thanks to:

**Dirk Bonker,** *Associate Professor of History*

**Malachi Hacohen,** *Professor of History, Director of Undergraduate Studies*

**Jehangir Malegam,** *Associate Professor of History*

**John Martin,** *Professor of History*

**Jakob Norberg,** *Associate Professor of German Studies*

**Lesa Redmond,** *Ph.D. Candidate, Department of History*

**Thomas Robisheaux,** *Professor of History*

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# Duke University's Undergraduate Historical Review

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# The Christian Integration of Pagan Elements in Anglo-Saxon Charms

## By Adam Laurin, McGill University

During the early Middle Ages in England, there were two major periods of conversion to Christianity. The first, taking place in the seventh century, was the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons who had migrated from the coasts of what are today Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands to establish kingdoms in Britain in the fifth century. Their languages were part of the Germanic family, and their religion and culture would also have shared similarities to those of other Germanic speaking peoples. The second important conversion period began in the ninth century in the Danelaw region, that is the part of England which Vikings had recently conquered, and which saw an influx of new Scandinavian migrants who also spoke Germanic languages and had cultures and religions similar to those of the earlier pagan Anglo-Saxons. Although these periods of conversion brought a new religion to these peoples, their Germanic pagan culture was not completely supplanted. Evidence for this can be seen in extant Anglo-Saxon charms. These charms were formulas and poems which were believed to have the power to protect and improve one's life, most often involving healing, but also things like the protection of crops and livestock. Sometimes the poem was a set of instructions which would outline a ritual of power, including words or phrases to be uttered as a part of it. Other times the poem itself was an invocation, often with separate instructions included as a prose preface in the written sources. These charms regularly make use of symbols and elements which have their origins in a Germanic pagan culture and worldview. At the same time, however, some Christian theologians denounced formulas of power associated with paganism as being demonic and thus incompatible with Christianity.[1] For this reason, therefore, earlier historical commentaries on the charms assumed that they were evidence that the Anglo-Saxons had not truly converted, and that pagan religion lingered. One of the most notable of these commentators was Godfrid Storms, who famously noted that "the entire practice decidedly smells of magic, with a little superficial Christian colouring."[2] However, this interpretation is overly simplistic. In fact, this article will argue that the inheritance of pagan elements was not necessarily seen negatively by Christians, who may have instead understood them as positive additions, and that the obviously Christian elements present within these charms

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1 See for example Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, X.11. Here, Augustine denounces the theurgy of Neo-Platonists. His arguments can be seen reflected in later works, including those of the Anglo-Saxon monk Ælfric of Eynsham, which will be discussed below.

2 Godfrid Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1948), 178.

were not necessarily an attempt to "fix" them as much as they were examples of respect for Christian authority and expressions of faith by the charms' users. In sum, this article will explore how elements of pagan origin became a part of a Christian practice and worldview.

It is important to clarify what exactly is meant by Germanic paganism when discussing Anglo-Saxon charms. Some scholars try to distinguish between what is religiously pagan and what is part of a "secular" culture or folklore.[3] This allows them to see a transfer of Germanic cultural elements while the religion itself fades away and is replaced with Christianity. Indeed, I would say that although this separation may be rather artificial for the pagans themselves, who would have seen all of the elements of their culture, religious practices, and other such customs as being interconnected in their worldview, to an Anglo-Saxon in later centuries most of these inherited elements would not be "pagan" in so far as that meant an opposition to Christianity. They did not feel the need to get rid of these traditions so long as their application did not contradict larger Christian views. Therefore, these elements of Germanic culture ceased to be pagan in a Christian worldview.[4] Although we can trace out the pre-Christian origins of some symbols and concepts, to the Christian Anglo-Saxons there

was only one correct worldview and thus if something did not fall under idolatry, which was misguided folly, it was a part of the Christian world.

Looking at many of the symbols and concepts with likely pagan origins, which will be discussed in more detail below, it is clear that they were not inherently unchristian in the eyes of the charms' practitioners. The fact that they are recorded in clerical manuscripts of remedies indicates that even if they might seem problematic in later times, some Christian authors could justify their use to some degree at the time when were written down, that is the eleventh century at the very latest. The macrocosmic worldview of the Anglo-Saxons had become a Christian one by this point, but the core of everyday life remained very similar to how it had been before the arrival of Augustine and the other missionaries sent by Gregory the Great.[5] Therefore, traditional ideas about everyday life were adapted to the new Christian worldview wherever they could fit. This is not to say that the Anglo-Saxons simply found new justifications for all of their old practices, however. Many rites and rituals, such as various forms of divination and things like anointing the wounds on dead bodies bound for the afterlife, were condemned outright precisely because they were considered demonic

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3   Thomas D. Hill, "The Rod of Protection and the Witches' Ride: Christian and Germanic Syncretism in Two Old English Metrical Charms," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 111, no. 2 (April 2012): 146, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jenglgermphil.111.2.0145; Karen Louise Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 142.

4   Karen Louise Jolly, "Anglo-Saxon charms in the context of a Christian world view," *Journal of Medieval History* 11 (1985): 287.

5   Karen Louise Jolly, "Medieval Magic: Definitions, Beliefs and Practices," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, Vol. 3: *The Middle Ages* (London: Athlone, 2001), 16, 17.

or otherwise too deeply at odds with Christian views.[6] Nonetheless, even some of these prohibited practices continued to be observed which could just as easily indicate a lack of consensus as to what did and did not fit into this worldview as it could a lack of caring about it or the persistence of paganism.

As for charms themselves, their acceptability amongst Christians seems to have been hazy. The word most often used for them in Old English was *galdra* (song, a similar situation to the Latin *carmen* which gives us charm) which are listed amongst prohibited pagan practices, and yet are written down and transferred by clergy, and even the most staunch reformers such as the abbot Ælfric of Eynsham were willing to accept the use of words being spoken over herbs so long as they were Christian prayers.[7] It seems then that although the idea of a charm was *potentially* demonic—certainly old ones which invoked pagan gods would have been perceived this way—all charms were not inherently seen as such.

The four elements most obviously inherited from the Germanic pagan world are: first, the number nine; second, "flying venoms"; third, elves and similar beings; and fourth, worms or serpents. These elements are all staples of Germanic folklore, meaning that they were likely not introduced through classical and Christian magical formulas later on.[8] None of these

elements are ever used in a way which is inherently unchristian. In fact, the last three are usually the causes of diseases rather than elements invoked for aid. Even so, other elements whose pagan origins are less clear still do not necessarily contradict the Christian worldview. For example, in Lendinara no. 108B of the *Leechbook*, the charm calls for ritual actions which have been assumed to be pagan in origin by some, including Godfrid Storms, namely how you are meant to "[…] thrust your knife into the herb [elecampane]. Leave it sticking out, go away." Then in the next morning before sunrise, after having sung the *Benedicite*, *Pater Noster*, and a Litany: "Dig up the herb, leave the knife sticking in it. Go back to church as quickly as possible, and lay it under the altar with the knife. Let it lie until the sun has risen."[9] However, regardless of the potentially pagan origin of these actions, no pagan worship is present, and instead it relies on Christian prayers and associations to give the herb power.[10] Those actions which were not directly Christian in origin could still be made part of the Christian world here.

The Nine Herbs charm at first glance seems the most potentially problematic. The number nine is frequently invoked and worms and "flying venoms" are blamed for unspecific diseases, but again this was not necessarily a problem for Christians. What seems problematic may instead be the presence of the pagan

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6 Jolly, "Medieval Magic," 17-18.
7 Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England*, 102-103.
8 Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England* 124.
9 Storms, trans., in *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 222-225.
10 Jolly, "Anglo-Saxon charms," 289.

god Woden. In this charm he is not seen negatively. In fact, the charm states that "[…] Woden took nine glory-twigs, / he smote then the adder that it flew apart into nine parts,"[11] implying that he plays a helping role in curing the disease. Nevertheless, he is neither shown nor worshiped as a god here, nor is his ability alone the cure for the disease. By this time, various Christian thinkers had been arguing that the pagan gods were actually humans who demons had deceived people into worshiping. Isidore of Seville, in his *Etymologies*, even writes that many of these figures were admirable, some founding cities, others inventing useful arts.[12] In the Anglo-Saxon context, this idea can be seen in the inclusion of Woden in various royal lineages, some of which even trace his ancestry back to Adam.[13] Some, such as Hutcheson, will claim that it is the inclusion of Christ in the charm to contrast Woden which justifies him being present,[14] but if his presence as an assistant in the healing process was really problematic it seems odd that they would feel the need to have or keep him in the charm at all. Instead, it would appear that the Christian charm made use of Woden as a figure and symbol representing a battle against the invisible causes of these venoms, the idea of which gives the user strength and wisdom due to his folkloric association to both.[15] It

was not Woden the pagan god who was being invoked here, but the human hero who the pagans had wrongly worshipped. His role had changed in a Christian worldview, but his authority remained.

As Christians themselves, the Christian and classical elements in Anglo-Saxon charms would have given them a level of authority. Therefore, it is possible that the inheritance of Germanic elements had a similar effect. The Anglo-Saxons had a long tradition of belief in the power of ancient things. This is evident in literature, but it is also hinted at through the presence of many burials and other ritual sites near Neolithic as well as old Roman structures. That many of the burials encompass these ancient monuments into their composition, for example orienting the graves toward a focal point within them, and reusing or expanding upon these structures, indicates that this was done with reason, since they associated such ancient places with power.[16] In the charms, this cultural association manifests itself in a few ways. The use of ancient languages, Latin and Greek as well as more local ones such as garbled Old Irish, is probably the most obvious. The ability to understand it might not have been important. What was valuable was the idea of an authentic ancient heritage to the charm which the language provided.[17] If it was

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11   Storms, trans., in Anglo-Saxon Magic, 188-189.

12   Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, Stephen A. Barney, et al., trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), VIII.11.1-4.

13   See for example Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, book 1 ch. XV.

14   B.R. Hutcheson, "Wið Dweorh: an Anglo-Saxon Remedy for Fever in its Cultural and Manuscript Setting," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 69 (2012): 179, DOI: 10.1163/9789401208192_008

15   Stephen O. Glosecki, "'Blow these vipers from me': mythic magic in The Nine Herbs Charm." In *Essays on Old, Middle, Modern English, and Old Icelandic: in honor of Raymond P. Tripp, Jr*, ed. Raymond P. Tripp et al. (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 108.

16   Howard Williams, "Monuments and the past in Early Anglo-Saxon England," *World Archaeology* 30, no. 1 (Jun. 1998), 102.

17   Jolly, "Medieval Magic," 40.

old, it had the power and authority of age. Therefore, Germanic elements inherited into the greater Christian worldview could also have had an air of authority to them. If a specific practice was passed down and was not inherently at odds with Christianity, then not only would its continual use have been unproblematic, but it might have seemed foolish to get rid of it completely. The role of these elements in the power of the charms would then have been intermixed with that of the classical Christian ones through the process of their creation and continued distribution.

The creation of Christian charms happened in a few different ways. It was not simply a top-down process in an attempt to remove demonic magic from the newly converted peoples. Instead, the fact that the charms differ in the ways in which Christian and pagan elements are integrated shows that the process was much more organic and local, reflecting an oral tradition of practical synthesis.[18] The frequency of instances where liturgical elements are included, such as the use of Eucharistic wafers prescribed in the prose preface to *Wið Dweorh* or the use of masses in numerous other charms, implies that the clergy were involved in their creation and were sometimes necessary for their performances. Indeed, parish priests were seen as wise and learned men who were usually members of the community they presided over, especially in the Danelaw where local churches flourished, and so they would

have had knowledge of both folklore and classical Christian belief, but they by no means dominated in the use of charms and other forms of life-improving practices.[19] It is very likely then that locals requested the aid and wisdom of their priests in order to make their existing charms more effective rather than to cleanse them of pagan influence. If this is the case, different priests would have made different changes depending on how they perceived these practices, but overall, it would have been a gradual and syncretic process much like the Christianization of the rest of Anglo-Saxon society.

Not all members of the clergy were equally comfortable with these charms. The reform-minded abbot Ælfric followed the notion that God allowed humans to fall sick and thus God's power alone could heal them.[20] Likewise, some scholars have argued that certain charms indicate in their composition an attempt to actively place pagan elements subordinate to Christian ones, such as the inclusion of the liturgical prose before the folkloric meter in *Wið Dweorh*.[21] However, the Germanic and Christian elements are so intertwined in most charms that this sort of composition seems like the exception rather than the rule. For some, such as *Wið Færstice* the Christian elements are even less dominant:

> Against a sudden stabbing pain: *feferfuige*
> and the red nettle which
> grows through the house and plaintain—

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18   Glosecki, "Blow these vipers from me," 94; Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England*, 124-125, 130, 132.
19   Jolly, "Medieval Magic," 31; "Anglo-Saxon Charms," 288, 290-291; *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England*, 46.
20   Jolly, "Anglo-Saxon Charms," 284-285.
21   Hutcheson, "Wið Dweorh," 181.

boil in butter.
They were loud—yes they were loud when they rode over the hill;
they were determined when they rode across the land.
Shield yourself now—you can survive this strife.
Out little spear if it be here in!
[I] stood beneath the shield, beneath the bright shield,
where those mighty women gathered their strength
and they sent shrieking spears.
I will send them another, a flying javelin in front against [them].
Out little spear if it be in!
A smith sat; he worked a little knife—irons—wondrously strong!
Out little spear if it be in!
Six smiths sat—wrought slaughter spears!
Out spear, not in spear!
If there be in—a bit of iron,
The work of a "hægtessan,"
It shall melt.
If you were shot in the skin, or shot in the flesh,
Or shot in the blood,
Or were shot in the joint—let thy life never be afflicted.
If it were the shot of the Aesir, or the shot of the Elves,
Or the shot of the "hægtessa," now I will help you.
This as a remedy to thee for the shot of the Aesir
—this as a remedy to thee for the shot of the Elves,
This as a remedy to thee for the shot of the "hægtessa"—I will help
thee.
Fly there to the mountain top.
Be whole! May God help you.
Take that knife—put it in water.[22]

In this whole charm which places the ill in a battle against those causing them sickness, there is only a sin-

gle mention of God at the end, hardly an attempt to sub-due folkloric elements, in this case especially the elves, Aesir, and *hægtessa* ("hag"). As for Ælfric, the fact that his Homilies and *Saints' Lives* were likely meant to educate the secular clergy on how to better inform the laity about spiritual affairs[23] suggests that his views on the matter were not universal, or else there would be no need for him to discuss them. Nevertheless, even a view that the pagan elements in these charms had no power and that it was the Christian invocations which actual-ly helped heal does not mean that the pagan elements were seen as problematic in themselves by any but the most austere. However, their persistence also suggests that some users of charms may have believed these ele-ments to have been valuable in their own rights. In this case, the users would have added Christian elements because in their minds Christ was the ultimate healer and God was benevolent, thus giving additional power to the charms. For most, these charms may not have been useless without Christian invocations—the prac-tices and images retained ancient medical authority—but the sick wanted every bit of help on their side.

An important indication that Germanic elements were not seen to be at odds with those of Christianity is the ease with which they were often transferred from one worldview to the next. It is not merely a matter of avoiding conflict, but instead one of being analogised to ideas already present in Christian thought. The ac-tions pertaining to the charms themselves are examples

22   Hill, trans. in "The Rod of Protection and the Witches' Ride," 159-160.
23   Jolly, "Anglo-Saxon Charms," 280.

of this. Although the specifics of the ritual surrounding a charm may have originated in the pagan world, ideas about the inherent powers of herbs, stones and other items were attested to in the writings of classical authorities like Augustine and Pliny. Pliny himself was not a Christian and yet his ideas about the natural world remained authoritative throughout the Middle Ages. The very idea of a charm was also originally pagan; the Journey charm refers to itself as an incantation (*sige-gealdor*) which, as mentioned previously, can be associated to pagan magic in different contexts.[24] And yet, the notion that words have occult power was not new to Christians. The existence of liturgy showed them that by speaking specific words, wondrous things could happen. In fact, many Anglo-Saxon charms resemble Christian liturgy in their form, perhaps due to Clerical participation in their creation,[25] but the association of liturgy with holy power might also have created a desire in the non-Clerical participants to strengthen the similarities.

Any potential conflict would have instead existed in the ultimate source of this power. The power of a charm was evil when it relied on a demonic source, which included the invocation of a pagan god. Some may have believed that the charms would not have worked without God's explicit aid, as Ælfric did, but they were not necessarily evil in and of themselves. If they did work without God's aid, Ælfric would have claimed that this was a demonic trick, in which case it would have been evil again due to its demonic source of power. However, as noted above, Ælfric's views do not seem to have been universal or even common beyond the clerical elite.

Later readers looking back at these charms sometimes saw the sources as potentially problematic in a Christian worldview. In the Nine Herbs charm, for example, the reader addresses the herbs as imbued with personality and virtues ("Remember, Mugwort, what you made known, / What you arranged at the Great Proclamation. […] And you, Plantain, mother of herbs, / open from the east, mighty inside. […] Remember, Camomile, what you made known, / what you accomplished at Alorford,"[26] to show a few instances), which has been interpreted as a pagan understanding of the herbs having spirits within them. However, to a Christian observing the same lines, they would have understood these virtues to have been placed within the herbs by God, with the healer merely using words to activate them.[27] What is key in this example is the ambiguity of the passage. Either interpretation can be had because although God is mentioned in the charm, He could be swapped for another entity and it would still work. Therefore, it can easily be transferred from one worldview to another by people simply looking at it from a different perspective. For modern observers who are actively trying not to impose their own worldviews

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24    Hill, "The Rod of Protection and the Witches' Ride," 154.
25    Jolly, "Medieval Magic," 36.
26    Storms, trans. in *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 186-191.
27    Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England*, 127.

upon the text or who, knowing of the existence of a pagan inheritance, are looking for evidence for it, they might see these elements in a certain way, whereas the Christian Anglo-Saxons would have seen them differently. They were trying to observe the charms through a Christian lens and so could interpret ambiguity according to their own beliefs and adapt things appropriately with little issue.

The thematic elements and images within the charms also show much evidence of adaptability to similar concepts in the Christian worldview. This is most evident in the notion of elves, but there were others which will also be addressed below. The causes of many hardships, especially medical ones, in the Anglo-Saxon world were understood to be invisible. Prior to the rediscovery of Hippocratic/Galenic theory, there were a lot more diseases associated with attacks on the body from an invisible outside assailant. At some point before the final composition of the charms we have, the pagan entities called elves (and other related creatures) became the ones blamed for these actions. Over time, their invisibility and need to be charmed away took a new meaning in the Christian worldview and they were adapted as demons because of the similarities to the idea of possession, and in order for them to better fit into the good/evil dichotomy of Christianity.[28] This is indeed a case of pagan elements becoming associated with evil. However, it is not by virtue of coming from a pagan worldview that this is the case. Instead, it is be-

cause of their existing association to disease and therefore their transferability to the idea of demons.

Looking again at *Wið færstice*, the depicted battle scene against hostile beings claims to help the user against the attacks of elves, Aesir (Old English *Esa*, a name for the main family of gods in Germanic myth), and "hags" (*hægtessa*). Once again, beings of moral dubiousness are associated with the causes of harm and hardship upon a victim of disease. What is special here is the fact that the Aesir are among them. It makes sense, however, that they would be here for a couple of reasons. Firstly, because of the notion in the Christian worldview that worshipping pagan gods was devil worship. Unlike the presence of Woden in the Nine Herbs charm, the use of the title *Esa* more clearly implies a "divine" being, thus linking them to demons in the Christian mind since their divinity would contradict the larger worldview.  However, even if this was not the case and they were seen as something separate, surviving Norse myths show that if, as is likely, their Anglo-Saxon cousins had any similarities to them, then the Aesir were far from benevolent. This is especially true of Odin who is often associated with war and frequently manipulates the circumstances of a battle for the better warrior to die, something which was even critiqued by Thor in *Hárbarðsljóð* ("You deal out victory / and defeat unfairly, / if you have so much power over battles."[29]). Therefore, it makes sense that they might obtain the same association as elves with "shots" that

28   Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England*, 136.
29   Jackson Crawford, trans. *The Poetic Edda: Stories of the Norse Gods and Heroes* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2015), 86.

cause illness in a seemingly arbitrary manner.

Another transferrable element in a charm appears in the Nine Herbs when it is written that, "They were created by the wise Lord, holy in heaven as He hung."[30] I am always surprised when commentators on the charm pay no attention to this passage, because it seems fairly reminiscent to the story of Odin's sacrifice of himself to himself by means of hanging in order to obtain wisdom, as told in *Hávamál* ("I know that I hung / on a wind-battered tree / nine long nights, / pierced by a spear / and given to Odin, / myself to myself, / on that tree / whose roots grow in a place / no one has ever seen."[31]). One might object to his role as a creator of medical herbs due to lack of evidence for it in surviving myths, however it is not impossible that his association to magic led to this idea, or that he had a stronger connection to creation in Anglo-Saxon myth than he did for the Norse. Indeed, one could argue that even in Norse mythology his participation in the dismemberment of Ymir to make the world from the giant's body might allow for the interpretation that he created magical herbs. In any case, when a Christian heard or read a passage about a wise and holy Lord who created things and is known for having hung, the obvious association would have been to Christ himself. Godfrid Storms' translation which I have quoted takes this interpretation for granted by capitalizing "Lord," "He," and

inserting "[on the cross]" after the mention of hanging. The ambiguity is once again central (which is why I left out Storms' addition of the cross in my quotation). An element which may have originated in a pagan worldview could be transferred to a Christian one simply by observing it through a different lens. It did not need to be Christianised because it fit already and thus was not a problem for Christians.

As one final example of transferability, a few elements in the Æcerbot charm, a charm used for protecting one's fields in times of poor yields, shall be used. Although traditionally this charm has been taken as the best example of evidence for a pagan fertility ritual, many of the elements which have been associated with this, such as the focus on the number four like when writing the names of the four gospel authors on crosses and planting them in the four corners of the field, can actually be traced to developing traditions of early medieval exegesis.[32] Likewise, the notion by authors such as Storms that Anglo-Saxon charms minus Christian elements equals pagan ritual is a problematic formula based on the belief that, "the entire practice decidedly smells of magic, with a little superficial Christian colouring,"[33] rather than seeing it as a syncretic blend of worldviews in which new complex associations could constantly be developing. Nevertheless, even if Storms and others are correct about any of the associations they

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30    Storms, trans., in *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 188-189.
31    Crawford, trans., *The Poetic Edda*, 42-43.
32    Thomas D. Hill, "The Æcerbot charm and its Christian user," *Anglo-Saxon England* 6 (1977): 215, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44510692
33    Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, 178.

draw to pagan practice, the majority of these obtain Christian significance in their new context. If the idea of planting four totems of whatever kind in the corners of the field did originate in a pagan worldview, it was clearly similar enough to Christian exegesis to obtain the association of the four gospel authors. The figures which the totems originally represented may have been problematic and thus changed, but this did not warrant the complete discrediting of the idea. The notion, therefore, of powerful symbols at the four corners could have been reinterpreted and become itself a part of the worldview of Christian Anglo-Saxons.

Because there was nothing inherently unchristian about the elements which were inherited from a pagan worldview into Anglo-Saxon charms, and few people had problems with them in themselves, it would be misleading to say that they are evidence for a lack of legitimate Christian sentiment amongst the common population. To them these things were just as much a part of the Christian world as the classical elements the charms had, and their persistent authority fit them into the wider universe. The charms' practitioners wanted to use certain ritual actions and to make use of liturgical elements because both of these things were thought to have a function in the power of the charm. Together, all of these elements became intermixed in an attempt to access the charms' curative and protective powers: powers which God imbued in the macrocosm which He created. Regardless of how later Christians would think of these practices, in the eyes of those who created and used them, they were Christian, and they worked.

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# Germany's Democratic Breakdown: Determining the Role of the Weimar Constitution

## By Luis Martínez, Vanderbilt University

*For my late father, Armando Martínez, to whom I owe my love for history and for liberal democracy.*

### Introduction

The emergence of the German single-party state in 1933 is a direct result of the erosion of liberal democracy in the Weimar Republic, a case of democratic breakdown whose exact character still remains in question. In the fourteen years preceding Hitler's takeover of Germany, the causes of Weimar's decay can be ascribed to the increasing political presence of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP, also known colloquially as the Nazi Party); to institutions and groups acting in conjunction with traditionalist and anti-Republic undercurrents; and to Hitler's ultimate path to power.[1] Historians during the twelve Hitlerian years to modern perspectives outline each of these interdependent realities in the 1920s and early 1930s. F.A. Hermens, Kenneth F. Ledford, and Michael Stolleis, however, emphasize an idea that should continue to be underscored in the narrative of Weimar's downfall: that the Weimar Constitution contained crucial provisions that facilitated Hitler's rise to power and general democratic breakdown in varying forms and capacities.[2]

Each of these three constitutive features contributed to democratic instability in post-1919 Germany in distinct ways. While the NSDAP may have needed only one or two of these provisions to successfully undermine the stability of the Weimar Republic, it certainly benefited from all three, in addition to the other main forces driving its ascent. Before discussing these provisions, it bears noting that the Weimar Constitution did not create a failsafe against any attempt to alter its provisions on the part of anti-democratic forces. By not protecting against attempts to modify the Constitution, Weimar's founders allowed for the structure of democratic governance to be contested in the realm of political negotiation, strategy, and manipulation, which ultimately helped clear the way for regime change in 1933. In a way, the analysis of a decaying liberal democratic system prior to authoritarian ascent is at least partially a study of democide, or the endogenous termination of a liberal democracy.[3] The concept of democide, analyzed by certain political theorists such as John Keane and Mark Chou,[4] implies to some extent that the fate of democracy is predetermined by its internal design in documents like the Weimar Constitution. Of course,

1  Geoff Layton, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany 1919-1963* (London: Hodder Education, 2008), 23.
2  Layton, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany,* 24.
3  Mark Chou, "Sowing the Seeds of Its Own Destruction: Democracy and Democide in the Weimar Republic and Beyond," *Theoria (Pietermaritzburg)* 59, no. 133 (2012): 25.
4  Chou, "Sowing the Seeds of Its Own Destruction,", 24.

this approach is limiting, but attending exclusively to exogenous factors like the rise of right-wing populism and sociopolitical instability is also limiting. Rather, it is more productive to view both intrinsic and extrinsic preconditions to the Third Reich as crucial layers that jointly facilitated Hitler's rise to power.

Hence, I emphasize three discrete aspects in Weimar's constitutional design, or three endogenous forces in the framework I identified above, that lead to democratic collapse in 1933. The Weimar Constitution's introduction of a pure proportional representation system in Articles 17 and 22 provided the foundation for the NSDAP's net increasing count in the Reichstag in Weimar's last two democratic elections on July 31, 1932 and November 6, 1932.[5] Then, the Weimar Constitution's leniency in permitting traditional institutions to persist unaltered in Articles 84, 102-104, 129-130, and 178-179 helped weaken the Republic from the start.[6] The legal system and judiciary, the military, the civil service, and universities constituted the majority of traditional institutions that leaned right and abetted Hitler and the NSDAP in their campaign against the Republic. The third and best-represented provision historically is how the Weimar Constitution defined the relationship between the President and the Reichstag:

Articles 23-26, 28, 41, 51, 53, and most importantly, 48, created the conditions wherein emergency powers helped bring about the collapse of Weimar and Hitler's transition from Chancellor to Fuhrer.[7]

In positing an argument like this, it is important to clarify that this approach to understanding one set of variables and its impacts in early 20th century German history serves only to that end—working with just one part of a complex network. As I emphasize specific aspects of the Weimar Constitution, I hope not to subtract from research on the other forms of intrinsic and extrinsic "dry timber" that contributed to the fall of the Weimar Republic,[8] but rather to emphasize the role of constitutive features in the history of European regime change while drawing on relevant text from the Weimar Constitution. The phrase "dry timber," as Holocaust historian Doris L. Bergen devised it, refers to the preconditions to major events in pre-1945 Germany.[9] Bergen argues that certain preconditions facilitated Hitler's ability to accrue portions of the German vote in the 1920s and early 1930s. For instance, the 'stab in the back' conspiracy held in various sectors of German society led right-wing radicals to incite putsches and engage in other forms of fringe political activity, which helped legitimate antisemitism, racism, and other prej-

5  "Elections in the Weimar Republic," Historical Exhibition Presented by the German Bundestag, Deutscher Bundestag,  accessed December 1, 2019, https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/189774/7c6dd629f4afff7bf4f962a45c110b5f/elections_weim ar_republic-dat a.pdf.

6  "The Constitution of the German Reich / August 11, 1919 / Translation of Document 2050-PS / Office of U.S. Chief of Counsel," Donovan Nuremberg Trials Collection.

7  Layton, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany*, 24.

8  Doris L. Bergen, *War & Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Crane  Library, 2017), 13.

9  Bergen, *War & Genocide*, 13-14.

udices in national discourse. These circumstances ultimately allowed Hitler and the NSDAP to consolidate their political ascent in the Reichstag and develop a cogent far-right nationalist discourse that would provide a shared ideological language for their supporters.[10] Bergen's model for understanding lines of causality and other relationships between historical variables applies then to Weimar's collapse.

Hitler and the NSDAP preyed on the constitutional vulnerabilities of the Weimar Republic, especially in light of the Constitution's pure proportional representation system for legislative elections, the unchecked resumption of traditional institutions like the judiciary, and the definition of the President-Reichstag relationship such that power was shifted to the Reich President. Weimar's democratic breakdown attests to the significance of affording attention to protecting the security of a liberal democracy when assembling its constitution in the aftermath of regime change. To more clearly understand the costs of failing to insure liberal democracy against breakdown in constitution-building, the following sections will assess these three contentions as reinforcing elements in Weimar's collapse.

## Pure Proportional Representation and the NSDAP's Legislative Ascent

The introduction of pure proportional representation endangered post-1918 German democracy because it encouraged small splinter parties and their legitimization in the Reichstag. Hugo Preuss, Friedrich Ebert, and the other legal thinkers who drafted or enacted the Weimar Constitution were effectively responsible for installing a pure proportional representation system. Many critics of Weimar's electoral system argue that a 'first past the post' model or a majoritarian system in general would have given rise to a party duopoly in 1920s German democracy, which would have been preferable to proportional representation insofar as impeding the rise of the NSDAP.[11] In fact, American political scientist James K. Pollock notes that legislators in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) recognized the perils of Weimar's system of pure proportional representation in 1949.[12] These individuals on the FRG's Parliamentary Council determined to devise a legislative electoral system based on their nation's "electoral experience" from Weimar to minimize the possibility of democratic breakdown after 1949.[13] In other words, the Council's lawmakers intentionally designed their new system in 1949 to differ from the "straight P.R. in Weimar days," because the Parliamentary Council sought "to avoid Weimar's fate as it was "junked by the Nazi one-party state when Hitler made his Reichstag.""[14] Hence, in moving on to analyze the ways in which pure proportional representation posed a vulnerability to the Republic, it is worthwhile to consider the importance of

10 Bergen, *War & Genocide*, 13.

11 Layton, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany*, 23.

12 James K. Pollock, "The Electoral System of the Federal Republic of Germany," *The American Political Science Review* 46, no. 4 (1952): 1057.

13 Pollock, "Electoral System," 1066.

14 Pollock, "Electoral System," 1057.

designing a legislative electoral system with democratic security in mind.[15]

On the specific ways Weimar's proportional representation system enabled anti-democratic forces to impact the Republic, it is first necessary to identify the relevant articles in the Constitution that set up this electoral system. Article 17 in the First Chapter ("Reich and Lands") of the First Part of the Constitution ("Structure and Function of the Reich") delineates the democratic mandates for Weimar's electoral processes: "The people's representatives must be elected by universal, equal, direct and secret ballot by all German men and women in conformity with the principles of proportional representation,"[16] and the rest of the article does not reference proportional representation again. There is only one other article in the entire Constitution that explicitly mentions proportional representation. Article 22 in the Second Chapter ("The Reichstag") of the First Part of the Constitution states: "The delegates are elected by universal, equal, direct and secret ballot by men and women over twenty years of age, according to the principles of proportional representation." [17]

Articles that established legislative elections did not provide detailed regulations for how the system should function. For instance, Articles 17 and 22 established no minimum threshold for a percentage of votes established to keep fringe parties from sending representatives to the Reichstag even if they only received a handful of votes. The reason why I refer to Weimar's electoral system as "pure" is because proportional representation systems can establish minimum vote percentage thresholds that keep splinter parties from multiplying with only small shares of the vote. As University of Chicago economist Roger B. Myers observes, Weimar's "extreme proportional representation facilitates the creation of many small parties…So a presidential system with extreme proportional representation…seems most likely to generate a plethora of legislative parties that focus on the special demands of their constituents" rather than multi-party governmental coherence in national policy.[18] The Constitution did not account for anti-democratic parties and the political health of the Republic. When the Weimar Republic was created, twentieth century authoritarian states birthed through democratic populism had not yet emerged, so democratic security was not a likely topic of major concern at this point in German politics. Whether or not these thinkers were justified in failing to include protective measures against fringe parties, it is worth stressing that the absence of these measures nevertheless proved detrimental to Weimar's efforts to restrain anti-democratic parties.

Further, F.A. Hermens, a political scientist who escaped Nazi Germany in 1934 and then worked in ac-

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15  Pollock, "Electoral System," 1057.
16  "The Constitution of the German Reich"
17  "The Constitution of the German Reich"
18  Roger B. Myerson, "Political Economics and the Weimar Disaster," *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 160 (2004): 194.

ademia in the U.S., argued in 1936 that proportional representation is fundamentally irreconcilable with democracy.[19] This is a drastic perspective rooted in personal experience, but there are valuable elements in Hermens' analysis. He claims that democracy is meant to subject the will of the minority to the will of the majority and that proportional representation denies this because it takes undue care of the minority whenever a decision must be made.[20] Hermens proceeds to contend that the "deadlock" resulting from this legislative election model is "the ideal preparation for dictatorship" because it allows radical splinter parties like the NSDAP to wield disproportionate amounts of power.[21] The concept that proportional representation is conducive to political stalemate, inefficient coalition-building, and splinter party formation is not novel. However, Hermens' application of these ideas in his theoretical approach serves to complicate and inform an understanding of how Weimar's electoral system contributed to its own weakening.

Hermens also provides evidence, based on German election data from 1919 to 1932, in favor of the argument that proportional representation was harmful to Weimar's democracy, showing that it was eight times easier to create an official party under Weimar's proportional representation system than under a majoritarian system. However, the crux of the trouble this structure fomented in Weimar was the validation that parties like the NSDAP gained—a reinforcing cycle wherein "a nucleus for a new group now exists and voters know that they no longer 'throw their votes away' when voting for this party."[22]

Weimar from 1920 to 1930 saw the multiplication of parties in the Reichstag, from the Communists' Party (KPD) to the Revaluation Party and the NSDAP; some of these, like the KPD, ascended to a level of strength in the Reichstag that posed obstructionist barriers and other problems to Weimar. The presence of Communists in the legislature allowed Hitler to claim that the far-right had to save Germany from the peril of Bolshevism, particularly when he seized the opportunity to capitalize on an event like the Reichstag fire. Hermens also adds that under a majoritarian system a Nazi candidate could never have succeeded because in the four hundred German "single member districts," each of approximately equal size, not once did the NSDAP obtain the majority of the votes cast—in fact, nowhere did they even gain forty percent of the votes cast.[23] Throughout the Weimar Republic, only elections in the 1930s saw the Communists and Nazis gain a shared majority of the votes throughout Weimar, and these elections took place in a national environment of political intimidation and repression. Even then, if a two-party duopoly had emerged, the NSDAP would have had

19   Ferdinand A. Hermens, "Proportional Representation and the Breakdown of Germany Democracy," *Social Research* 3, no. 4 (1936): 412.

20   Hermens, "Proportional Representation," 412.

21   Hermens, "Proportional Representation," 412.

22   Hermens, "Proportional Representation," 413.

23   Hermens, "Proportional Representation," 430.

to be one of the two parties in major leadership and it still would not have won seats initially without a shift in base or approach.

To understand this progression in terms of Weimar's political development in the 1920s, this partisan competition began with the SPD, Centre, and DDP acquiring an aggregate vote share of 70% in 1919 and losing this strong majority in 1920 when anti-republican sentiments became more palpable in Weimar's electoral trajectory.[24] Post-1920 governments in Weimar mainly consisted of minority coalitions between moderate liberal and conservative parties that left adequate space for instability within the legislature. The share of the vote that these liberal parties lost, however, was not exclusively won by the NSDAP. The center-right German People's Party (DVP), the Bavarian People's Party (BVP), the German National People's Party (DNVP), and the KPD constituted much of the remaining vote in numerous election cycles.[25] Ultimately, provisions of the Weimar Constitution such as Articles 17 and 22 provided the National Socialist Party an undeniable opening through the vehicle of pure proportional representation.

### Permission for Conservativism, Traditionalism, and Continuity

The idea that the Weimar Constitution allowed for the persistence of traditional elements from Wil-helmine Germany is less easily defined in its relationship with democratic breakdown than proportional representation. To understand that constitutional permission for the resumption of traditional practice contributed to Weimar's democratic breakdown, it is necessary to establish the context in the beginning of the period. Both research on Weimar Germany and memoirs like Sebastian Haffner's Defying Hitler attest to 1920s anti-Republic popular sentiment manifesting itself in the conservative leftovers from Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm II. This antipathy did not originate in the creation of German liberal democracy after the 1918 revolution, but in factions of German society with interests in the imperial establishment.[26] These groups were defined along lines of class, ethnonational identity, and political standing, but they opposed the Weimar Republic on the basis of popular belief and ideology.[27]

Anti-revolutionaries, and conservatives in general, resented the 'November criminals' in the Weimar government who, in their view, were wrong to accept the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The founders of the Weimar Republic carried several of these associational burdens from popularized narratives like war guilt after the Treaty of Versailles, or the 'November criminals' and 'stab in the back' mythologies.[28] By the early or mid 1920s, these had all helped consolidate the anti-Republic zeitgeist that found shelter in tradi-

24  "The Weimar Republic (1918 - 1933)," Parliament, German Bundestag, accessed December 2, 2019, https://www.bundestag.de/en/parliament/history/parliamentarism/weimar.
25  "The Weimar Republic (1918 - 1933)," Parliament, German Bundestag.
26  Layton, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany*, 24-25.
27  Layton, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany*, 24-25.
28  Bergen, *War & Genocide*, 62.

tional institutions that the Weimar Constitution did not reform. For instance, the civil service was inclined to favor old-fashioned conservative ideas from Imperial Germany.[29] Another iteration of a pre-1919 group that extended into Weimar Germany without undergoing a refining process was the military. To maintain its influence and social capital in relations with Prussian landowners, the army was not sympathetic to democratic Germany once it was established.[30] A third group was universities in Germany. Although universities favoring conservatism and a recent imperial past might seem contradictory in a contemporary light, universities in early twentieth century Germany were proud of their traditional status and, having secured the upper end of a power differential in German society for their continued prestige, they preferred the pre-Weimar mode of German political rule.[31]

These three examples introduce a few problems. The Weimar Constitution refrained from infringing on the composition of these institutions, but many of them, like the judiciary, rejected the introduction of a liberal democratic system into the fabric of German government. To understand this, it is useful to note that the judiciary reacted to the new liberal democratic order of power despite not facing immediately threatening changes. Although the premise of this issue may stand on a weaker foundation for the army, which could have easily experienced a decrease in institutional pow-

er upon a regime change like Germany's after 1918, the circumstances surrounding the civil service and universities in their response to the democratic transition require further analysis. Barring the possible loss of implied privileges they may have claimed under the Kaiser, the answer to this question may lie less in the spheres of interests, privilege, and institutional power than in the sphere of ideological alignment. Although misalignment in ideology and belief may not seem as substantial a source of motivation for the conservative opposition from some of these institutions, it is a possibility that should not be discounted in the framework of Weimar's early years and anti-Republic sentiment. These brief examples and their underlying contexts in Weimar serve as a background to continue informing this argument.

In the Constitution's First Part ("Structure and Function of the Reich"), the Sixth Chapter ("Reich Administration") contains Article 84 and the Seventh Chapter ("The Judiciary (Rechtspflege)") contains Articles 102-104, all of which are pertinent.[32] Article 84 establishes tax administration rules and tax laws; Article 102 states, "Judges are independent and subject only to the law"; Article 103 regulates that the ordinary judiciary was to consist of the "Reich Supreme Court" and the "courts of the Lands"; and Article 104 mandates that judges of the ordinary judiciary be appointed for life, as well as defines the conditions of a sus-

29   Layton, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany*, 24-25.
30   Layton, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany*, 24-25.
31   Layton, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany*, 24-25.
32   "The Constitution of the German Reich"

pension and removal from office.[33] In the Second Part ("Fundamental Rights and Duties of the Germans"), the Second Chapter ("The General Welfare (Gemeinschaft-sleben)"), Article 129 states that public officials shall be appointed for life and the first part of Article 130 states the following: "Public officials are servants of the whole community, and not of a party."[34]

The most crucial section of the Constitution in the matter of traditional institutions and continuity is the last part, or "Transitional and Concluding Provisions." In this section, Article 178 repeals the laws of the Constitution of the German Reich of April 16, 1871 and of the 1918 provisional government and keeps all other laws. Then, Article 179 creates Weimar's political structure—the Reichstag replaced the National Assembly, the Reich Council replaced the State Committee, and the Reich President's roles were to change to fit the new Constitution.[35] In brief, as far as traditional institutions were concerned, the Constitution's provisions did little in these articles to upset their pre-Weimar access to power. Indeed, these constitutional provisions demonstrate how little the Weimar Constitution changed German institutions despite the opportunity for greater change in the atmosphere of post-revolutionary regime change.

Promoting a notable degree of institutional continuity was characteristic of the Weimar Constitu-tion. Although Weimar's democracy is known for its expansion of the franchise to include women and its attempt to democratize German politics in general, it is also necessary to recognize how similar Weimar was to the prior imperial system despite having founded new political parties.[36] This can be explained on some level because using constitutional measures to target the Germans behind these institutions would have exacerbated anti-Republic sentiment. Anti-Republic popular sentiment was already high considering how anti-revolutionary groups promoted the 'November criminals' and 'stab in the back' conspiracies, among other pro-Kaiser narratives.[37] As it was, the founders of the Weimar Constitution decided to grant these traditional institutions a high level of freedom and mobility, hence leaving them largely undisturbed.

To return to a specific institution replete with unchecked conservative elements in 1920s and 1930s Weimar, the judiciary provides a strong model for understanding the fallout of not including constitutional provisions to delimit traditional institutions. There are self-evident aspects of the judiciary and legal system as breeding grounds for conservative and anti-Republic discourse and action, but nuanced aspects should be considered as well. As Articles 102 and 104 set forth, Weimar's judges were independent and supposed to serve only the law in their lifetime appointments.[38] So,

33  "The Constitution of the German Reich"
34  "The Constitution of the German Reich"
35  "The Constitution of the German Reich"
36  "The Weimar Republic (1918 - 1933)," Parliament, German Bundestag.
37  Bergen, *War & Genocide*, 62.
38  "Constitution of the German Reich"

as the judiciary continued to enjoy this independence, and judges favored extreme right-wing assassins in the sentencing after the 1920s putsches and punished the extreme left-wing assassins at a higher rate.[39] Of 354 right-wing assassins, 28 (7.9%) were found guilty while 10 of the 22 (45.4%) left-wing assassins were found guilty; of course, it is also valuable to note that there were 354 convicted right-wing assassins as opposed to only 22 left-wing assassins.[40] Whether in an attempt to offset the lower number of left-wing perpetrators by disproportionately sentencing them to death or in an exercise of political bias, Weimar's judges were certainly not inclined to favor the left.

Still, the inner workings of the legal system in Weimar were more complicated than conservative bias—and even these conservative biases assumed more complex forms than the disproportionate sentencing of fringe party criminals. The German Bar Association (DAV), like most other institutions in Germany, submitted to Nazi takeover with relatively little resistance.[41] In the case of the legal system, it was actually remarkable how quickly the German Bar's traditional leadership allowed itself to be replaced by young Nazi "professionals" who belonged to a party that viewed the law with contempt. To understand how the "bulwark of civil society" succumbed so easily, the motifs shared among traditional institutions serve us well: private legal practitioners and judges were university-trained lawyers who emblematized monarchist and nationalist belief and ideology through their experiences at university and in the military.[42] That legal practitioners were quick to renounce their positions to "reprofessionalize"[43] under Nazi coordination is not the fault of the thinkers who drafted the Weimar Constitution, and neither were the circumstances in which anti-Republic national feelings steeped regardless of the Constitution's lack of legal reprimand against inherently conservative subgroups. Further, it is undeniable that the collapse of the German Empire in 1918 increased the vulnerability of comfortable relationships the German Bar had formed with the imperial government—relationships many members of the legal profession in the 1920s thought they had permanently lost to liberal democracy and its new parties.[44]

The legal circumstances became even more complicated after Weimar's transitional phase. Bourgeoisie forces in Germany lobbied for the courts' power to keep checks on the German parliament. The "conservative bourgeois judiciary" used tools ranging from judicial review to administrative and constitutional re-

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39  Layton, Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany, 24-25.
40  Layton, Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany, 24-25.
41  Kenneth F. Ledford, "German Lawyers and the State in the Weimar Republic," *Law and History Review* 13, no. 2 (1995): 317.
42  Ledford, "German Lawyers," 318.
43  Ledford, "German Lawyers," 319.
44  Ledford, "German Lawyers," 327.

view in order to shift power away from the Reichstag and toward judges.[45] Judicial review was fueled by fears of left-wing rule and so judges shifted right—the judiciary declared war against the politicians and increasingly used judicial review in the 1920s. As legal historian Michael Stolleis points out, "given the continuity of institutions and staff in the transition from the Kaiserreich to the Weimar Republic, it is hardly surprising that judicial review of administrative action continued to expand."[46] In fact, the ideological rift between liberal and anti-Republic forces in Weimar manifested itself in how traditional institutions used their power from pre-Weimar Germany and legal means like judicial review to keep a check on Weimar's liberal politicians.

In railing against parliamentarians, those in the legal profession who forcibly expanded judicial power over the legislature—which was supposedly the highest authority in Weimar as per the Constitution—opposed those who supported the political well-being of the Republic. After the conservative judiciary's nearly decade-long campaign against the Reichstag and Weimar's political stability, it eventually left the Reichstag without authority. By then, the judiciary and other traditional institutions were prepared to comply with Nazi coordination.[47] For perspective, the judiciary was only one conservative collective acting against democracy in 1920s Germany—set against the backdrop of an opposition to the Republic that was born with and strengthened alongside the Republic itself.

## The President-Reichstag Relationship and Emergency Power Insecurity

Fears of "parliamentary absolutism"[48] affected the Weimar Republic beyond acting as an incentive or pretext for a conservative judiciary to keep checks on the Reichstag. When the Weimar Constitution was still being written, Preuss found himself debating against the addition of a set of basic rights in the Constitution because he knew the bourgeois influencers propounding the explicit statement of these rights sought to use them as legal measures against the Reichstag when they deemed its laws unfavorable.[49]

From the beginning, the Weimar Constitution was partly motivated by a general distrust of parliament, from its basic rights to its identification of the powers of the Reich President in relation to the Reichstag. In other words, the Weimar Constitution was constructed to lessen these fears of an unrestricted parliament, which were concerns typically from conservative and infrequently from liberal spheres.[50] This is where the President-Reichstag relationship comes into play: if the Constitution was created in a context defined by fears of the Reichstag and by antagonism toward liber-

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45   Michael Stolleis, "Judicial Review, Administrative Review, and Constitutional Review in the Weimar Republic," *Ratio Juris* 16, no. 2 (2003): 277.
46   Stolleis, "Judicial Review," 274.
47   Stolleis, "Judicial Review," 279.
48   Stolleis, "Judicial Review," 277.
49   Stolleis, "Judicial Review," 271.
50   Layton, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany*, 24.

al democracy, then it follows that parts of the Weimar Constitution had to be designed to create a presidency whose powers could supersede those of the Reichstag and its parties. The attempt to redistribute power between government institutions after the German regime change resulted in an imbalanced redistribution where efforts to keep the Reichstag from wielding massive power resulted not only in the weakening of the Reichstag, but in the center of gravity shifting to the Reich President and Chancellor.[51] This President-Reichstag relationship facilitated Hitler's takeover and derived its constitutional legitimacy from Article 48, which provided the head of state with the legal power to suspend civil rights in a sufficiently disastrous situation and issue decrees to restore order in the government.

The articles that built the President-Reichstag relationship were Articles 23-26 and 28 in the Second Chapter ("The Reichstag") of the First Part of the Constitution ("Structure and Function of the Reich").[52] Key points from these articles are that the Reichstag is elected for four years (23); the President of the Reich may dissolve the Reichstag, upon which new elections would be held within a 60-day period (25); the Reichstag chooses its President (26); and the President has domiciliary and police authority within the Reichstag building, as well as control of the house administration and representation of the Reich in all legal mat-

ters (28).[53] In the Third Chapter ("The Reich President and the Reich Government"), Article 41 establishes that the German people elect the Reich President; Article 51 prescribes that the Reich President will be replaced by the Reich Chancellor when he cannot function; and Article 53 that the Reich President can appoint and dismiss the Reich Chancellor.[54] Article 48 can be found in the same Third Chapter and although its full text is too long to include here, the emergency powers clause follows:

> The Reich president may, if the public safety and order in the German Reich are considerably disturbed or endangered, take such measures as are necessary to restore public safety and order. If necessary he may intervene with the help of the armed forces. For this purpose he may temporarily suspend, either partially or wholly, the Fundamental Rights established in Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, and 153.[55]

This text establishes that the Reich President has the authority to issue emergency decrees and invoke military power to suspend Fundamental Rights—these were the basic rights originally envisioned to protect the German populace from unconscionable parliamentary rule. Regardless of the German constitutional thinkers' reasons

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51    Layton, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany*, 24.
52    "The Constitution of the German Reich"
53    "The Constitution of the German Reich"
54    "The Constitution of the German Reich"
55    "The Constitution of the German Reich"

for shifting power to the role of the President, abuse of this article facilitated Weimar's breakdown, especially in its last years.

In fact, not just any use of Article 48 necessarily ensured that Germany suffered immediate dictatorship. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, President Friedrich Ebert invoked the article 63 times from 1923 to 1924 and quickly returned his "dictatorial powers" soon after using them.[56] The overuse of the article by President Hindenburg, who was distrustful of Weimar democracy, further weakened the Reichstag and public confidence in the system.[57] In 1932, Hindenburg used the article 60 times.[58] When Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor, the Reichstag had been weakened nearly to the point of abeyance because Article 48 had normalized the President's power overriding the Reichstag. Although the Weimar Constitution assigned the power to dismiss government and presidency alike to the Reichstag, there was no instance of this in the Republic—and most likely no opportunity for it considering low public confidence in Weimar and repeated uses of Article 48.[59]

The German government today acknowledges the role of Article 48 along with other crucial preconditions and factors in Weimar's breakdown. The last Grand Coalition, or majority coalition of pro-Weimar parties in the Reichstag, broke up in 1930, and the following governments relied less on Reichstag coalitions than on presidential cabinet rule because of the frequent use of Article 48.[60] Marc de Wilde, Professor of Jurisprudence at the University of Amsterdam, argues that the way President Hindenburg took refuge in Article 48 and appointed a minority cabinet that depended on emergency decrees to rule led to authoritarianism and the subsequent erosion of Weimar's democratic institutions.[61] As Preuss failed to keep the President from having inordinately more power than the Reichstag, so did Weimar fail to secure itself against the absolutism of what many were bound to dismiss as warranted and temporary constitutional dictatorship.

Further, the way Article 48 could be exploited was based not only on how the Weimar Constitution prescribed the Reich President his powers to dominate over the legislature, but also on how constitutional lawyers and leading voices of German jurisprudence during Weimar legitimated the presence of the article and its continued use. At an annual meeting of the Association of German Constitutional Lawyers in April 1924, constitutional legal practitioners and thinkers convened to discuss how Article 48 had to be interpret-

56  "Article 48," Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed December 2, 2019, https://e ncyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/article-48.
57  "Article 48"
58  "Article 48"
59  "Article 48"
60  "The Weimar Republic (1918 - 1933)," Parliament, German Bundestag.
61  Marc de Wilde, "The State of Emergency in the Weimar Republic: Legal Disputes over Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution," *The Legal History Review* 78 (2010): 139.

ed in the scope of the "dictatorship of the President of the Reich."[62] German thinkers like Carl Schmitt and Erwin Jacobi argued with each other as positivists and anti-positivists—terms referring to two main schools of early twentieth century legal thought—and despite their disagreement on other matters pertaining to morality, social authority, and constitutional inviolability, both groups of men tended to agree that the institution of constitutional dictatorship was legal and legitimate.[63] Weimar's firm provisions created a legal basis for emergency powers and constitutional dictatorship, but pre-Hitler politicians and constitutional theorists validated it as well. By February 1933, Hitler and the NSDAP were set to lay pressure on Hindenburg to declare a state of emergency after the Reichstag fire through the Reichstag Fire Decree.[64] A precursor to the Enabling Act of 1933 a month later, the precedent of Article 48 and the Reichstag Fire Decree helped Hitler increase the Nazi vote by repressive means ahead of the undemocratic March election of 1933 to secure a majority in conjunction with the DNVP in the Reichstag.[65]

## Conclusion

Key provisions in the Weimar Constitution helped provide the NSDAP, KPD, and other extreme parties with the conduit of proportional representation, which then enabled their entry into the Reichstag, the core of the Weimar system where these anti-democratic forces contested the heart of the democracy. By leaving residual conservative and traditional institutions unexamined and unchecked in its provisions, the Weimar Constitution reinforced groups like the civil service, universities, the military, and the judiciary that were opposed to the installment of a liberal democracy from the early onset of the Republic. In the case of the judiciary, its high concentration of legal practitioners who abided by pro-Kaiser ideals impacted the stability of the Reich, particularly in terms of the disposition of the German Bar and lawyers not only to submit to Nazi coordination, but to facilitate the collapse of the Reich by using legal tools that the Constitution permitted.

Pure proportional representation in Weimar's electoral system and the influence of traditional spheres on Germany's reinvented government were not the only ways certain provisions or the absence of particular clauses in the Constitution accelerated and intensified democratic breakdown. The Constitution's prescription of a President-Reichstag relationship centered on the reorientation of governmental power to the President and away from the Reichstag was fueled by these same sources of conservative discontent. These traditional institutions that complemented the rise of extreme fringe parties were the very sources providing the critical context in which the Constitution's own provisions poisoned Weimar's own system. Hindenburg's invocation

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62   de Wilde, "The State of Emergency in the Weimar Republic," 136.
63   de Wilde, "The State of Emergency in the Weimar Republic," 139.
64   "Reichstag Fire," Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed December 2, 2019, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-reichstag-fire.
65   "Reichstag Fire"

of Article 48 in 1933 lent Hitler the key to complete his takeover, but over Weimar's last few years, Article 48 operated in lethal symphony with the consolidation of extreme parties in Congress and a sociopolitical context of illiberal besiegement.

The conservative monarchy preceding the Republic provided fertile ground for the collapse of Weimar's democracy by informing the new government's electoral system, relationship with traditional institutions, and executive-legislative power balance. Still, Weimar's demise cannot be located using only pre-Republic historical context or the most commonly cited preconditions of Hitler's rise to power, and neither can it be located only with the failings of Weimar's constitution-building. The Weimar Republic likely did not collapse because its governmental framework was inevitably chained to the fate of democratic suicide,[66] or because right-wing forces in 1920s Germany were bound to ascend irrespective of the governmental system in which they operated. Accordingly, Weimar's constitutive features need to be viewed alongside the forces of democratic attrition during the period, while being foregrounded as an element that enhances a historical understanding of how the liberal democratic government collapsed and permitted the emergence of Hitlerian fascism and genocide in its outgrowth.

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66   Chou, "Sowing the Seeds of Its Own Destruction," 28

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# Polemical Battles of Grace and Predestination: From Pelagius Through Jansenism to the French Revolution, AD 396 to 1799

## By Joe North, North Carolina State University

### Preface

From the beginning of the Protestant Reformation through the reign of Louis XIV to the Revolution, French history can be considered nothing less than "turbulent" and with good reason. The Kingdom of France, otherwise known as the first daughter of the Church was pummeled through involvement in many long and costly wars outside and inside her borders, rioting due to religious schism, a widely publicized massacre in Paris, the beginnings of scientific enlightenment, the rise of an absolute monarchy, and the promulgation of new heresies that threatened many core precepts of the Church. One of these new heresies, Jansenism, would begin in an almost innocuous manner and then flourish into one of the most influential and tenacious of the period. It attracted many notable, seemingly orthodox, Catholics during the seventeenth century; among them, physicist and mathematician, Blaise Pascal.

Pascal became one of the foremost apologists for Jansenism and in doing so, wrote what Voltaire would describe as the first work of genius in prose, *The Provincial Letters*. Pascal's letters began as a rebuttal to what he perceived as an unjust censure of a friend, but they would evolve into a satirical battle of wits against his main antagonists, the Jesuit Order. However, there are strong historical parallels to another polemical battle fought over 1200 years earlier that involved one of the original Doctors of the Church, Augustine of Hippo, and an archrival, Pelagius. To appreciate the theological irony of this parallel is to understand that both battles concerned Augustine's theories on Grace and Predestation. Augustine's neo-Platonic and Pauline writings were seized upon by Cornelius Jansen, an obscure Bishop of Ypres in the early seventeenth century. Jansen's magnum opus was a six-volume work concerning Grace referred to as Augustinus, which became the reference work for the Jansenist movement.

The following discussion will cover the history of Jansenism: its Augustinian roots, the principal actors who introduced it into France, Pascal's battles with the Jesuits, and the strong influence Jansenism had on the politics surrounding the French Revolution. Did Jansenism have a tenuous grasp on orthodox Catholicism, or was it a grand example of misinterpretation by an author unable to grasp Saint Augustine's theological genius? The discussion will begin at the beginning, with Augustine of Hippo in AD 397.

## The Philosophy of Augustine Prior to AD 397

Born in the year of our Lord 354 in the city of Thagaste in the Roman province of Numidia, today Algeria, Augustine was a convert to Christianity by AD 386.[1] Prior to his conversation, he was an intellectual dedicated to a neo-Platonic school of philosophy that factored greatly into the next ten years of his theological thought and methodology. Many of his contemporaries, such as Ambrose and Simplician, followed a similar style of "Platonic-optimism"; that is to say, they believed in the natural capacities of humanity to do good. According to this approach, God was educating mankind and the world was improving by the slow and careful revelations through the Hebrew patriarchs, the prophets, and finally Jesus. People, through free will, were spurred on to greater things.[2]

In AD 396, Augustine succeeded Valerius as the Bishop of Hippo and, as was tradition during that time, wrote a religious autobiography of himself entitled, *Confessions.* The work is that of a neo-Platonic philosopher, written in the form of prayer, and was not to be considered a major theological work. Instead, "the *Confessions* are, quite succinctly, the story of Augustine's heart, or of his feelings," seeking contrition for the acts of youth.[3] Among those extremely impressed

with this work was a fellow theologian from Britain; like Augustine in this period, Pelagius advocated the free will of Platonic optimism in salvation. These early philosophical works of Augustine, prior to AD 397, wherein he is confident in the capacity of humans and freedom of will, indicated that he was not convinced of any need of internal or God-given grace, to find salvation. It is to this end that Augustine has been referred to as a "proto-Pelagian."[4] Historian and Augustinian biographer Peter Brown makes no qualms about this reference in his work, "Indeed, Pelagianism as we know it, that consistent body of ideas of momentous consequences, had come into existence; but in the mind of Augustine, not of Pelagius."[5]

### The Move

Augustine admitted that his study of the Epistles of Paul had not reached a fully mature state prior to AD 397. After studying Paul, especially the events in Romans 9: 10-18, Augustine developed a response to a question originally posed by his catechist and old friend mentioned earlier, Simplician. This response was entitled, *Ad Simplicianum,* and marks the philosophical move from neo-Platonic thought to Pauline Orthodoxy; completely changing Augustine's views on grace and free-will.[6] In *Ad Simplicianum,* Augustine makes the

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1   Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), p. 7. Numidia was an ancient Berber Kingdom located in present day Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.
2   Dennis Creswell, *Saint Augustine's Dilemma* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997), p. 61.
3   Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London: University of California Press, 2000), p. 163.
4   Anthony Dupont, "Continuity or Discontinuity in Augustine," *Ars Disputandi,* no. 8, (2008):68.
5   Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London: University of California Press, 2000), p. 346.
6   Dennis Creswell, *Saint Augustine's Dilemma* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997), p. 61. Simplician had succeeded Ambrose as Bishop of Milan. The question he posed to Augustine related to God "choosing" Jacob and "rejecting" Esau as described in Romans.

argument that Paul's purpose in writing this chapter in Romans is to point out that people should not glory in their own works as if they had *earned* grace from God; grace cannot be earned from God as it is or is not, already present from God. However, this grace comes with faith, "and is still an act of the will of the one who believes, in response to admonition form God." To the effect of free will, Augustine's viewpoint is not radically changed, but what did change was the concept that free will and good works alone could gain saving grace; it is these things *plus* assistance from God through grace that gives mankind the ability to maintain the Commandments.[7] On the issue of predetermination however, Augustine makes the following realization from studying Paul: God *has* predetermined who is saved by presumption of God's immutability and foreknowledge of who will use free will in accordance with His Laws. This foreknowledge is the result of one great act of willing that was determined from the foundation of the world.[8] There is an obvious contradiction between Augustine's grasp of predetermination and his insistence on the free will of mankind. In AD 413, Augustine was still trying to reconcile these problems when he received a document from Pelagius and Caelestius; this outlined the Pelagian position on obtaining moral perfection through free will and good works without

the necessity of divine grace. A primary source of theirs was a neo-Platonic religious philosopher, none other than Augustine himself.

### The Pelagian Controversy

The background of Pelagius before the notoriety he gained in facing Augustine over the theology of grace, free will, and predestination is rather sparse. He was from Britain, but it is not clear if he was Scottish in ethnicity as has been speculated; born AD 354 and passed sometime between 420 and 440. Pelagius spent the greater part of his life in Rome and it was there, around the year 405, that he was made aware of the dilemma Augustine faced between his neo-Platonic philosophical upbringing and his Pauline revelations between 397 and 405. However, Pelagius' original question for Augustine concerned the "moral laxity" that was presented in *Confessions*, "Give what you command, and command what you will." If this were a valid expression of Christian faith, Pelagius reasoned, then the necessity of attempting to live a good life was taken away; which was one of the reasons Pelagius had come to Rome in the first place. To combat the moral ineptness of people joining the Catholic Church in name only for political reasons, and with this attempt at reform he had gathered quite a following.[9]

Since the late part of the fourth century, Rome

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7  Dennis Creswell, *Saint Augustine's Dilemma* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997), p. 70. This particular passage will become more relevant when Jansen's errors are discussed.

8  Creswell, *Saint Augustine's Dilemma,* 77-82. God's immutability is a reference to a hold over from Augustine's neo-Platonic background that God does not, or ever, change. This is later hypothesized as a fallacy based off Biblical reference, God can show mutability through Mercy.

9  Dennis Creswell, *Saint Augustine's Dilemma* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997), p. 94. The accusation of "Moral Laxity" would be raised again 1200 years later against the Jesuit Order by Blaise Pascal.

had been slowly dying from invasion, civil war, and its own moral sickness; because of this instability Pelagius and Caelestius, his closest follower, fled to Africa. Over the next four or five years they outlined the full Pelagian position and as referenced earlier, send the document to Augustine. Pelagius' view of morality and free will was a product of his, and Augustine's, neo-Platonic background. Remember that Augustine could not argue this point as he supported the theology of free will; the freedom to choose one's path and be held accountable for those actions, under the presumption of a just universe, that good is rewarded and evil is punished. Both Augustine and Pelagius agreed that there is a necessity to live a good life in order to be saved. However, this where Augustine's dilemma of the inability to reconcile neo-Platonic thought with Pauline understanding of grace and predetermination again plague him.[10] While still working on this reconciliation, around AD 420, Augustine came to the realization that Pelagius, giving mankind free will to choose without God's grace, was too much power. He rejected this and accused Pelagius of turning God's gift of salvation into a "wage due." Later that year, Augustine continued to hammer away at Pelagius, by contending that there was no possibility of a person being able to live a pure and virtuous life by free will alone, without the grace of God, a point that the Pelagian's refused to acknowledge. Augustine's logic

was inescapable however, once he pointed out that if what Pelagius said was correct, that a person could live without sin by free will alone, Christ would have been in error when communicating the Lord's prayer. "Forgive us our sins," would not have been necessary.[11]

### AD 427; *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio, "On Grace and Free Will",* The Reconciliation

In the last years of his life, Augustine continued to battle Pelagianism in its original form as well as semi-Pelagianism, but the problem of grace and free will continued to torment him. That is, until he made the realization that his understanding of free will was not correct; upon redefining the word "freedom," in the contest of this use, he was finally able to reconcile the rift between predetermination and freedom of choice. He changes the definition of freedom from "being autonomous" to "being liberated from," he then applies this to redefine free will; it is no longer a question of free or bound will, but of good or evil will. Both types are still free, but only free to do what they are able to do. If, from the foundations of the earth, a life is predetermined to be good through the immutability of God, the choice for evil can be made but will not be possible. By this redefinition, "Augustine has taken free choice of will as a necessary attribute of being human, as it is understood by neo-Platonic philosophy, and defined it out of existence, replacing it with a will through God's

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10   Creswell, *Saint Augustine's Dilemma,* 94-102.
11   Dennis Creswell, *Saint Augustine's Dilemma* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997), p. 100.

grace and predetermination, is free because it wills without coercion."[12]

## AD 428; *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum, "On Holy Predestination"*

The final point of contention between Pelagianism and Augustine before his death in AD 430, like the issue of free will, also has great relevance to the overall discussion of this paper; concerns the question of the predetermination of who will be saved. The Pelagian's asked why all were not saved since scripture clearly says that God wants all people to be saved. Augustine responded by stating that "all" did not mean all of mankind, but all of those whom God had already predestined to save, "why some are saved and others are not is not the business of humans, but of God. . . the worthy are made worthy by God's gracious action of predestination. . . those who do not hear the Gospel are foreknown to be outside of the elect."[13] The Pelagian response to this was that preaching predestination would create despair among people and they would not be encouraged to keep the commandments or do good works; Augustine countered by stating that the good works and keeping the commandments were all accomplished by the grace of God so how could this lead to despair? To this the Pelagian's finally acquiesce as they admit that good works must be gifts from God since they pray for them to be given.

The final blow to the movement again came from Augustine's inescapable logic in stating that the Pelagian position, in either of its forms, causes people to hope in their own abilities for self-salvation rather than in God. So then, one either preaches predestination and gives all credit to God or preach Pelagianism and take credit for one's own salvation. The latter removes the gratuitous nature of grace, and again, turns salvation into a wage earned.[14] Man does not tempt or barter with God.

### Augustinian Concerns

With the defeat of Pelagianism, Augustine's authority among the early Doctor's of the Church was clearly established. However certain aspects of his doctrines would come under scrutiny and even come to be recognized as errors over the course of the next millennia by other theologians; among them Thomas Aquinas. After Augustine's death in AD 430, his grand unification of the contradictory natures of God's grace and the insistence of free will came under immediate attack. Thought of as "double determinism," his redefinition of freedom and free will to allow for the paradoxical nature of efficacious grace, was not upheld in later ecumenical councils. Further, if those to be saved had been predetermined from the foundations of the earth, there could be no logic for the visitation and crucifixion of Christ.

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12   Creswell, *Saint Augustine's Dilemma,* 118. This redefinition is note worthy as the will of good or evil is still a free choice. Is this the element that Cornelius Jansen misinterprets 1200 years later? Semi-Pelagianism admitted that God's grace was necessary for salvation, but they argued that grace was not present until faith was sought after.
13   Dennis Creswell, *Saint Augustine's Dilemma* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997), p. 119.
14   Creswell, *Saint Augustine's Dilemma,* 121-124.

His neo-Platonic view on the immutability of God was also a cause for concern. Several references to scripture were cited displaying the mutability of God by the show of mercy and a willingness to change his course of action.[15]   The move Augustine made in *Ad Simplicianum*, from the neo-Platonic to the Pauline theological thought which spurred the great dilemma that plagued him during the Pelagian controversy, deeply affected his thought processes almost to the point of obsession.

Augustine's genius of philosophical and theological thought is not in question, and many of these concerns were addressed and corrected as has been noted; however, interpretation of his writings can be tedious and difficult and ultimately, laced with misinterpretation. The next phase of this research paper will focus on the interpretations and conclusions of Augustine's work; drawn by a 17th century apologist of Baianism and Jesuit antagonist, Cornelius Jansen, the Bishop of Ypres.[16] Though Jansen's work would be published posthumously, he could have not foreseen its ultimate effects on the Catholic Church of which he claimed orthodoxy.

### Alumni of the Louvain

The passionate support of theological theory during the time of the Reformation had the effect of creating partnerships and friendships which, by any other measure, would be considered odd to say the very least. Such is the case with Cornelius Jansen and Jean Du Vergier De Hauranne.

Du Vergier, born of Basque nobility in AD 1581 near Bayonne, exhibited a keen intellect and gift for learning early in his youth. He was sent to the Sorbonne in Paris around 1601, to study theology; here he shared a room with an individual who would later become one of the foremost French Jesuits, a student named Petau. Petau's recollections of du Vergier were not necessarily complementary, "he was restless, vain, presumptuous, aggressive, and meticulous in his personal habits."[17] Whatever his habits were, his intellectual talents brought him to the attention of the master of the school and he was recommended for study at Louvain, where he would become the favorite of Justus Lipsius and James Jansson, both notorious Baianists. During this period, 1603 to 1604, he made the acquaintance of the recently admitted Cornelius Jansen.[18]

Born in AD 1585 in a small village near Leerdam, and in contrast to du Vergier's nobility, Jansen came from a poor family and relied on the charity of friends and family to attend Utrecht University in the Netherlands. Jansen found the opportunity to migrate to Louvain through the employment in the household of a

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15   Exodus 32:14 and Numbers 14:12-20; Jonah 3:10; Amos 7:3-9; Jeremiah 26:3.

16   Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p.126. Michael Baius, 1513-1589, the originator of Baianism, an Augustinian Theologian that is regarded as the predecessor of Jansenism. Baiansim was based off a pure form of the Pauline theory of Augustine ignoring his reconciliation of grace and free will; additionally, Baius rejected the new Scholasticism of the Jesuits.

17   Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* 161.

18   Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* 162. Both Lipsius and Jansson were stoic Baianists who largely disregarded the indeterminate findings of the Council of Trent regarding the legitimacy of Michael Baius and his propositions.

Philosophy professor after his early years of work as an apprentice to a carpenter despite his initial university training. In AD 1604 he was financially able to attend Louvain University. No sooner had he begun his studies than three things of major importance occurred: he met Jean Du Vergier, he became intimately acquainted with Baianist theology, and he found himself transferred to Paris for health reasons. Later in the year 1605, he was rejoined by his friend, du Vergier. After completion of their studies, du Vergier retired to Bayonne in 1611, asking Jansen to join him.[19]

Jansen and du Vergier shared residence together for over 12 years and continued their study of Baianism, though it had been determined condemned, albeit controversially, by Pope Gregory XIII in 1579.[20] However, the study of the works of Saint Augustine as it had related to the Baianist ideology intrigued them and they continued to scrutinize Augustine's works with the Epistles of Paul. During this period of near-monastic study Jansen began to conceive the idea of what he felt would be the crowning theological achievement of his lifetime. His friend du Vergier, however, still had not found a path that would satisfy him. However, du Vergier did have that remarkable ability to be noticed by the right people at the right time, and so he came to be granted an abbey by the Bishop of Portiers, Louis-Henri de la Rocheposay. The name of that abbey was Saint-Cyran, and Jean du Vergier de Hauranne would take its name.[21]

### *Augustinus*

While his friend Jean du Vergier, now referred to as Saint-Cyran continued with political and personal intrigue which will be discussed briefly in the next section, Cornelius Jansen returned to the Louvain in 1619 and, after a succession of theological and university honors, was awarded the bishopric of Ypres in 1635. It was during this period, as his health steadily declined, that Jansen finished *Augustinus.*

Nigel Abercrombie states quite emphatically that, "First and foremost, it [*Augustinus*], was an apology for Baius, and a counter-attack upon the recent revival of Scholasticism." As the Jesuits were at the forefront of this scholastic movement, they became the principal and inherent opponents of Jansen and his ideology.[22] Three volumes in length, and each volume divided into multiple books, *Augustinus* is daunting not so much from its theological epiphanies, as from its sheer mass. Yet, for all its pomp and grandeur, the work is based on a snapshot of Pauline theology that Augustine himself obsessed over in his attempts to rec-

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19   Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 160-162.
20   William Doyle, *Jansenism,* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000), p. 9. Although Baius formally recanted in accordance with the Pope's Bull, he had gained celebrity status at the Louvain where he had spent most of his scholarly life, and where both du Vergier and Jansen would later study and become enthralled with his theology.
21   Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* 165.
22   Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 125-126. Scholasticism was not a theology as a methodology for teaching. It employed a method of articulating and defending Church dogma that employed casuistry over scriptural reference; specifically promulgated by the Jesuits. This was scornfully rejected by many of the Church Orthodoxy, among them Antoine Arnauld and Blaise Pascal.

oncile with his neo-Platonic philosophies. Jansen, as well as Baius, seemed to have completely ignored the centuries of thought and study that further explained, and even corrected, the great Doctor of the Church.[23] To Jansen, however, these thoughts and corrections were unnecessary innovations; in fact, they were a corruption of the original writings and authority of Augustine that Jansen considered supreme. This intolerance of change led Jansen down a dangerous path, a path that ultimately led to much of his work being condemned or censured.[24] Further, his insistence on following Pauline doctrine ran the risk of resurrecting heresies that Augustine had fought so hard to stifle. While the work had not yet been published, *Augustinus* was already making Rome nervous as the counter-reformation seemed to be making headway, largely due to the Jesuits. Ironically, just as Pelagius argued against laxity in Rome while supporting free will, Jansen was arguing against the laxity of the Jesuits while supporting predestination. Jansen attended the Louvain but not the Jesuit School, his attitude toward the Jesuits was largely the product of his friend Saint-Cyran. An undeniable by-product of Jansen's work on predestination was its similarity to Calvinism. Jansen vehemently denied this and insisted on his orthodoxy until his death in AD 1638.[25]

Although Jansen did not live to see his work published, Saint-Cyran, along with some new acquaintances, ensured that his friends' work was published in 1640.

### Saint-Cyran and the Port Royal

In the period of time that Saint-Cyran and Jansen had parted ways around AD 1619, until Jansen's death 19 years later, Saint-Cyran had been deeply involved in his calling of both enthralling, and infuriating people. Those enthralled will be discussed momentarily, but one of particular note that was infuriated was the Bishop of Lucon, Armand Jean du Plessis, also known as the Duke of Richelieu.[26] As were most who met Saint-Cyran for the first time, he was most impressed and had offered to help advance his career between 1625 to 1630. However, Saint-Cyran's personality flaws, eventually alienated Richelieu to the point where he severed ties and, as Cardinal Richelieu, eventually had the enigmatic priest arrested in May of 1638 in the city of Vincennes. He would remain imprisoned until Richelieu's death in 1642.[27]

During this period, Saint Cyran made many excellent acquaintances that were enchanted with the priest and either migrated to, or were already part of, the religious court at Port-Royal. Among these were

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23  William Doyle, *Jansenism,* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000)

24  Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* 155.

25  Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 151. The insistence on the connection between Jansenism and Calvinism was fostered by the Jesuits and would bring about the admonishment of the pope, and the continued insistence that *Augustinus* contained the heretical five propositions of Baius, this will come to bear later in the paper. The political environment was also tenuous due to the unstable truce of the Edict of Nantes just a few decades ago and it was feared violence would resurface due to this "crypto-Calvinism."

26  Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* 165.

27  Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 189.

Robert Arnauld d'Andilly, a rising star of the French Court and his father, Antoine Arnauld the elder. Arnauld and Saint-Cyran shared the academics' hatred of the Jesuits and their universities, which naturally included their casuist works and laxity.[28] Antoine Arnauld had two other surviving children; Jacqueline-Marie Arnauld who became the Abbess of Port-Royal, and Antoine Arnauld the younger.[29] This constitutes the major actors of Port-Royal involved in this 17th century drama with one more notable figure, seemingly destined to be a part of these initial introductions; Etienne Pascal, father of Blaise Pascal.

### The Arnauld's and Antoine "le grand"

*Augustinus* definitely had a Calvinist flavor in spite of Jansen's and Saint-Cyran's denial, and everyone else supporting the movement who adamantly denied it. The loose connection made between Jansenism and Calvinism was appalling to them as they viewed themselves as the ultra-orthodox Catholics. They held the sacraments in the highest regard, whereas the Calvinists held them in the highest disdain. Yet, the connection made would stick with the movement, fostering the heretical stigma. The community at Port-Royal consisted of Cistercian nuns whose Abbess was none other than Jacqueline-Marie Arnauld; henceforth referred to as Marie-Angelique. She was 11 years old when she

assumed this post in AD 1602.[30]

The background of the Arnauld family is indicative of why a religious movement that brushes closely with Calvinism would be appealing. The Arnaulds were a prestigious family who had been Calvinists until the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre in AD 1572, after which they recanted and returned to the Catholic faith. Jansen's work could not have been better received in Port-Royal. After Richelieu had Saint-Cyran arrested, he instructed Isaac Habert to deliver a series of sermons on Advent of AD 1642 and Lent of AD 1643, condemning *Augustinus* to crowds who were largely ignorant of the work. It is possible that if Richelieu had not done so, Jansenism may not have ever become the problem or developed the notoriety that it did.[31] However, at that moment French public opinion tentatively agreed with Habert and favored orthodoxy. This would change with the appearance of the *Provinciales.*

Richelieu died in November of AD 1642 and Saint-Cyran was released in February of AD 1643 but died that October. Antoine Arnauld the younger assumed the leadership of the movement.[32]

Derisively referred to as "le grand Arnauld," because of his diminutive stature, Antoine Arnauld the younger made the decision to join the priesthood in AD 1639 while also pursuing his doctorate at the Sorbonne.

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28   Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* 168. Antoine Arnauld was viewed as a brilliant lawyer who had brought legal suit against the Jesuits on behalf of the University of Paris in 1594.
29   Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* 168.
30   Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 168.
31   Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* 199. Habert was hardly a Jesuit, and no friend of Richelieu's, he had actually argued for Antoine Arnauld's accession to doctorate in 1640; the Jesuit's applauded Habert's attacks on Jansenism.
32   Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* 199.

Saint-Cyran's influence on Arnauld was evident in that his doctoral dissertation was denied by his professors as being too Augustinian in theology. This delayed his admittance to the faculty until AD 1641.[33] From the time that Saint-Cyran was arrested he had been corresponding with Arnauld, guiding him and reminding him that it was his duty to support the doctrine of Jansen and efficacious grace, "which is not just that of the bishop of Ypres or of Saint Augustine but of the Church as a whole."[34] This support came in the form of two *apologies* published in AD 1644 and 1645, written in response to the attack on Jansen by Isaac Habert and the Jesuits. Habert viewed Jansen's *Augustinus* as heretical, and coined the term "Jansenism."[35] The Jesuits, because of their university teachings emphasizing free will, were natural antagonists of the Jansenists and published a series of casuist writings on the subject over several decades. Arnauld's *apologies* were centered on underscoring the difference between Jansenism and Calvinism and went on to accuse the Jesuits of a type of penitential ethic that was reminiscent of Pelagianism. Arnauld continued his polemical attack against the Jesuits by denouncing their use of casuistry and the Jesuits responded by branding him a crypto-Calvinist dedicated to the subversion of the entire Church. These letters and their responses were all made in public. By

the mid-1640's, Arnauld and his circle were now being openly referred to as the "Jansenist Party", with Port-Royal as their spiritual headquarters. Intellectuals and those in the leisure class found Arnauld's *apologies* passionate and compelling and admired the heroic determination with which he took on the established Jesuits. Arnauld's works became more widely read than *Augustinus*.[36]

None of this occurred in a political vacuum; had not both Richelieu and Louis XIII died within a year of each other, these controversies most likely would have been quelled. What allowed them to continue was the weak and distracted regency government of the Queen Mother, Anne of Austria. By AD 1648, the crown was nearing bankruptcy and most of the nobles of the robe and sword were in open revolt. This led to five years of upheaval and civil war known as the Fronde. The Jansenists kept themselves separate from this revolt and may have avoided notice altogether had not Arnauld's brother, d'Andilly, so closely aligned himself with Archbishop of Paris, Gondi. D'Andilly was the Jansenist's chief spokesman in courtly circles, so the open association with Gondi would prove politically consequential when Gondi's nephew became the head of the Parisian Fronde. Cardinal Mazarin was acutely aware of all of this and would bring about new rhe-

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33  Alexander Sedgwick, *The Travails of Conscience; The Arnauld Family and the Ancien Regime,* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 125.
34  Sedgwick, *The Travails of Conscience,* 130.
35  Sedgwick, *The Travails of Conscience,* 131.
36  Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 214.

torical attacks on Port-Royal, Jansenism, and Arnauld personally.[37]

Arnauld, being a Doctor of Theology at the Sorbonne, brought duress from Mazarin to that institution as well. This was deservedly so as several students' bachelor's theses contained references to five propositions, that were allegedly contained in Jansen's original *Augustinus*. The inclusion of these propositions in *Augustinus* was constantly in dispute during this period and continued until Pope Innocent X wrote *Cum Occasione* in AD 1653, declaring the five propositions heretical. In response to this, Arnauld wrote two scathing letters criticizing the pope and refuting the existence of the propositions in Jansen's work.[38] Coupled with the pressure from Mazarin, this led to the Sorbonne censuring and expelling Arnauld in February of 1656, despite his disavowal of any support for the five propositions. However, Arnauld continued to claim that the propositions did not occur, verbatim or otherwise, anywhere in Jansen's work.[39] Arnauld claimed this in the face of *Cum Occasione*, which blatantly attributed the five propositions to Jansen. The religious at Port-Royal held that the propositions were a fabrication of the Jesuits.[40]

This act of censure, purely theological by any standard but pressed by Arnauld's friends as purely po-litical, was the first actual persecution of the Jansenist movement and Pope Alexander VII suggested that Port-Royal be closed. Up until this point, all attacks had been polemical or doctrinal in nature. This was the situation when Blaise Pascal offered to come to the defense of Arnauld at the suggestion of Pierre Nicole, Arnauld's dearest friend and advisor on the intellectual side of ecclesiastic methodology.[41]

**Pascal and the Provincial Letters**

Born in 1623 at Clermont in Auvergne, Blaise Pascal became one of the towering intellects of the seventeenth century. A renowned physicist and mathematician, his work with fluidity and pressure in a confined system became known as Pascal's Law. His sister, Marie-Angelique, had already assumed the duties of Abbess at the Port-Royal convent when he had his first conversional moment in 1654. A brush with death in which his carriage had narrowly escaped being plunged into the Seine moved him to join his sister and pursue a more monastic life. He did not completely abandon his scientific endeavors until a mystical experience, referred to as his second conversion, would push him into becoming one of the foremost apologists for the Jansenist movement.[42]

When Pierre Nicole came before Pascal to re-

37   William Doyle, *Jansenism,* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000), p. 25. Anne of Austria was a Spanish princess of the House of Habsburg and wife of Louis XIII, she reigned as regent during the minority of Louis XIV from 1643 to 1651; her tenure was not well received by the nobles and fueled the flames of the Fronde uprising. Cardinal Mazarin succeeded Richelieu to the head of the Church in France after his death in 1642.
38   Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 218.
39   William Doyle, *Jansenism,* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000), p. 26.
40   Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 239.
41   Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* 251.
42   Saxe Commins, "Introduction," *The Provincial Letters,* trans. Thomas M'Crie (New York: Random House, 1941), p. x-xvi.

quest his assistance in taking Arnauld's case to the court of public opinion, Nicole supplied him with various selections from the works of Jesuit Casuists, especially the 1643 work, *The Moral Theology of the Jesuits.* However, only passages were supplied to Pascal without the full frame of reference to many of these works. Nigel Abercrombie sums up this lack of information as, "all knowledge of the principles of casuistry, or of moral theology, which alone could have qualified him to judge the value of these propositions, was sedulously withheld from him."[43] Unknown to him, Pascal was writing with half-truths.

Pascal did not disguise his disgust for what he felt was a condemnation by a majority more concerned with power than dealing with the theological issues at stake. He offered to write in the defense Arnauld, and in doing so, produced something that was utterly new in the annals of religious controversy, whereby "In place of the usual fury and technical quibbling, he adopted a tone of easy-going candor and colloquial simplicity."[44] Pascal's *Provincial Letters* were all written under the pen name of Louis de Montalte, presumably addressed to a "provincial friend" in the country and published within the Port-Royal Abbey.

Satirical in nature and written in the form of interviews with an imaginary Jesuit antagonist, the first three letters directly addressed the issue of Arnauld's censuring by the Sorbonne. He asserted that, "It is not the sentiments of M. Arnauld that are heretical; it is only his person . . . He is not a heretic for anything he has said or written, but simply because he is M. Arnauld."[45] Nicole had encouraged Pascal to write and further, to change the tone of the censure from theological to political. By the time the tenth letter was written, French public opinion had completely exonerated Arnauld, and the enthusiasm for the letters remained high. However, it was this publicity, and Pascal's second letter, that drew the attention of the Jansenist's archrivals, the Jesuits. The first letter concerned "proximate power," and the second letter addressed the Jesuit's use of the term "sufficient grace." This was in direct contradiction to what one of their most esteemed casuists, Father Luis de Molina, had addressed in his 16th century works on Augustine's dilemma between neo-Platonic and Pauline theology. This they could not ignore. As Pascal continued his writing campaign with 15 more letters, the Jesuits lobbied the court of Louis XIV and Rome for the closure of Port-Royal. To this end, soon after these first two letters were released, in January and February of AD 1656 respectively, persecutions increased against Port-Royal.

As the Jesuits retaliated, they were able to secure the expulsion of two prominent figures from Port-Royal; Dr. Sainte-Beuve and Arnauld's brother, d'Andilly. These removals took place on 26 February and 15 March 1656 respectively, soon after Pascal's fourth let-

43   Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 252.

44   David Simpson, "Blaise Pascal," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* accessed April 10, 2019, https://www.iep.utm.edu/pascal-b/.

45   Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* trans. Thomas M'Crie (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 357.

ter was published. Pascal was incensed at these events, and a week later he published the fifth letter dealing specifically with the "design of the Jesuits in establishing a new system of morals" and attacking their use of casuistry against his colleagues.[46] This system of morals of the Jesuits was what Pascal referred to as far too relaxed in nature and was inviting the poor and unsound reasoning they used in their arguments, and also had the flavor of Pelagianism. The Jesuits were the absolute personification of the Counter-Reformation. Attempting reforms in many aspects of the faith that the ultra-orthodox, such as Pascal and the Jansenists, deemed appalling in their relaxed nature, "It is on the basis of this doctrine that the Jesuits find a means to excuse almost every sin and to reassure even the most tepid Christians of their salvation."[47] The Jesuits continued to harass Port-Royal in anger over the latest from M. Montalte, and after the evacuations of Saint-Beuve and d'Andilly, a civil deputy was dispatched on 30 March to ensure that the buildings of the bastion of Jansenism were empty and to also search for a clandestine printing press. In Paris, police began raiding various printing shops, trying to discover who was printing the *Provincial Letters*, but to no avail.[48]

The Jesuits found it difficult to continue this campaign as news reached them of the miracle of the Holy Thorn. This was Port-Royal's most prized relic, a thorn from Christ's crown. Pascal's niece, Marguerite Perier, was suffering from an eye affliction that doctors had given up on trying to heal. The girl knelt and prayed before the reliquary containing the thorn and was healed completely on 24 March. News of the miracle spread throughout Paris and the public saw it as a sign from God, favoring Port-Royal. This caught the attention and favor of Louis XIV as well as the court, and on 23 April, d'Andilly was allowed to return.[49] This news reinvigorated Pascal and on 25 April 1656, he published the seventh letter; dealing with one of the most notorious and shocking subjects yet, the Jesuits alleged casuistry concerning murder - more specifically, tyrannicide.

### Letter VII

When reading the *Provincial Letters,* it is easy to forget that the conversations that Pascal was having with the Jesuits under the pen name M. Montalte are all fictional. However, Pascal believed the doctrines of the Jesuits that he attacked were incorrect and incomplete, based upon his incomplete knowledge.

Take, for instance, the idea benignly referred to as "direction of intention." This casuistic principle of the Jesuit Father Molina is described as when the *intent* away from the evil consequence of an act to the good that will come from it. Pascal's hypothetical Jesuit would absolve the vice if the purpose was pure,

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46  Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* 372.
47  Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* trans. Thomas M'Crie (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 374.
48  Francis Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast; The Life and Work of Blaise Pascal,* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul Publishers, 1986), p. 118.
49  William Doyle, *Jansenism,* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000), p. 29.

a purification of intention. In Pascal's letter, this was the logic the Jesuits invoked to legitimize tyrannicide. M. Montalte did not hide his astonishment at this as it indicated the horrors to which Jesuit doctrines seem to lead.[50] An example of this doctrine and its consequence was the practice of dueling, which was permitted. Pascal's Jesuit asked, "for what moral evil is there in one stepping into a field, taking a stroll in expectation of meeting a person, and defending oneself in the event of being attacked?"[51] The intention being directed away from fighting the duel to simply defending oneself. In this non-contextual manner, the Jesuits could justify a great diversity of killing, and they stressed the importance of this principle for policies and interest of the State or specifically, tyrannicide.[52] So, Pascal hit upon the primary motivation of this policy in his retort to the priest, "What, Father, we have here then is only a defense of politics and not of religion?" Pascal knew that the king professed extreme piety and sought to do away with the practice of dueling, however the Jesuits seemed to be doing everything possible to make dueling tolerable and sanctionable in the Church.[53] Louis XIII outlawed dueling in France in 1626, yet the practice continued throughout the country as well as most of Europe. As Louis XIV would have used capital punishment to deal with anyone involved in the practice,

the Jesuits, in their zeal to counter-reform, were willing to push a doctrine that had no basis in the Gospels, the Fathers of the Church, or in any ecumenical council. The Jesuits were in direct contradiction to the king, presumably, in a continuous effort to reinvigorate the Church by devaluing sin.

Pascal decided to push the issue further; "just to see how far this damnable doctrine would go, I said, 'But Father, may not one be allowed to kill for something still less? Might not a person so direct his intention as lawfully to kill another for telling a lie, for example?'" The theoretical Jesuit replied, "He may."[54] M. Montalte's exasperation increased as the theoretical Priest continued to cite other Jesuits and their work regarding the doctrine, such as Fathers Molina and Escobar, but not scripture as noted earlier. However, since Nicole only supplied passages out of context and Pascal admitted that he had not read most of the works that the Jesuits cited, his exasperation might have been lessened had he more intimate knowledge of Molina.[55] The conversation takes a drastic turn as the subject of the Jesuits killing Jansenists renders Pascal's interviewer nearly speechless; he demands to know by what divine authority they can claim this, and that by this policy all Jansenists are as good as dead. The Jesuit uses another casuist reference, and in a very convoluted way,

50   Robert Nelson, *Pascal; Adversary and Advocate,* (London: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 187.
51   Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* trans. Thomas M'Crie (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 407.
52   Francis Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast; The Life and Work of Blaise Pascal,* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul Publishers, 1986), p. 120.
53   Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* trans. Thomas M'Crie (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 408.
54   Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* 411-412.
55   Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 252-253.

explains that the Jesuits did not feel threatened by the Jansenists as it was not in their power to injure the Society's reputation, as they could not "obscure the glory of the society."[56] Pascal brings up concerns over certain circumstances where they might, to which he confesses to the priest that he is quite staggered by this entire concept. To this, the Jesuit cries, "How so? Are you a Jansenist?" The question is evaded but then the interview concludes with the Priest dismissing Montalte.[57]

On 12 May, after this letter was published, the syndic of the priests in Paris, Father Rousse, demanded one of two things of the Assembly of the Gallican Clergy: either condemn the *Letters* or act against the Jesuits if what was described was true. The Jesuits attempted to persuade the Assembly to condemn the letters and at the same time, persuade the publishers and printers of Paris not to publish any more of the letters. This backfired on the Jesuits for it seemed that everyone, including magistrates, were enjoying seeing the Order exposed in this light. The Clergy of Rouen, at that time the second largest city in France, came out openly against the Society of Jesus as did Cardinal Barberini of Rome. The Jesuits were Ultramontanistic by their very designand the Church of France, more specifically, Louis XIV felt that ecclesiastical authority should be shared between the monarchy and the pope. The Jesuits could not have hoped for any real support from the clergy of France.[58]

Pascal had briefly entertained ending the letter campaign but when word reached him of this support, he zealously continued.

## Letters XIII and XIV

After the tenth letter, Pascal abandoned writing to his "provincial friend in the country" and started directing the letters to the Jesuits themselves; the interview style was abandoned, and the style of the pure polemic emerged. Gone was the wry wit, sarcasm, and irony of the first group; replacing it was a tone of complete moral outrage at the Order's policies. Letters thirteen and fourteen revisit the Jesuit's doctrines on dueling and murder, but the harbinger of the thirteenth letter is the Jesuit's insistence that M. Montalte had misquoted them and the casuist works that Pascal had cited in the interviews. Remember, Pascal admitted that he had not completely read all the texts that he used in his letters, "I have been asked if I have read all the books I have cited, my answer is no."[59] The Jesuits used this in their defense as it was obvious to them that certain passage's he had quoted were incomplete and lacking key phrases. Further bolstering the Jesuits and dealing a blow to the Jansenists was the fact that Arnauld's letters (which led to his censuring at the Sorbonne) had now been condemned in Rome and they were placed on the list of forbidden books. Incensed by these events, "a shrill and humorless Pascal," would renew the attack

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56   Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* trans. Thomas M'Crie (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 416.
57   Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* 417.
58   Francis Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast; The Life and Work of Blaise Pascal,* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul Publishers, 1986), p. 121.
59   Malcom Hay, *The Prejudices of Pascal,* (London: Aberdeen University Press, 1962), p. 40.

on the Jesuits.[60]

Even as the Jesuits publicly chastised the author of the letters for misrepresentation and slander, Pascal was reasserting the casuist doctrine for murder in Letter 13. He latches on to an idea associated with Fathers Escobar and Lamy regarding permission to kill for a buffet or slander; "What Fathers! Will you tell us that, looking simply to the law of God, which says, 'Thou shalt not kill,' we have a right to kill for slanders?"[61] Pascal alludes to several citations of Escobar and Lamy, in a sanctimonious and vicious assault on the Jesuits which concludes with a declaration that the casuists are useless to the Church as they are contradictory and serve to betray the simplicity of the Spirit of God.

Soon after, the Jesuits offered their response in a pamphlet containing Escobar's exact words as taken from his *Theologia Moralis* or, *Manual of Cases of Conscience*: "The circumstances when an act is directed to a just end can have no effect to modify the act, but leave it simply and from any point of view a thing of evil. An evil action is incapable of acquiring moral goodness."[62] The Order maintained that no Jesuit casuist, moralist, author, or preacher had ever asserted or suggested that an act intrinsically evil can be changed into a good act by any good effect the doer might intend. Pascal clearly omitted this or may simply have not been aware of

it. The Jesuits not only vigorously publicized this, but used it as an attack on the intellectual integrity of the *Provincial Letters'* author. Pascal's intellectual pride now damaged, he countered with the fourteenth letter, published on October 23, 1656, it has been described as "the most violent of the *Provincial Letters*," in which Pascal makes an uncharacteristic direct address to the author of the Jesuits' pamphlet.[63]

While the thirteenth letter was being circulated, in a simultaneous event, the result of Arnauld's letters being condemned earlier in September by Rome, was causing turmoil for members of all the clergy in France. All priests and religious were required to sign the "Formulary" as acquiescence to Pope Innocent X and his condemnation of the five propositions of Jansen, with particular attention given to Port-Royal. Ironically, Arnauld was in favor of signing the Formulary if it could be reworded to state that the five propositions did not occur in Jansen's work as he wrote earlier. Most of the Jansenists at Port-Royal refused to sign it, including Pascal. Perhaps this is what fueled his "most violent" letter.

Pascal evokes staunch orthodoxy to continue the attack on the Jesuit doctrines concerning murder and admonishes the Jesuits; "It appears then, Fathers, that the right of taking away the life of a man is the sole

60   Francis Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast; The Life and Work of Blaise Pascal,* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul Publishers, 1986), p. 124.

61   Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* trans. Thomas M'Crie (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 509.

62   Malcom Hay, *The Prejudices of Pascal,* (London: Aberdeen University Press, 1962), p. 44. Hay cites Father Escobar's work; *Theologia Moralis,* 1652, Vol. I, lib.iii, section I, p. 81.

63   Francis Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast; The Life and Work of Blaise Pascal,* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul Publishers, 1986), p. 124.

prerogative of God."[64] . Pascal's disdain and exposed sarcasm, no longer hidden in passive-aggressive interview style, is fully evident in the following passage: "Such extraordinary assurance! The law of Moses punishes those who kill a thief when he does not threaten our lives, and the law of the Gospel, according to you, will absolve them! What Fathers! Has Jesus Christ come to destroy the law, and not fulfil it?"[65]

Whether by design or embarrassment, Pascal noticeably defers from using Escobar as focus for citation against the Jesuits, and only moderately uses the other casuists for his assault when compared to the previous letter. The indignation of Pascal is overreaching in letter fourteen which would seem to explain the almost irrational tirade; "It was to be wished that these horrible maxims had never found their way out of Hell." However, he does come back to an earlier point made in the seventh letter, regarding the Jesuit's contradiction of the will of the king and the courts. The Jesuit's doctrines, in Pascal's view, conflicted with Louis XIV's assigning criminals into the hands of judges to dispense justice. Pascal contended the Jesuits would assign the offended party as the judge, jury, and executioner. This would seem to indicate treason against the will of the king by the Jesuits. Perhaps Pascal was expecting the magistrates to take more of an interest in the Society of Jesus. Possibly even bring civil charges against them for these doctrines and their seemingly disloyal attitudes towards the king's will upon the circulation of the fourteenth letter.[66]

## The Final Letters

Jesuit response to letter 14 was overshadowed by the fact that the Clergy of Paris and Rouen seemed to be moving against them. The Grand Vicar of Paris voiced his misgivings about the Order while the Assembly of the Clergy asked the Chancelier de Seguier to forbid any further publishing of any of the Jesuit's doctrines, specifically that of Escobar in French. The Jesuits increased their direct assault against Port-Royal with a series of libels and calumnies. The next two *Provincial Letters* (fifteen and sixteen), dealt specifically with Pascal's response to these, but also gave more of an insight into the background of M. Montalte that had been left out of previous letters. The author confessed he was not a man of Port-Royal but was compelled to intervene on their behalf due to the Jesuit's vilification of them. His anger intensified as he defended the sisters of the Port-Royal convent; remember, Pascal's own sister was a religious of the Daughters of the Blessed Sacrament.

The last of these two letters ends with an odd apology from Pascal to the Jesuit who was reported to be the author of the responses to his earlier letters. He says quite candidly, "I am sorry for what I said. I retract it; and I only wish that you may profit by my example."[67] Perhaps this was setting the tone for the

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64   Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* trans. Thomas M'Crie (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 516.

65   Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* 519.

66   Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* 524-528.

67   Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* trans. Thomas M'Crie (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 572.

conciliatory nature of the final two letters, which were addressed to the Reverend Father Annat of the Jesuit Order.

The olive branch that M. Montalte offered Father Annat was not well received. Father Annat was, after all, the author of most of the replies to Pascal; many of those responses from Pascal were scathing to say the least. Annat replied that the *Provincial Letters* author was a heretic and that Port-Royal was heretical. Father Annat may have felt somewhat vindicated from the earlier distrust voiced by the Grand Vicar of Paris as the Jansenist cause seemed to be on the verge of doom. On 12 December, the High Council of the King forbade writing against the Jesuits and ruled it illegal to publish without permission and the author's name. The police were keeping printers under surveillance which made any response from Pascal extremely difficult. Nevertheless, on 23 January 1657, letter seventeen appeared.[68]

Pascal's ultra-orthodox nature and perhaps the fact that he addressed these letters directly to the head of the Jesuit Order demanded a certain reverence and composure on his part. Pascal invoked logic and refuted the Father's claim against him of heresy by asking what proof he could possibly have against a phantom author; "When did I fail at my presence in Mass, what act of union with heretics, or of schism with the Church

can you lay at my charge?"[69] Pascal asserted that there was no proof of heresy and dismissed the charge. The rest of letter seventeen was devoted to the proof of the orthodoxy of Augustinianism and that the Pope was erroneous in thinking that the five propositions were included in Jansen's work *Augustinus*.

Letter eighteen takes on even more of a tone of contrition than seventeen; Pascal seemed to realize that the Jansenist battle was lost, yet he continued to argue that Jansenism is not Calvinism, and that the Pope is indeed fallible. Pascal argued there are three avenues to truth: sense, reason, and faith; none of these involved the Jesuit's casuistry.[70]

This last complete letter, dated 24 March AD 1657, came on the heels of more pressure against Port-Royal. In spite of the immense popular support for M. Montalte and his rapier wit from the enlightened of France, Pope Alexander VII issued a bull condemning the convent and remanded it to Louis XIV. In March the Assembly of the Clergy devised a stricter Formulary which the religious were compelled to sign under pain of excommunication and the archbishop of Rouen put an end to the quarrel between the clergy and the Jesuits.[71] Pascal started a nineteenth letter but never finished it, perhaps thinking better of it after considering the effects of the Formulary and the acceptance of the Pope's bull by Louis. The Jesuits, however, took an ill-advised

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68   Francis Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast; The Life and Work of Blaise Pascal,* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul Publishers, 1986), p. 127.

69   Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters,* trans. Thomas M'Crie (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 574.

70   Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast,* 128.

71   Francis Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast; The Life and Work of Blaise Pascal,* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul Publishers, 1986), p. 128.

turn to not only respond to Letter eighteen, but to also attempt to put to rest publicly the accusations made against them by M. Montalte.

Father Picot of the Jesuit Society published a book with the rather lengthy title: *Apology for the Casuists against the Calumnies of the Jansenists: in which the Reader will find the Truth of Christian Morality so nicely explicated and proved with so much solidity that he will readily see that the Maxims of the Jansenists have only the Appearance of Truth; and that they lead to all sorts of sin, and to great laxities that they blame with so much Severity. By a Theologian and professor of Canon Law.* Ill-advised indeed as the book was condemned by the Clergy of Paris, Rouen, and finally by Rome itself.[72] In the purest sense of irony, the Clergy of Paris turned to Port-Royal and Pascal to aid them in writing a condemnation against Father Picot's book. It was a short work entitled; *Address to the Parish Priests of Paris, against a book entitled, "Apology for the Casuits . . ." and against those who composed, printed, and spread it.* Pascal used the same thesis against the Jesuits he used in the *Provincial Letters*, that morality and truth are the true causes of faith, not the casuists who corrupt it. The Jesuits replied against the book; the Clergy, using Pascal as their proxy, responded back. Volley after volley of pamphlets and retorts ensued for several months, until at last, even Pascal had had

enough. With the publishing of his final pamphlet in July of 1658, and after a passion that consumed nearly two years of his life, Pascal retired from the front lines of the polemical battle.[73]

## Aftermath

Pascal took great delight in knowing that his identity was never known while the letters were circulating. Even after the Port-Royalists had the letters published together in one volume they continued to use his pen name and many still thought the letters were written by Arnauld. It wasn't until AD 1659 that the Jesuits, who had begun to suspect Pascal, discovered the truth by coercing Pascal's brother-in-law out of the information.[74] Pascal openly admitted he never read all the casuist books he cited in his polemics, although he still contended that he never cited anything until he first read it in the book. Remember, Pierre Nicole was instrumental to Pascal in supplying the verses in the Jesuit's books to exploit for his arguments, and it is uncontested that they collaborated on the first three letters.[75]

In his book, *God Owes Us Nothing*, Leszek Kolakowski makes the following observation:

> Both the Jesuits and the Jansenists contributed to the enfeeblement of Christian values, the former by their leniency, the latter by the intransigence; and both contributed to keeping those values alive,

72   Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast,* 129.
73   Francis Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast; The Life and Work of Blaise Pascal,* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul Publishers, 1986), p. 130.
74   Coleman, *Neither Angel nor Beast,* 132.
75   Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 251.

the former by making Christianity so easy, the latter by making it so difficult . . . The former prevented many people from leaving the Church, the latter reinjected into the Church the memory of its origins.[76]

The Jesuits, naturally, were the targets of many rhetorical attacks, but also targeted because of their power. Financing their missionary work throughout Europe and in the colonies required them to be involved in many different aspects of business which raised suspicions of the order in the eyes of not only the Jansenists, but the king as well, primarily fueled over their allegiance to the Pope. They would make many powerful enemies, among them Louis XV. The Jesuit Royal Confessor refused to absolve the king's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, of adultery. The next century would see the order expelled from Portugal, Spain, and their new world colonies In 1761, the Parlement of Paris investigated all aspects of the order and declared it a subversive organization. With mounting pressure from most of the Catholic monarchies of Europe, Pope Clement XIV disbanded the order in 1773. Gone was the greatest force in Catholic missionary and educational work.[77]

Jansenism would fare no better. With the Formulary being bitterly enforced after the AD 1660 As-

sembly of the Clergy of France, more and more of the religious were being expelled from Port-Royal. Louis XIV apparently felt the time had come and ordered an episcopal deputation to destroy Jansenism. On 23 April 1661, royal officers went to Port-Royal and removed all the novices and boarders. The spiritual director was dismissed and forced into hiding. These events may have played a role in the untimely death of Marie-Angelique, Arnauld's sister, in August of 1661. She at least was spared the acceptance and signing of the Formulary. Arnauld himself signed the Formulary eventually and directed the remaining nuns to do so as well. Though they specifically maintained that the five propositions were not in Jansen's work, in AD 1669 a "Peace of the Church" could be formally recognized with their final signatures. This ended the classic or "heroic" phase of Jansenism. Arnauld was never reinstated at the Sorbonne.[78]

The Jansenist minority in the Catholic Church would remain belligerent towards papal authority to AD 1693 when Louis XIV would acquiesce to Pope Innocent XI's request that Gallican liberties of the French Clergy, which directly affected the Jansenists, be disavowed. Toward the end of his reign in AD 1713, Louis XIV would deal Jansenism another blow when he solicited and obtained a papal bull entitled *Unigenitus* (*Only Begotten*), which would further censure the Gal-

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76   Leszek Kolakowski, *God Owes Us Nothing; A Brief Remark on Pascal's Religion,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 64.
77   Harold Crocker, *Triumph; The Power and Glory of the Catholic Church,* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 337.
78   William Doyle, *Jansenism,* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000), p. 32-33.

lican Clergy and condemn Jansenist doctrines.[79] This papal condemnation, along with Louis' determination to be rid of Jansenism, resulted in the destruction of Port-Royal. King Louis XIV's political reasons for striving to eliminate Jansenism could certainly be tied to the movement's continued polemical comparison to Calvinism by the Jesuits. In an ongoing effort to maintain a peaceful coexistence between the Protestant and Catholic Churches, Jansenism strained that relationship by their attitude toward the sacraments and serving as an unintentional reminder of the Calvinist's disdain for them. Louis may very well have feared a resurgence of religious violence if the movement continued. Between AD 1717 and 1720 the Jansenists attempted an appeal of the acceptance of *Unigenitus* and managed some support in the Parlement of Paris, primarily because Jansenists had managed to infiltrate the Parlement while the Gallican Clergy still had authority.[80] However, renewed persecution of the Jansenists pushed these few out of Parlement, beginning the final demise of the movement. When the Jesuit Order was dissolved in AD 1773, it could be argued that the Jansenists regarded this as vindication. However, by the Pope disbanding their most public adversary, their own cause faded into obscurity and the "court of public opinion" summarily dismissed the Jansenists while being successfully mobilized by Voltaire.[81] Post-revolutionary France would see Jansenism's complete disappearance in the wake of the election of Pope Pius VII in 1799.[82]

## Epilogue: "Beyond the Infinite"

Saint Augustine struggled with his self-inflicted dilemma over free will and predetermination for over a decade. The length of this struggle, and the added frustration of dealing with Pelagius, provide evidence of the importance of this matter to him. So important that he actually re-defined the word "freedom" to reconcile neo-Platonic thought and Pauline theology. How then, was none of this evident to Cornelius Jansen and Saint-Cyran?

If the following presumptions may be logically inferred from this research paper: that Nigel Abercrombie is accurate in his statements regarding the length of time Jansen and Saint-Cyran studied Augustine's works in their entirety (over five years); that statements regarding Jansen's lingual abilities and talents were accurate (fluent in Latin and Greek); that both Jansen and Saint-Cyran were bitterly opposed to the pope's condemnation of Baianism; and that the Latin of Augustine is not Latin from another planet; then it can be concluded that Jansen made no misinterpretation of Augustine's works as was originally theorized. Rather, Jansen made an *intentional misrepresentation* in order to further a personal agenda; essentially, theological fraud in order to produce an apology of Baianism. Saint-Cyran was not interested in the accuracy of Jansen's work as much as he was in furthering his political and religious

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79   Dale Van Kley, *From Deficit to Deluge; The Origins of the French Revolution,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) p. 107.
80   Kley, *From Deficit to Deluge,* 125.
81   Dale Van Kley, *From Deficit to Deluge; The Origins of the French Revolution,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) p. 132.
82   William Doyle, *Jansenism,* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000), p. 86.

agenda. *Augustinus* became a battle flag with which to rally supporters and the Arnauld's were more than eager to claim the legitimacy of the work due to their Calvinist background, all the while claiming their orthodoxy. Even the entry of Blaise Pascal into this drama was engineered with fraudulent intrigue; Pierre Nicole *purposefully* withheld the full context of the Jesuits' Casuistic works from Pascal, which he did admit.

The Catholic Church has withstood many attacks and tests of faith since its inception 2,000 years ago, some violent and aggressive, others innocuous and all the more insidious. Jansenism began in the latter manner. The work of a bishop obsessed with a particular version of Saint Augustine, published posthumously and promoted by an opportunist. However, of this cast of characters, Pascal must be granted leniency. He seemed to fervently believe he was using his intellect and passion for the truth in a manner not to damage the Church, but to preserve and glorify it. Yet, only toward the end of his life would he make the realization that only the power of *faith* would truly suffice: *"Le cœur a des raisons dont la raison elle-même ne sait rien."* "The heart has reasons of which reason itself knows nothing" – Blaise Pascal.

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# Women and Gender in Viking militaries

## By Freyja Petersen, North Carolina State University

### Introduction

Explorations of the history of the Vikings focus on typically male-dominated areas of society such as the military, politics, and law. Naturally, for the Vikings themselves evoke images of exploration, seafaring, raiding, trading, mercenary work, and so on. Unfortunately, less research has been done into the lives of the women of Viking Age Scandinavia[1], the roles they occupied, and how they interacted with the elements of society which were dominated by men. The relative dearth of information about women in Viking society is surprising given the prominent presence of women throughout cultural depictions of Vikings going back centuries. Accompanying the burly, bearded, axe-wielding Norsemen that typically represent the Vikings stands an equally imposing figure: the Valkyrie, a mythical woman resplendent in armour, spear in hand, choosing half of the valiant slain to be carried to their next life in Valhalla. In contrast to the mythical Valkyrie stands the more grounded shieldmaiden: a heroic warrior-woman who fought shoulder to shoulder with her male raider counterparts. These feminine figures have taken on a life of their own in modern times due to the allure of powerful women as action heroines or symbols of women's empowerment.

Studies of Viking Age women who stepped into military roles offer an intriguing glimpse into the possibility of women subverting traditional gender roles by participating in one of the most heavily male-dominant sections of society. The historian Judith Jesch has put forward some of the most complete analyses of Viking Age women in her works *The Viking Diaspora* and *Women in the Viking Age.* She argues that although the prospect of Scandinavian women participating in Viking Age militaries is alluring, it is ultimately unsubstantiated by facts.[2] Jesch's portrait of Viking Age Scandinavian societies includes rigid gender boundaries. Although women enjoyed a great deal of freedom in their ability to occasionally divorce, become merchants, and travel, they were frequently bound to domestic and household management roles. This argument suggests that the images we have of Valkyries, shieldmaidens, and other violent women from Old Norse literature are constrained to the realm of entertaining fantasy and are not reflected in reality. Jesch's viewpoint is corroborated and supplemented by Jenny Jochens, who argued in

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1  For the purposes of this analysis, Viking Age Scandinavia will refer to Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, as well as the colonised regions in Britain and Ireland from the 8th through the 11th centuries.
2  Judith Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora*, The Medieval World (London: Routledge, 2015).; Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1991).

her book *Old Norse Images of Women* that the violent female figures we find in Old Norse literature may have their roots in pre-Viking Age social realities during the time of the migrations and expansion.[3] Ultimately, however, Jochens states that they served as entertainment for audiences primarily consisting of male warriors and do not mirror any contemporary tradition of shieldmaidens or other women warriors.

There are historians and archaeologists such as Neil Price who have argued that, on occasion, it was acceptable for some women to cross gender boundaries and participate in Viking militaries.[4] Sadly, Price and others have made these arguments without a complete synthesis of the evidence of the kind Jesch and Jochens offer. Most of the analyses of Valkyries and shieldmaidens restrict themselves to analysing gender exclusively as it appears in the literary texts, and while Price has pointed to various pieces of historical evidence which suggest that they might have been grounded in reality, he makes no effort to compile the evidence in one single scholarly work. The pieces of evidence Price highlights are various texts from other cultures referring to women participating in militaries as well as physical iconography of Valkyries or shieldmaidens which demonstrate that these figures were present in the minds of the Viking Age Scandinavians who craft-

ed and carried them.[5] Lise Præstgaard Andersen, who, like Jochens, surveyed depictions of shieldmaidens and Valkyries within Old Norse literature, comes away with a similar idea to Price about depictions of Valkyries and shieldmaidens. Præstgaard Andersen suggested that even if it may have been possible that only men could achieve fame and honour as warriors, the depictions of these warrior-women crossing gender boundaries in literature was not simply a baseless fantasy, but instead an indication of attitudes, if not realities.[6]

There remains a need to to fill the space left by the lack of a comprehensive argument for the existence of warrior-women in Viking Age Scandinavia, however, as well as address the objections raised by historians such as Jesch. This can be done through archaeological and textual evidence placing them in the context of the ideas and themes of Old Norse literature. Such an approach demonstrates that there is sufficient archaeological and historical evidence to suggest that warrior-women or shieldmaidens did exist in Viking Age societies and that they represented a unique opportunity for individuals to cross gender roles, at least temporarily. An interpretation of the historical and archaeological evidence informed by Old Norse literature's depictions of women yields a compelling picture of people occupying a nonbinary or third gender role to participate in

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3  Jenny Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1996).

4  Neil Price, "The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia" (Uppsala University, 2002).

5  Ben Raffield et al., "Ingroup Identification, Identity Fusion and the Formation of Viking War Bands," *World Archaeology* 48, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 35–50, https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.2015.1100548.; Neil Price, "The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia" (Uppsala University, 2002).

6  Lise Præstgaard Andersen, "On Valkyries, Shield-Maidens and Other Armed Women - in Old Norse Sources and Saxo Grammaticus," in *Mythological Women: Studies in Memory of Lotte Motz (1922-1997)*, Studia Medievalia Septentrionalia 7 (Vienna: Verlag Fassbaender, 2002), 291–318.

combat.

## Women, Gender, and Violence in Old Norse Literature

The range of women depicted in the literary traditions of the Vikings spans from ordinary farmers to mythical goddesses but a striking common thread is the strength and wilfulness of the women featured. Throughout Old Norse literature, women manage households, practice sorcery, and fight as warriors. Many analyses of Viking perceptions of gender are confined to the Icelandic literary tradition, seeking to unify common ideas about gender persistent across the multitude of sagas and poems. The Icelandic texts, produced long after the Vikings' conversion to Christianity, have been the subject of a great deal of academic scrutiny. Attempting to draw out cultural realities and attitudes towards gender can be difficult with these texts as they are rife with questions of authorial bias. Nevertheless, they are rooted in an oral history reflecting centuries of development within the Viking Age and are an important resource in contextualising archaeological evidence.[7] The women depicted in Viking stories often play curious roles as agitators, deceivers, and warriors. Analysing the relationship between gender, violence, and combat, a shieldmaiden archetype within Old Norse literature emerges and reveals much about Viking Age attitudes towards gender and women warriors.

The classic images of Norse warrior-women come from the mythology around Valkyries. The Valkyries themselves are women who personify war and battle, descending from the heavens to decide battles and bring the worthy slain to Valhalla. In "Helgakviða Hundingsbana I" the Valkyries are seen "wearing helmets, high in the heavens; their armour was bloody, and their banners waved, from their spears," and they later descend to defend the hero Helgi in battle.[8] In Njal's Saga, Valkyries sing "start we swiftly with steeds unsaddled – hence to battle with brandished swords!" Finally, in the Prose Edda Sigurdr finds a Valkyrie named Sigrdrifa or Brynhildr sleeping in full armour and a helmet.[9] Although some scholars attempt to differentiate the mythical Valkyries from the shieldmaidens featured in the heroic lays, the line between the two is muddied and several of the most famous shieldmaidens are often conceptualised by poets and scholars as Valkyries, thus the terms are often used interchangeably. A necessary note on terminology must come first: the term shieldmaiden represents a more modern construct, the old Norse term "Skjaldmær" is quite rare within the literature itself and instead is frequently applied retroactively. Most Old Norse writers would have been more likely to apply the term Valkyrie to both mythical figures and realistic figures alike. This lack of a clear distinction between the mythical and the realistic may suggest that the line between myth and reality which historians draw might not have been as important to the texts' audiences.

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7  Jane Smiley, Preface to *The Sagas of Icelanders*, edited by Ölnólfur Thorsson (London: Penguin, 2001), xxii.
8  Jackson Crawford, trans., "Helgakviða Hundingsbana I" in *The Poetic Edda* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2015), 193.
9  Lee Hollander, trans., *Njal's Saga*, Revised, Classics of World Literature (Ware: Wordsworth, 1999) 68.; Crawford, "Sigrdrifumal" in *The Poetic Edda,* 252.

One such shieldmaiden is Sigrdrifa, the Valkyrie who dared to defy Odin's decision in granting victory to a king and instead killed him.[10] Sigrdrifa's punishment for defying Odin is being pricked by a sleep thorn and cursed that she must marry and will never be victorious in battle again. Later in her story, the martial aspects of her character become expanded upon and she states that she has been a Viking and fought the king of Russia, and that she had suggested to her brother Attila that she should be in command of one-third of the country's army. Physically she is depicted as immensely strong, the athletic equal to the heroic Sigurdr, and during the nights of her and her husband's wedding celebration she hangs her husband up on the wall. Sigrdrifa's character forms the model for a shieldmaiden or Valkyrie. She is strong willed and independent, resistant to marriage, young and physically fit, she is physically the equal of the men around her.

Old Norse literature also offers more human images of shieldmaidens and warrior-women who hold their own against men and occasionally even command other warriors. The character Hervor appears in an early poem about a conflict between Goths and Huns in which she commands the defence of a fortress against the Huns before ultimately falling in battle.[11] Later authors took the earlier character of Hervor and created a second, similar character, grandmother to the origi-nal, who was an adventurous and violent Viking who encountered undead creatures and continues life as a Viking by pretending to be a man for a time.[12] The two Hervors also served as the inspiration for other stories which provide more examples of warrior-women who dress as men, such as Thornbjorg, a woman who was a Swedish sovereign who would "deal fierce blows and kill many men."[13] The depiction of warrior-women and shieldmaidens in literature continued, albeit sparsely, into newly invented sagas during the thirteenth and fourteenth sagas including in the chivalric sagas. However, like the Hervors and Thornbjorg, the invariable outcome of these stories was falling in battle or submitting to men and marrying.

Given that these texts were largely composed and recorded by men for the purposes of entertainment, what is the value of these texts in examining the historicity of shieldmaidens? In her survey of Old Norse literature *Old Norse Images of Women,* Jenny Jochens articulates her stance that beyond glimpses of society these depictions of women can be used to examine gender: "I consider them as images, embodiments of masculine perceptions of feminine roles articulated by male authors. As such they pertain to gender and not to woman's history."[14] The texts can serve in both capacities, not simply limited to the realm of what they can tell us about their male authors' perceptions. The texts

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10  Crawford, "Sigrdrifumal" in *The Poetic Edda,* 253.
11  Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women*, 97.
12  Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women,* 99.
13  Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women,* 101.
14  Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women,* 88.

can also reveal much about the ideas of Viking Age so-
cieties reflected in the ways the stories catered to their
audiences. They reflect social realities and how shield-
maidens might have looked, acted, and thought. How
these characters are responded to by others, how they
reflected the expectations and desires of audiences, and
what they looked and acted like are all equally import-
ant in understanding how Viking Age Scandinavians
would have understood Valkyries and shieldmaidens.

Contrasting the images of Valkyries bloodied
in battle in the various poems of the Poetic Edda are
the images of Valkyries in texts such as the Prose Edda
where the Valkyries are not depicted as taking part in
battles at all, instead their function is to serve the men
of the Einherjar drink, articulating a very different view
of the place and character of women.[15] Attitudes to-
wards gender are also showcased in stories about Thor
wherein the god is emasculated by crossdressing, used
to comedic effect as the mighty warrior demeaned by
femininity.[16] Comedic crossdressing also appears in
the story of Hagbarth and Signe when Hagbarth's rival
Haki dresses up as a female slave proficient at hurling
spears and lances, and in "Helgakvida Hundingsbana
II" when Helgi disguises himself as a woman whose
coarse hands are attributed to a past as a warrior-wom-
an.[17] Such examples are most assuredly intended to be

humorous but as Jesch points out, they also demonstrate
that the concept of a warrior-woman was not altogether
inconceivable to audiences.[18] Trying to make sense of
the contradiction between women having pasts as capa-
ble warriors and the ideals of women and femininity as
being subservient, we can perhaps reason that the view
is split between specific individuals who for a time can
be warriors and the more abstract concept of women as
being domestic or physically inferior.

Jochens has put forward the idea that the prima-
ry function of the warrior-woman was to cater to audi-
ences of primarily male warriors who would have found
the idea of attractive young women possessing warrior
values and interests alluring.[19] In making this case, Jo-
chens points to these characters' story arcs following a
common and predictable pattern beginning with them
being powerful, demonstrating their strength, and end-
ing in invariably being conquered by men in some way,
either falling in battle or being taken by men as brides
after putting up entertaining resistance.[20] In this way
they were attractive but ultimately did not challenge
men's dominance in the realm of combat. Jochens does
suggest that if there was any basis in reality for these
figures, it would likely have been in the past periods of
Germanic migration when rigidly defined gender roles
would have fallen by the wayside as men and wom-

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15  Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda*, trans. Jesse Byock (London: Penguin, 2005), 44-45.
16  Crawford, "Þrymskviða" in *The Poetic Edda,* 115-122.
17  Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, trans. Peter Fisher (Woodbridge: DS Brewer, 1998), bk. 5.; Crawford, "Helgakvida Hund-
ingsbana II" in *The Poetic Edda,* 204-205.
18  Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, 179.
19  Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women,* 111-112.
20  Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women,* 111-112.

en both fought for survival but that the practice might have continued into the time of Viking expansion but would have diminished significantly.[21] I would like to push back against this idea by suggesting that these noticeably similar descriptions of shieldmaidens and the arcs their characters follow was not just an appealing fantasy to men rooted in a distant past, but was also appealing and empowering to Viking Age women and may have even been emulated by some women.

### Shieldmaidens in the Historical Record

Although relatively few remain today, there are some historical texts which refer to women fighting amongst the militaries of the Vikings. Two oft-cited examples are that of the Byzantine historian Ioannes Scylitzes who recorded that women were found among the fallen Varangian warriors after a battle in the 970s and a medieval Irish text dated to the early twelfth century which counts a fleet commanded by a fierce red-haired woman among the invading parties of Norsemen.[22] Most famous are the accounts of female warriors among the Vikings by the Christian Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus, from whom come the stories of warrior-women such as Lagertha, once wife of the famous Ragnar Lodbrok, as well as a commentary on the history of such figures which is worth quoting:

In case anyone is marveling that this sex should have sweated in warfare, let me digress briefly to explain the character and behavior of such females. There were once women in Denmark who dressed themselves to look like men and spent almost every minute cultivating soldiers' skills; they did not want the sinews of their valor to lose tautness and be infected by selfindulgence. Loathing a dainty style of living, they would harden body and mind with toil and endurance, rejecting the fickle pliancy of girls and compelling their womanish spirits to act with a virile ruthlessness. They courted military celebrity so earnestly that one might have guessed they had unsexed themselves. Those especially who had forceful personalities or were tall and elegant embarked on this way of life. As if they were forgetful of their true selves they put toughness before allure, aimed at conflicts instead of kisses, tasted blood, not lips, sought the clash of arms rather than the arm's embrace, fitted to weapons hands which should have been weaving, desired not the couch but the kill, and those they could have appeased with looks they attacked with lances.[23]

The shieldmaidens which Saxo Grammaticus references in the Gesta Danorum are, as pointed out by Jesch and Jochens, an invention of Christian male fantasy, attributing the mythical qualities to these women and drawing on classical inspiration from the Christian, Greek, and Roman literary traditions while treating these female characters with a healthy amount of misogynist disdain as expressed in the above passage.[24] While it is easy enough to dismiss the writings of Saxo

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21  Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women,* 108.

22  Raffield et al., "Ingroup Identification, Identity Fusion and the Formation of Viking War Bands."; James Henthorn Todd, *Cogadh Gaedhel Re Gallaibh: The War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill: Or, The Invasions of Ireland by the Danes and Other Norsemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

23  Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, bk. 6.

24  Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age.,* 176-180.; Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women*, 104-105.

Grammaticus as fiction laden with authorial bias rather than history, it is worth examining the content of his writing as it draws heavily on the writings of his Icelandic contemporary skalds and writers who had been carrying on their history since the Viking Age. The women he describes in the quoted passage "dressed themselves to look like men" much like the shieldmaidens from the literature who would go into battle in mail armour and helmets. "Hardening the body and mind with toil and endurance" and "tall and elegant" are descriptions which largely fit the maiden warriors from literature as well, who almost always were young women which we can assume to be in their late teens and early twenties, described as being tall, slender, and physically powerful, and in the case of some of women provided with warrior burials the remains align with such a description: around twenty years old, slender, and possessing game pieces which might suggest a "hardening of the mind". A final element of this description, "fitted weapons to hands which should have been weaving" strikes a resemblance to the line from "Helgakvida Hundingsbana II" "it would befit you better, if your hand, held a sword-hilt, rather than a grindstone.", an accusation assuaged by Helgi describing his past as a warrior-woman.[25]

## Archaeological Suggestions of Shieldmaidens

Some of the most compelling archaeological evidence for shieldmaidens existence comes in the form of individuals sexed as women who appear to be given warrior burials. The custom of interring the dead with a wealth of goods which they might be expected to bring with them for use in their next life held a great deal of symbolic importance and can reveal much about the life of the individual. The most common items found within women's graves tend to be weaving implements and agricultural tools, and as such archaeologists tend to infer that weaving and household management roles were the most common roles to be held by women in the Viking Age.[26] This strong association between women, weaving, and agricultural implements may lead to linking Viking ideas of femininity with weaving and domestic work, but it is rare for any type of grave good to be found exclusively in one sex's grave and not the other.[27] Women's graves could also contain tools for leatherworking, carpentry, as well as weights and balances for use in trade, suggesting that there were few roles within society that could be considered to be purely the domain of a single sex. This lack of role exclusivity does present a problem in the gendering of graves wherein the remains are either absent or the sex is unable to be identified outside of osteological analysis or genetic testing. In such ambiguous cases, the sex of the individual interred is judged based

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25 Crawford, "Helgakvida Hundingsbana II" in *The Poetic Edda,* 204-205.
26 Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age.,* 19-20.
27 Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age.,* 19.

on the goods within the grave: large tools, weapons, and armour signal men's graves while smaller tools and weaving implements signal women's.[28] Such a method for gendering uncertain graves may be more accurate than not, but it biases finds towards gender conforming conclusions and precludes the attribution of graves which suggest military involvement when they might rightfully be women's graves.

Despite the bias, there are graves belonging to sexed female individuals which contain weapons and or armour. Across Sweden, Norway, and Denmark there have been several graves containing biologically sexed women in which axes, swords, spears, arrowheads, and shield bosses have been found. Questions of interpretation are rife in such cases, swords have been alternatively interpreted as weaving battens, axes have many practical uses outside of combat, and spears may have ritual significance rather than any combat purpose, but these matters are far from settled.[29] It is worth highlighting that the examination and interpretation of weapons found in the graves of individuals sexed as women is subject to much greater speculation and alternative attributions than those found in the graves of those sexed as men. The meaning and ownership of weapons found in males' graves is typically scrutinised significantly less and the mere presence of weapons has, in the past, been used to sex remains and burials as male without intensive investigation or scientific examination of the remains.[30]

Although rare, there are a handful of graves in which biologically sexed females have received full burials in the style of warriors rather than simply a single axe, spear, or knife. A notable instance of this is at Birka, Sweden where an individual was found buried in a grave next to the town's garrison complete with a sword, spear, axe, armour-piercing arrows, a battle knife, two shields, game pieces, and two horses.[31] A flurry of debate was sparked over the nature of this individual's burial once the remains were analysed and found to be those of an individual sexed as female.[32] The archaeologists involved in determining the sex of this individual buried in grave Bj 581 point to the positioning and furnishing of this grave as evidence that the individual interred within must have been of both high status and holding some sort of military significance.[33] There are other graves in which the burial of a warrior appears to have been given to individuals biologically sexed as female in Viking Age Scandinavia, with weapons such as swords, axes, spears, whetstones, shields, arrows, and gaming pieces while lacking in the

28  Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age.,* 14.

29  Leszek Gardeła, "'Warrior-Women' in Viking Age Scandinavia? A Preliminary Archaeological Study," *Analecta Archaeologica Ressoviensia* 8 (2013): 306.

30  Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age.,* 14.

31  Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson et al., "A Female Viking Warrior Confirmed by Genomics," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 164, no. 4 (2017): 853–60, https://doi.org/10.1002/ajpa.23308.

32  Judith Jesch, "Norse and Viking Ramblings: Let's Debate Female Viking Warriors Yet Again," *Norse and Viking Ramblings* (blog), September 9, 2017, http://norseandviking.blogspot.com/2017/09/lets-debate-female-viking-warriors-yet.html.

33  Hedenstierna-Jonson et al., "A Female Viking Warrior Confirmed by Genomics."

goods traditionally associated with women's graves.[34] As previously noted it is very rare for any sort of tool to be found exclusively in the graves of one sex and not the other and that there was some degree of crossover and this can be seen in numerous other graves around the Viking world, even in the famous Oseberg grave, containing only the remains of two women, there were found axes and horse harness mounts.[35] In both the Bj 581 and in a second grave found at Aunvollen, game pieces were found, drawing a parallel to Ermenga from the Magus Saga Jarls and Cecilia from Mirmans Saga, both of whom beat their husbands in chess and display combat ability, curiously providing a link between literary characters and reality.[36] The links between these burials and the literature suggests that the buried individuals had some connection to the legendary stories of shieldmaidens, either symbolically or by emulating those characters in life.

In addition to burial evidence, iconography depicting individuals biologically sexed as female who participate in battle and who wield weapons and wear armour has been found. Recent finds of brooches and figurines depicting what appear to be women wearing helmets and carrying swords and shields. Such figures are typically described as being depictions of Valkyries and are a compelling indication that these ideas of strong and powerful women crossing gender boundaries were appealing not just to men, but to women who would incorporate these images into their clothing in the form of brooches. Even more interesting than their similarities to the Valkyries of myth and legend, however, are the ways in which these iconographic depictions depart from their literary counterparts. In the often referenced "Valkyrie-brooches" from around Denmark two "Valkyries" are depicted, one astride a horse and another standing just beside, both armed.[37] Despite their common interpretations as Valkyries, they do not quite match the traditional image of the Valkyrie in a few ways. First, the figure on horseback is wearing breeches: a practical choice of clothing for an individual who will be doing intensive riding such as one would in battle, but not something specifically associated with Valkyries. The standing figure is also occasionally carrying a sheathed sword, which some archaeologists have pointed out as a departure from the typical Valkyrie associations with spears.[38] While it is true that mythological depictions of Valkyries reference spears as their primary weapon, there are Valkyries and shieldmaidens that are often described as wielding swords such as Sigrdrifa/Brynhildr. Notably, these depictions of sword-wielding Valkyries tend to be more on the grounded side, depicting the Valkyries and mortal women rather than mythical creatures. This concept of a woman wielding a sword in the iconography can be seen in other brooches from

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34  Hedenstierna-Jonson et al., "A Female Viking Warrior Confirmed by Genomics."

35  Gardeła, "'Warrior-Women' in Viking Age Scandinavia? A Preliminary Archaeological Study.", 290-292.

36  Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women,* 106.

37  Gardeła, "'Warrior-Women' in Viking Age Scandinavia? A Preliminary Archaeological Study.", 290-292.

38  Judith Jesch, "Norse and Viking Ramblings: Sword-Girl," *Norse and Viking Ramblings* (blog), January 29, 2013, http://norseandviking.blogspot.com/2013/01/sword-girl.html.

around Scandinavia depicting women wielding a shield and a sword and a three-dimensional figurine found in Denmark. The woman standing beside the horse is also notable in that despite carrying a shield, a horn, occasionally what is interpreted as a sword, and is wearing what appears to be a helmet, they are also wearing a full-length dress. This choice of clothing is significantly different from the literary depictions of women in war who are described frequently as donning mail armour and a helmet referenced separately, yet this motif of figures wearing dresses and occasionally aprons, recurs in multiple brooches and figurines that are often assumed to be depicting Valkyries. This departure from the literary depictions suggests that these depictions are perhaps not based on mythical Valkyries who women saw as entirely separate from the world in which they inhabited, but instead based upon a more grounded idea of shieldmaidens who may have had a basis in reality.

### An Image of the Shieldmaiden

With an understanding of how women appeared in literature and the historical and archaeological evidence for women's participation in combat, how can we go about constructing a holistic image of women warriors in the Viking Age? A primary concession must first be made: there is no unassailable body of evidence which currently exists for the participation of women in Viking Age militaries, there will always be alternative explanations for weapons in graves and alternative interpretations of brooches, figurines, and recurring literary themes. With that concession made, a logical approach can be taken to examine this question, working through why shieldmaidens, Valkyries, warrior-women, and other women associated with violence were so often depicted in literature, what the lives of the women who comprised part of the audience for these stories were like, and how these stories played out in their lives.

Beginning with the first sub-question of why shieldmaidens, Valkyries, warrior-women, and other women associated with violence were so often depicted in literature. It has been suggested by Jochens that these stories are the product of men's imagination, catering to a particular male fantasy by providing entertaining images of women participating in the male audience's interests but safely avoiding challenging their masculinity by resolving the stories with the conquest of men in the form of the marriage or death of the woman.[39] While these stories might have been appealing to men for those reasons and provided their authors with a vessel for articulating their ideas about gender, they do not need to be limited to those serving only those functions. The search for an answer to this question should not stop at the aspects of male fantasy simply because it is *an* answer when a more complete answer may be out there. The ways in which strong-willed and powerful women as characters continued to be depicted may reasonably be believed to be the product of an increasingly invested female audience which

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39 Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women,* 111-112.

we might substantiate with the existence of women's brooches and figurines depicting Valkyries or women warriors. It is important not to forget that while modern historians might characterize Valkyries as mythical figures separate from regular women, the distinction was less clean-cut to the Vikings. The various Valkyries referenced earlier such as Sigrdrifa would be described engaging in human actions: they had families, fell in love, had children, experienced jealousy, betrayal, and loss. With this in mind, the characterization of the "Valkyrie Brooches" as Valkyries may be a matter of semantic importance for historians, whereas in the mind of the women who possessed them, such a dichotomy between myth and reality likely was not as strongly perceived or even necessary. Even the genesis of such stories can be viewed with a more nuanced lens than simply fantasy or fiction, but as the reflection of historical realities in which women were capable of both fighting and instigating violence.

While discussing the lives of women in Viking societies, domesticity is often confused for passivity and oppression. It is unquestionably the case that Viking societies were irredeemably patriarchal and that systems of codified gender distinctions such as those in clothing or the arranging of marriages by male family figures demonstrate that women did not possess the same amount of social equity that men did. Despite this, queens could rule autonomously, women could own and manage land in the absence of men, could

divorce their husbands, special social positions existed for women who performed rituals, magic, or healing duties, and women were able to independently travel as settlers and traders. With women possessing such autonomy, to argue that women could not have also participated in expeditions and in militaries because they were not independent enough or could not step into heavily male influenced spheres and were restricted to home life presents a remarkably narrow view of Viking women's lives.

On the topic of gender, an intriguing question may be raised about the way in which these individuals viewed and interacted with gender. Although Viking societies occasionally allowed for women to enter roles traditionally occupied by men in cases such as queens leading independently, women participating in trade, leading expeditions, and managing households, there still appears to have been very rigid gender boundaries and a general disapproval of transgressing these boundaries. How then are we to understand women participating in militaries where they would be dressing and behaving like men in a male dominated role such as that of a warrior? The answer seems to lie in the physical characteristics of these exceptional individuals. In describing the historical shieldmaidens, Saxo Grammaticus uses an interesting turn of phrase typically translated as "they might have been thought to have unsexed themselves."[40] Clearly intended to be derisive, it might indeed be quite apt after all, for to the

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40  Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, bk. 6.

Vikings, as Jochens puts it: "biology was destiny in the Nordic perception of gender."[41] When these women entered the role of a warrior, dressing and training as men did, they put aside their biological sex for a time. It is clear from the attitudes of the poems' and sagas' authors that the intended destiny of their warrior-women was to accept life as a woman, marry, and end their military careers, or to die. The impermanence of their warrior status seems to indicate that though they might have set aside their biology for a time, they did not cease to be women permanently and therefore their destiny remained the same as all women regardless of role.

In this context we might be able to understand the identity of "warrior-woman" as a transitory state of increased gender fluidity, a window of time in which it might have been socially acceptable for women to perform the role of warrior before they were ready to marry and assume the traditional duties of women. In this manner parallels might be drawn to early twentieth-century western Europe and the United States in which young women could independently seek work or pursue studies for a period before marrying. To find evidence for such a hypothesis we may return to both the literary texts and the archaeological evidence we used to establish the existence of such women. Throughout the texts we have examples of "maiden kings" such as Thornbjorg, the warrior-queen who eventually is

overpowered and then must marry, and Sigrdrifa, the Valkyrie cursed by Odin to never win again be victorious in battle and to marry: an explicit link between marriage and the end of a military "career".[42]

The Valkyries, Shield-maidens, and warrior-women in literature and in the burials tend to share physical characteristics, described as tall, slender, and young, at around twenty years old, the interred women warriors were likely to have either been unmarried or only recently married, the exception to this being the Bj 581 grave in which the woman was found to have been over the age of thirty, which could be interpreted in various ways: given the quantity and quality of the grave goods found within as well as the positioning of the grave, she was likely a woman of some status and presumably some success, giving her cause to remain in military life.[43] From this information we can form a composite image of young women crossing gender boundaries, dressing and training as men during their peak years of physical condition, and taking part in warbands, expeditions, and armies as something which might be described as a nonbinary gender for a time before transitioning into "women", hanging up their sword and shield and marrying.

## Conclusion

The way in which we understand the lives of Viking women has evolved dramatically over the past few decades and with that we have uncovered a histo-

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41  Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women,* 110.
42  Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women,* 101.; Crawford, "Sigrdrifumal" in *The Poetic Edda,* 253.
43  Hedenstierna-Jonson et al., "A Female Viking Warrior Confirmed by Genomics."

ry of women strong-willed and active in many roles throughout Viking Age societies. Women enjoyed autonomy in various aspects of their life, capable of traveling independently, separating from their husbands, and occupying special positions in society, each in small ways stepping into spaces typically dominated by men and occasionally carving out their own niche. The literature paints pictures of women as Valkyries, Shieldmaidens, and warrior-women, glimpses of the possible ways in which women may have fought and the types of women who would have done so: younger, unmarried women, crossing gender boundaries. Those picturesprovide a fleshed-out image of Vikings' perceptions of gender and the relationship between women and violence: strong willed and powerful women capable of taking revenge or using men when violence did not suit their temperament or physical abilities.

The warrior burials of individuals sexed as female and the historical text references to women counted among the Viking armies together help to solidify the image of the historical shieldmaiden by providing tangible parallels with the literary descriptions of these exceptional women. The biases against identifying graves which possess weapons and other warrior-related items as belonging to individuals biologically sexed as female suggest that the total count of "warrior" burials belonging to such individuals is likely higher than currently known. The count is likely to remain sparse, however, and this is in line with the idea that while it was not impossible for such individuals to become

involved in Viking militaries, these individuals would have remained exceptional in their own right rather than typical. The presence of multiple sources attesting to warrior-women both from authors within Viking societies and from other societies lends credence to the idea that these individuals did indeed exist and to argue against them one must dismiss or refute not simply a single source but a number of corroborating sources. The strong parallels in the goods present in these burials with the descriptions of shieldmaidens in literature demonstrate that these literary ideas of gender and women held a great deal of real-world significance for the lives of either the individual interred or the people burying them, or both. Using our understanding of Viking ideas about gender and warrior-women from literature to interpret archaeological finds and historical texts related to warrior-women we can complete our picture of these individuals. Fluidly navigating masculinity and femininity for a short time in a society with otherwise strict boundaries between the sexes, these warrior-women, shieldmaidens, and Valkyries carved out their own unique niche within Viking society.

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# The Challenges of Studying African Religion in a Western Institution: Defying the Euro-Christian Origins of Research

## By Zion Solomon, University of California, Santa Barbara

The field of Religious Studies has long been dominated by Christianity and by the West[1]. To add, even when attempts to diversify and include non-Christian and polytheistic faiths are made, these traditions have been examined through a Western Christianized lens.[2] Despite the appeal of academic diversity and inclusion, at least at the institutional level of the University, not all inclusion is beneficial to the African Diaspora. Religions around the world are affected and shaped by the cultures that practice them. Similarly, the West and Constantinian Christianity have been enmeshed with mutual biases and prejudices that have residually affected Religious Studies scholars and the work they have historically produced. Systemically, this is reflected in the lack of attention paid to non-scriptural sources of study, debasement of African religions as primitive and non-substantial, and an overall lack of understanding of the depth and uses of African religious traditions. Rather than esteeming scripture and the Christian church as the centers of study, this essay suggests esteeming music, cooking, and oral traditions as starting points of study as a means of diligently studying African religious traditions.

This essay understands Afro-pessimism as well as Orientalism's impact on the foundation of the Americas as intertwined with the research conducted from Western institutions. "Afro-pessimism is a lens of interpretation that accounts for civil society's dependence on antiblack violence".[3] Afro-pessimism as a lens recognizes the creation of Black and white as racial categories as a part of the capitalist project to separate and differente the categorization of people who are deserving of and have access to various kinds of labor, access to societal resource, and even care, attention, protection, and affection. Afro-pessimist scholars often cite the inception of this view beginning at the moment of the Atlantic Slave Trade, where slavery elevated to a multi-generational affliction, and being Black became synonimous with being enslaved. Afro-pessimism maintains this assertion while acknowledging periods of the enslavement of other racial groups by characterizing the extended and systematic Africanized slavery

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1 Masuzawa 2005; Lindenfield 2007; Glaude 200

2 Jefferson-Tatum. "The Violence of Translation." *Journal of Africana Religions* 3, no. 3 (2015): 279. https://doi.org/10.5325/jafrireli.3.3.0279.

3 "Afro-Pessimism." obo. Accessed April 3, 2021. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190280024/obo-9780190280024-0056.xml.

pervasive among every European nation[45]. This lens of interpretation asserts that Western political, institutional, and societal structures are dependent on regimes of violence that consider Black people as enemies of "civil society"[6]. Afro-pessimist critical theory maintains that systems foundationally created through the suffering of Black workers sustain themselves by maintaining pervasive Anti-Blackness[7].

Great strides have been made within American universities to give attention to the Atlantic slave trade and systemic Anti-Blackness.[8] However, despite cultural optimism of the creation of a post-racial society, or more specifically, equality within academia (and furthermore, Religious Studies), there has been a failure to address the inherently prejudicial nature of the Western hegemony of academia, tainted by its roots in Anti-Blackness. The Academy can subvert mainstream Anti-Black society, but must first recognize that it still exists as a Western intuition, and pay careful attention to its own roots in Anti-Black racism. Lucia Hulsether writes in "The Grammar of Racism" that "The diversification of university curricula in religious studies was a means to frame the U.S. as a benevolent empire".[9] In this, the notion of Whiteness as well as the Western world and its faith traditions are positioned as ideal, civilized, and ultimately contrasted with the notion of Blackness and symbols of African tradition and practice. Anti-racist students at Harvard Divinity School recognized that the "rhetoric of pluralism undercut radical critiques" enforced by their University administration, which (similar to many academic institutions) promoted diversity and inclusion without fundamentally altering their own systems of power and knowledge[10]. To quote from Hulsether's analysis, the students "were asking for the school to relinquish its 'mythology of assimilated Americanism' and to reorganize the academic

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4  Legal and historical attacks have been made on the personhood of Black people in a way that is positioned at the bottom of the totem pole (see; encomienda system, Cuban and other caste systems) if and when Black people are even seen as full persons (see; 3/5ths regulations in the States and the creation of the One Drop Rule creating Blackness as a distinct category from whiteness). Additionally, the practice of enslaving the offspring of Africans who themselves were not indebted required the justification. This justification is seen to have led to the creation of Afro Pessimism and Anti-Blackness.

5  Grimes, Katie Walker. "Antiblackness and World History." In *Christ Divided: Antiblackness as Corporate Vice*, 11-40. MINNEAPOLIS: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2017. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1tm7gxp.7.

6  "Afro-Pessimism". In *obo* in African American Studies, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190280024/obo-9780190280024-0056.xml (accessed 12 Dec. 2019).

7  Orlando Patterson theorizes slavery as a relational dynamic between "social death" (the slave) and "social life" (the human). Afro-pessimism is as indebted to black feminist theory (Hortense Spillers) as it is to Patterson's definition of slavery. The black feminist interventions of Afro-pessimism privilege position (or paradigm) over performance. To this end, Afro-pessimist feminism is a critique of the theoretical orientation of nonblack feminist theory. Afro-pessimism theorizes blackness as an effect of structural violence, as opposed to thinking of blackness as a performance and embodiment of cultural and/or anthropological attributes. Most scholars would argue that what is essential about blackness is (a) the diversity of cultural expressions it elaborates or (b) the specificity of the socio-political terrains blacks occupy around the world. (Oxford Bibliographies)

8  Much of this work has occurred on University level, by radical students demanding departments of Black and Africana Studies, as well as Religious Studies; see analysis on Harvard Divinity School and Black student efforts to fight against White Supremacy and hegemony within academia in *The Grammar of Racism: Religious Pluralism and the Birth of the Interdisciplines* by Lucia Hulsether

9  Lucia Hulsether, "The Grammar of Racism: Religious Pluralism and the Birth of the Interdisciplines," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume 86, Issue 1, March 2018, Pages 1–41, https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfx049

10  Hulsether, "The Grammar of Racism," 1-41.

study of religion through the lens of black experience— not simply to add it to the curriculum".[11]

## Orientalism vs Diligence

This essay utilizes Orientalism in order to study how the West has gone about research of non-Western cultures, rather than to make a claim about the homogeneity of "orientalized" peoples. The "orient" as well as the Black diaspora in specific, are vastly diverse, yet have often been classified as simple, primitive, and homogenous. This essay seeks to make a case for exploring the alternative measures we may take in order to offer these cultures and their religious traditions with more honor and diligence. In order to further explore the implications of moving beyond inclusion of non-Western traditions and into more authentic depictions of non-Western traditions, we can begin engaging with Orientalism as praxis.

The theory of Orientalism allows us to dive deeper into this phenomenon and inspect how the study of non-Western humanities has been utilized to study and intellectually conquer the Orient, rather than bring light to the humanity of what is umbrellaed within the East.[12] Homi Bhabha in *Location of Culture* explains further, and writes that, "what these systems do, regardless of the variation, is to distinguish the West from the rest, even though the distinction is usually affected in more complicated ways than the still frequently used, easy language of "East and West" suggests".[13] He writes that each tradition that is examined is articulated from the perspective of the European West, which is historically aligned with Christendom. Traditions outside of "Western" and "Eastern Religions" are categorized by generic, lower-case names-- shamanism, fetishism, animism-and are characterized as basic, primal, preliterate, and tribal. Bhabha's insights reveal the issue of Orientalism within the study of Religion.

Religious Studies is inescapably housed under the larger institution of academia and the harmful implications of colonialism. This is not to say that other disciplines, like that within the sciences or other humanities, within academia are not also tainted by colonialism. But without further inspecting the Western biases of academia itself, scholars may fail time and time again to adequately represent the scope and depth of African Religion. Dipesh Chakrabarty, a scholar of subaltern studies, writes in *Provincializing Europe* that Europe alone has hoarded the ability to be "theoretical".[14] Theoretical knowing being "at the level of the fundamental categories that shape historical thinking". Chakrabarty writes that "all other histories are matters of empirical research that fleshes out a theoretical skeleton which is substantially 'Europe'".[15] This essay seeks

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11   Hulsether, "The Grammar of Racism," 1-41.

12   Notably, the science of Eugenics and Social Darwinism significantly tied to a history of White Supremacy justified through academia

13   Bhabha, Homi K., 1949-. *The Location of Culture*. London; New York: Routledge, 2004.

14   Dipesh Chakrabarty. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference (New Edition)*. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press, 2000. Accessed April 3, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctt7rsx9.

15   Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.

to explore this history of African religions under colonialism, how they may be studied appropriately within a European institution/lens and how this can synchronically be attempted while challenging the academy's foundational Western hegemonic structures through Afro-pessimistic critical theory. This work seeks to promote the idea that by peeling back and exposing the layers of Anti-Blackness and Orientalism that prevail amongst the subjects of study, Black and African people, we can begin to examine and experience African Religion through a lens of its own, rather than adopting inherently prejudicial strategies of traditional Western Religious Studies.

The only distinct definition of a church we are formally offered by the United States government is created by its Internal Revenue Service. The I.R.S. offers tax exemptions and 501(c)(3) nonprofit exceptions to churches that can prove, amongst other requirements, a "recognized creed and form of worship...code of doctrine and discipline...organization of ordained ministers...established places of worship…[16]". As an agency of the U.S. government, the IRS and its religious classifications show that despite a legal separation of church and state claimed by the United States and by public religious studies scholarship, it is through a Christian perspective that many of these classifications of religion in the West are built from.

Contemporary U.S. understandings of what the Founding Fathers decreed the "Separation of Church and State" has largely shifted due to the Supreme Court case of *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp* (1963) which ruled that mandated Bible reading and/or prayer in public school was unconstitutional[17]. The case upheld this mandate based on the court's interpretation that instructed religious fellowship violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment.[18] For the history of Religious Studies, this meant that public schools were forbidden from teaching any religion as an ultimate truth and were restricted to teaching religion as an object of study, rather than one of practice.[19] The outcome of this case disallowed theological instruction in public schools, and eventually led to the creation of the secular studies of Religion through the formation of departments on campuses across the country. However, while the ruling has been used in the field to make a case for religious pluralism and the inclusion of non-Christian faith traditions as objects of study, much of the field of Religious Studies fails to deviate from Western centered perspectives.

It is both foolish and impossible to throw our previous understandings and preconceptions completely out the window. Additionally, it is impossible to avoid the bias of our personal experience in relation to the object of study. As writers and scholars, we can ben-

16  Quoted in Gaffney, Edward McGlynn, Jr. "Governmental Definition of Religion: The Rise and Fall of the IRS Regulations on an 'Integrated Auxiliary of a Church'." Valparaiso University Law Review 25.2 (1991): 203-47

17  "School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania v. Schempp." Legal Information Institute. Legal Information Institute. Accessed December 12, 2019. https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/374/203.

18  The first amendment prohibits Congress from making any law respecting an establishment of religion.

19  The Department of Religious Studies at UCSB was officially established on July 1, 1964

efit our audiences by noting and accounting for these biases. In order to create a truly more inclusive and non-hegemonic definition of religion, we need to face these biases head on, embracing diversity, and strive to reframe our understanding of religion to work towards one that is globally accurate and fair.

### Oral Tradition and Religious Texts

In Religious Studies, oftentimes faith traditions are examined through two lense: creed and practice. "Creed" is the set of fundamental beliefs, and guiding principles; or "a brief authoritative formula of religious belief".[20] In examining creed, Religious Studies has traditionally established written scripture as more developed and civilized, superseding oral traditions of African religions. The Pew Research center, in its data analysis of American religious practices loosely defines "practices' ' as church service attendance, ceremony, individual prayer or private, the study of scripture and even speaking in tongues.[21] This study shows how Christian practices have been unofficially standardized and established as a benchmark through which all other faiths are compared to and their legitimacy is measured.

The assumption that scripture reading is the method by which religious devotees mainly reaffirm and practice their faith, would lead scholars of religion to believe that religious traditions that lack a keystone text are insignificant and insubstantial to its practitioners and therefore not worthy of study. This is simply not the case for African traditions, many of which have used oral traditions rather than written script. Additionally, enslaved populations were barred from reading and writing, and as a result, oral tradition became a significant method of passing on and embodying religious knowledge.

Here lies the question of how to classify and legitimize oral tradition when compared with scripture and sacred text. Typically, Western scholars who have written on African religions approach the study with their own solidified picture of what religion has the capacity to look like through their own lived experiences. For the most part, this includes an understanding of the "church" as a primary place of worship, the capacity for gathering in individual's homes in the case of outside fellowship, use of a formalized collection of biblical texts, clergy, and laymen.

If scholars are to assume, based on their experience with Western practiced Christian religions, that church occurs in a building, and religious practice consists of biblical readings, it leaves us with an obscured view of what African religion can exist as, as a stand alone. In Westerner's earliest views of non-Christian indigenous religious traditions, conquistadors noted

20  "Creed." Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster. Accessed April 21, 2021. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/creed.
21  "Religious Practices and Experiences." Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, May 30, 2020. https://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/chapter-2-religious-practices-and-experiences/.

their belief that because there were no houses of worship, that there was no religion at all[22]. Through similar points of view, African religions were often viewed as simplistic, savage, oppressive, and/or exotic. Rather than measuring African scripture against works like the Bible or the Quran, scholars may begin to explore African music, poetry, dance, sacred objects and holy sites-- in addition to African scripts, with value of their own accord, unattached to how well they fit within a Western Christian framework.

Identifying Orientalism and Christian hegemonies as misguided and unproductive towards an accurate and globally appropriate understanding of African Religions must be the first step towards reworking and reforming the study of religion as a whole. Scholars of African religious practices who discuss the importance of experiential learning and embodied knowledge include Yvonne Daniel(Religious dance ceremony), Ned Sublette (Afro-diasporic religious music), Jill Flanders Crosby (Oral tradition and social memory), and Elizabeth Perez (the preparation of sacred foods as sacrifices for the gods of Afro-Cuban traditions). As Kate Walker Grimes says in *Dismantling Antiblackness Supremacy*, "habits are acquired by repeated actions, [so] they must be unmade by actions that are equally repetitive yet en-

tirely out of character".[23] With this, I would like to explore how we can reframe how we define the study of religion as a whole-- to then discover how scholars of religion can work towards an accurate understanding of African Religion.

**Alternatives Posed by Scholars of African Religion**

Dianne M. Stewart writes *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience*, a study of African-derived/centered tradition and offers insight on how the diaspora can be thoroughly examined outside of a Western lens. Building off of one of her mentors, James Cone and his books, *Black Theology and Black Power* and *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Stewart pays tribute to Liberation Theology while offering criticism of its limitations. Liberation Theology is a radical theological analysis that emphasizes the socio economic liberation of poor and oppressed peoples. It began as a movement in South America and was taken on by the Black Panthers in the U.S. and other U.S. scholars of religion, primarily James Cone.[24] Stewart discusses James Cone's radical assertion of a Black Christ which attempted to disestablish Christianity from the White Supremacy of its oppressive agents. James Cone questioned the nature of God in retrospect to humanity and began the work

22  "Pedro Cieza de Leon claimed the indigenous people were 'observing no religion at all, as we understand it, nor is there any house of worship to be found'"

Elana Jefferson-Tatum. "The Violence of Translation: An Indigenous World-Sense and the Western "Prostitution" of Dahomean Bodies." *Journal of Africana Religions* 3, no. 3 (2015): 279-324. doi:10.5325/jafrireli.3.3.0279.
23  Grimes, Katie Walker. "Dismantling Antiblackness Supremacy." In *Christ Divided: Antiblackness as Corporate Vice*, 237-64. MINNEAPOLIS: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2017. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1tm7gxp.21.
24  "The Radical Rise of Liberation Theology: An Interview with Lilian Calles Barger." Religion & Politics, November 20, 2018. https://religionandpolitics.org/2018/09/25/the-radical-rise-of-liberation-theology-an-interview-with-lilian-calles-barger/.

of reimagining what, and who, God has the capacity to resemble.[25] His work is what many later Black radical texts build upon. Stewart builds from an understanding of the West as hostile to Black people to discuss the separate and distinct hostility towards African tradition, which she describes as "Afrophobia". Afrophobia in this context has been deployed by Black Christians and Pan-Africanists like Daniel Alexander Payne, Alexander Crummell, and Martin Delany. These men paved the road for Black Christians living within a nation that had only recently breaking free from the chains of slavery. Unfortunately the respectability they sought within a Western context came at the cost of renouncing African practices as savage and primitive.

*Things Fall Apart,* by Chinua Achebe, a novel discussing the destruction of an African community due to multi-leveled colonial effort, importantly lays bare these Afrophobic Black practices:

> *"He [the white man] says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us?" The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peace-*

> *ably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. How he has won his brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart (129)*

In *Things Fall Apart*, the phrase "cultural violence" presents the violent ideologies of the West as deeply harmful to the indigenous community. In the novel, Christendom is projected as a means of colonial attack on indigenous African culture, ritual sacrifices, and sacred objects. Eurocentric-Christendom is embraced by some of the African community members who take it upon themselves to destroy the "pagan" "false" gods and imagery collectively representing "primitive" ways"[26]. To add to this commentary, W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* discusses how Black Americans have been conditioned to seek freedom through "due process of the law".[27] This practice encourages submission to the Euro-Western world and instead of "Africanizing" America, the Negro is taught to submit to the powers that exist within an Anti-Black society and to esteem privileges within that structure.

Stewart claims that these very men have "embraced anti-African beliefs and attitudes" and sought

25  James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020).
26  David Hoegberg. "Principle and Practice: The Logic of Cultural Violence in Achebe's "Things Fall Apart"." *College Literature* 26, no. 1 (1999): 69-79. www.jstor.org/stable/25112429.
27  W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois, 1868-1963. The Souls of Black Folk; Essays and Sketches. Chicago, A. G. McClurg, 1903. New York :Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968.

to "civilize" African populations[28] . This approach metaphorically allows for the acceptance of Black people within the Western world only if they are willing to remove traces and assertions of Africanness and instead place within their Black bodies white brains-- ways of thinking about the world and socializing themselves in relation to the African content. Stewart argues how Black liberation (especially that which derives from a Black Christian and evangelical perspective) stops short of its goals if it is not also pro-African. Stewart's Black Feminist work is centered on a valuation of indigenous and diaspora practices of African tradition and heritage, specifically within the Caribbean "in ways that both my White and Black Christs could not".[29]African Religions are as wide and diverse as the continent itself, and therefore cannot be properly studied monolithically, under a single essay or even under one lens such as music, or food. However, Stewart asserts praxis towards understanding the study of Black religion in the African diaspora that can help scholars in this field condense a "typology of three major trajectories" that have influenced Blacks in the African diaspora.[30] These are: 1) African-derived religions and practices (Santeria/Candomblé/Vodou, etc.); 2) Black Christian denominations and Black membership in White denominations; and 3)

Black nationalist religious formations (Nation of Islam, Rastafari, Black Judaism, etc.). Additionally, "each of these trajectories has unfolded within the shadow of hegemonic Eurocentric Christian institutions, but they vary based on their use of material from both African-based and Euro-Christian traditions".[31] Centered in Afro-centric Black feminism, Stewart's insights are invaluable to the study of African traditions.

**Stepping Outside of Scripture and "the Church"**

This essay builds off of typology of African-derived  religions set out by Dianne Stewart. Within these traditions, ancestral veneration serves multiple, vital purposes to the structures of many African religious communities. Ancestral veneration through various religious practices links descendants to their deceased parents and heritage through the retelling of historical narratives as well as spiritual practices in service or communication to the Divine Community (divinities, spirits and ancestors). Many of these narratives and practices exist outside of written scripture and survive instead via religious apprenticeship, memorization, and other means of Embodied Knowledge[32].

Rather than privileging Euro-Christian normative discourse[33]scholars can instead view  places of religious devotion and holy sites that are dissimilar to a

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28  Alexander Crummell and Wilson J. Moses, eds., Destiny and Race: Selected Writings, 1840–1898 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992)

29  Dianne M. Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

30  Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey.*

31  Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey.*

32 Richman points out that " Embodied knowledge has long and deep roots not only in ethnography but also in cultural anthropological theory, beginning with Emile Durkheim and A. M. Hocart" (Dancing Wisdom: Review).

33  Elana Jefferson-Tatum, "The Violence of Translation: An Indigenous World-Sense and the Western "Prostitution" of Dahomean Bodies." *Journal of Africana Religions* 3, no. 3 (2015): 279-324. doi:10.5325/jafrireli.3.3.0279.

traditional Church setting as equally valid and crucial for its religious community as a Church may be. One of these important religious sites is the kitchen.

### Embodied Religious Knowledge

In *Cooking for the gods: Sensuous Ethnography, Sensory Knowledge, and the Kitchen in the Lucumi Tradition*, E. Perez begins providing historical context to the "sensory turn" of the social sciences following a literary era of the 1970s through 1990s which focused on "meaning-centered" analytical approaches; transcending to the study of religion. Seeing as though many African-derived religions lack literary scripture (while some certainly do),[34] an approach privileging the analysis of sacred text can only serve to uphold a Euro-Christian hegemony over African-centric religious practices. In her book *Cooking for the gods*, E. Perez takes a different approach, making a case for the religious significance of the preparation of food in Afro-diasporic cultures, starting with her work in the house of Ilé Laroye in the South Side of Chicago. E.Perez asserts that the preparation of food is a vital necessity for the survival of an African community, not only physically, but also culturally. Attempting to understand African tradition through a Western lens limits scholars from understanding the religious significance of objects,

sites, and practices that may have little to no meaning in the Euro-Christian world. For example, the kitchen is a sacred space (one that is kept clean and holy as such) in many Afro-Caribbean traditions that lack the establishment of a church or temple. Ritual labor is performed here, and the kitchen functions as a classroom-like space for instruction. E. Perez writes "Elders of the community have a religious obligation to teach the uninitiated and inexperienced to deal competently with the end products of sacrifice".[35] Passed on through visual and experiential memorization, these processes and stories are not written down, yet they are passed down generation after generation-- esteeming memorization of knowledge as bodily ownership, rather than recording the knowledge outside of oneself.[36] From a Western point of view, religious traditions that lack written scripture are often seen as reliant on oral tradition due to a lack of literacy. However, many African and indigenous traditions that consist of non-scriptural means of historical representation and religious devotions do so not because of illiteracy but because of an understood importance of the spiritual value of embodied knowledge.

An African tradition that esteems memorization over the written word, despite having scriptural texts, is

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34  See; *The Kebra Nagast, The Wisdom of Rastafari, The Holy Piby, Kaffir (Xhosa) Folklore* for example

35  Elizabeth Pérez, *Religion in the Kitchen: Cooking, Talking, and the Making of Black Atlantic Traditions*. NYU Press, 2016. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18040b8.

36  Quoted from Cooking for the Gods; In the words of Loïc Wacquant (2004: 69, his italics), "*Theoretical mastery is of little help so long as the move is not inscribed within one's bodily schema; and it is only after it has been assimilated by the body in and through endless physical drills repeated ad nauseam that it becomes in turn fully intelligible to the intellect. There is indeed a comprehension of the body that goes beyond – and comes prior to – full visual and mental cognizance. Only the permanent carnal experimentation that is training, as a coherent complexus of 'incorporating practices,' can enable one to acquire this practical mastery of the practical rules [...], which precisely satisfies the condition of dispensing with the need to constitute them as such in consciousness.*"

West-African Islam. As a religious tradition, Islam was introduced to West Africa through a process of gradual assimilation.[37] Over time, with isolation from its source in the Middle East, Islam practiced by West Africans became uniquely African. In contrast, conversion to Christianity was enforced by slaveholders, missionaries, and colonial authorities onto colonized peoples through threats and incentives. Because of the nature of Islam's introduction into West Africa, in which the messangers came and introduced the religion, but did not stay in the region to continuously enforce the religion, Islam in West Africa contains a host of Black poets, Sufi mystics, key teachers, and a history of Black re connected to the divine. With James Cone's Black Liberation Theology in mind, the importance of Black representations within the characterization of holy and divine is further illuminated. These examples serve to encourage scholars to re-center the importance of non-Western religious symbols and practices; such as holy objects, sacred sites, aspects of nature, recitation, food preparation, etc.

**Understanding Black Spirituality Through Music**

Another key object of focus that esteems African religious practices is the examination of the spiritual and academic significance of music. Music, both lyrical and melodical, has been prominently used as a spiritual tool amongst many religious communities. And just as the case with language, music can be deeply religious. In her journal, *Music and Trance*, Judith Becker, South Asian Ethnomusicologist and scholar of Religious Studies "discusses the relationship between music and trance" and examines the neurological responses to religious experiences caused by music and dance.[38] She asserts that neuroscience can help us understand our emotions as caused by mechanisms of the central nervous system. This includes understanding music as a tool of religious experience, specifically the experience of being in a state of trance-- denoting the power of music within the context of spiritual experience. Music is used amongst the Black Pentacostal tradition as well as a number of African traditional religions for the purpose of spirit possession. Becker defines trance as "a state of mind characterized by intense focus, the loss of the strong sense of self and access to types of knowledge and experience that are inaccessible in non-trance states".[39] This definition includes meditative states, possession trance, shamanic trance, communal trance, aesthetic trance, and isolated moments of transcendence. Under her model, trance states can be experienced as a mild state, where the listener's whole attention becomes focused on the music, and as a possession trance, where the self is displaced and the listener's body is taken over by a deity or spirit. These states are knowingly experienced by Sufi mystics in unification with Allah, in the

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37  "The spread of Islam throughout the African continent was neither simultaneous nor uniform, but followed a gradual and adaptive path" Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. "Trade and the Spread of Islam in Africa." metmuseum.org. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accessed April 21, 2021. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tsis/hd_tsis.htm.
38  Judith Becker, "Music and Trance." *Leonardo Music Journal*, vol. 4, 1994, p. 41., doi:10.2307/1513180.
39  Becker, "Music and Trance," 41.

meditative state of Vajrayana Buddhists for example. It is safe to say that music can contribute to the occurrence of these experiences by individuals of various religious traditions. Studies have not only shown the mental health benefits of religious music,[40] but also music's functional cue in reinforcing normative, culturally appropriate behavior as well as ritual participation.[41] Scholars Andy Bennet and Susanne Jannssen recognize the importance of popular music and its contribution to the notions of cultural heritage and national identity, as well as collective memory.[42] The *Origins of Music*, a work of biomusicology, asserts that "music making is the quintessential human cultural activity, and music is a ubiquitous element in all cultures large and small.' Although they admit that "there is no agreed upon answer" to the question "what is music"? the authors insist that "Music offers important insight into the study of human origins and human history in at least three principal areas' among which figure 'universal and multifunctional cultural behavior".[43] The authors of this text argue that anthropological study has demonstrated music and dance as essential components of many social behaviors including metaphysical quests. *The Origins of Music* contributes to this discussion by asserting

that music has been universally important in the study of the evolution of language, migration, memory and mysticism as experienced amongst various religious groups spanning from East to West. Accordingly, if we are attempting to lessen Western biases' effect on the study of African religion, should not we begin to classify religious music as an object of study with the same dignity as the study of scripture? Roy Shuker, in his book *Understanding Popular Music*, discusses popular music ideological hegemony. He claims, "Hegemony is never absolute, but is instead constantly being challenged and redefined".[44] Prioritizing the examination of music over scripture or, very possibly, of music under the umbrella of scripture/sacred text, would be a subversive act, and deviate from traditional approaches to the study of religion. This argument lies in the assertion that reframing music as a more holistic scope to understand religion would not only include religious traditions outside of the Western-Christian hegemony and esteem them to an elevated-equal status, but also would expand our understanding of religion within not just African religious traditions, but religion as a whole.

On collective memory, Ke-hsien Huang writes, "religion has been one of the longest memory-preserv-

40 "Findings suggest that the frequency of listening to religious music is associated with a decrease in death anxiety and increases in life satisfaction, self-esteem, and a sense of control across the 2 waves of data. In addition, the frequency of listening to gospel music (a specific type of religious music) is associated with a decrease in death anxiety and an increase in a sense of control. These associations are similar for blacks and whites, women and men, and low- and high-socioeconomic status individuals."(Listening to Religious Music and Mental Health in Later Life)

41 "We propose that religious music can function as a subtle cue associated with moral standards via cultural socialization and ritual participation. Such associative learning can charge music with specific meanings and create sacred cues that influence normative behavior. Our findings provide preliminary support for this view, which we hope further research will investigate more closely." (Effects of Religious Music on Moral Behavior)

42 Andy Bennett & Susanne Janssen (2016) Popular Music, Cultural Memory, and Heritage, Popular Music and Society

43 Ludwig Pesch, The Origins of Music. (2001) Edited by Nils L. Wallin, Björn Merker, and Steven Brown. 1.

44 Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture*

ing communities in human history, where sacred stories about past events and ancient heroes of the faith are remembered regularly".[45] For the sake of visualization, I wish I could draw here a Venn diagram chart, with Music and Religion as distinct disciplines, meeting at an axis, and in the middle (amongst many other things) would be serving the purpose of cultural preservation and memory. This along with means of devotion to deities, means of survival (food preparation), and means of memorization (recitative oral narrative) centers a study of African religion that seeks to holistically understand traditions independent from Euro-Christian hegemonic expectations or dissimilar characterizations.

### Conclusion

In the quest to find an appropriate, fair, global framework to approach the study of African Religion, our frameworks may center the rituals, and various individual and collective practices of which culture and memory are preserved, that do not always include scripture and church formations as conceptualized by Western scholars. And with this, we can narrow our focus on establishing religious means of memory which broadens out to include the examination of sacred sites, music, oral storytelling and memorization, poetry, and other holy objects. Rather than discounting entire cultures and religious traditions that do not fit within the mold of the Christian church, or simply attempting to align them up as equivalents, this essay suggests truly embracing the diversity of religion. In order to do so, we must recenter religion as it is defined by the people who practice indigenous traditions, and diligently esteem oral tradition as well as ritual that occurs outside of the walls of a church building. Religious Studies as a discipline has been progressively adapting in this way, as shown by the scholars mentioned in this work who have done exactly this.

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45  Huang, K. (2018). Restoring religion through collective memory: How Chinese Pentecostals engage in mnemonic practices after the Cultural Revolution.

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# Vanquished Foes, Demons, and the Damned: Selective Racialization in Ethiopian Illuminated Manuscripts from 1500-1800
## By Alexandra Tighe, Tulane University

Unlike much of the African continent, where sculpture and textile art dominated, Ethiopia has a long tradition of painting on scrolls and parchments dating far back in its history. Illuminated manuscripts, which constitute the vast majority of known Ethiopian art, developed from early Egyptian monastic traditions of copying scripture and decorating corresponding pages with intricate geometric designs and figural images.[1] The tumultuous centuries between 1500 and 1800 were a particularly prolific period in Ethiopian manuscript creation filled with shifts in style and, importantly, purpose of illuminated manuscripts. During these three centuries, the Ethiopian Empire faced a variety of threats—from the jihads of Ahmad Gran, to the incursions of the Oromo people, to the encroachment of the Portuguese. Ethiopian kings, elites, and the patriarchs of the Ethiopian Christian Church had to navigate these various risks, at times negotiating alliances and in other moments engaging militarily.

Ethiopian artistic production, particularly illuminated religious manuscripts, reflected the complex, and ever-changing, political situation of the 1500-1800 period. Notably, artists from this era used the racial-ization of their subjects—conveyed through a figure's clothing, complexion, conventions of position, and rendering of features—not to reflect the depicted individual's true physical appearance, but instead to communicate messages of Ethiopian identity.[2] Artists appropriated familiar religious tropes, such as representations of saints on horseback, the Last Judgement, and Jesus' Passion and Death, to visually relay political messages to their audience. They strategically rendered the victors and holy figures as Ethiopians and the image's vanquished foes, demons, and damned individuals as Portuguese, Arab, or Oromo "types" according to the political concerns of the moment. Artists commissioned by religious and government figures alike employed this specific racialization to create a unified Ethiopian entity, manipulate and communicate perceptions of fluctuating allies and enemies, and assuage anxieties about the future of the state's existence.

Both the prominence of Christianity in Ethiopian society since at least the mid-fourth century, and the prevalence of monks as artists, meant that most Medieval and early-modern Ethiopian art represented religious subject matter following certain strict, stylis-

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1  Robert Stevenson, "Aspects of Ambiguity in Crosses and Interlace," (*Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 1981/1982), 11.

2  I am aware of the scholarly debate regarding the origins of race as a concept, particularly in relation to the emergence of modernity. Although exploring whether, or how, race existed in early modern Ethiopia lays beyond the scope of this paper, I have decided to use the terms "race" and "racialization." More than anything, in using these terms I refer to the physical demonstrations of ethnic, cultural, geographic, or religious differences as represented by artists.

tic conventions.[3] Monks and other artists relied heavily on rules of composition, reproducing the same scenes repeatedly over the three hundred year period with only slight adjustments.[4] The most important and frequently repeated scenes included: seated Mary holding the child Jesus, equestrian warrior saints slaying foes, Jesus Christ rescuing the damned or standing victorious over Satan, and scenes from the Passion and death of Christ. Ethiopian artists also adopted, and adjusted, Roman and Egyptian artistic techniques to create a unique Ethiopian style. Especially relevant for this paper, Ethiopian art most often depicted people as "types," using set variations for age, gender, or race without personal specifications.[5] Portraits, such as those employed in the European Renaissance or Classical Greece and Rome did not feature in the Ethiopian tradition: if Ethiopian artists wished to signal the identity of a specific individual, they most often did so with labels in Amharic or the presence of set symbols, like a red horse to connote St. Theodore.[6]

Figure 1, demonstrates this use of types and labels to identify individuality, as opposed to optic representations. Here, the image denotes St. Mongestä not by individualized facial features to recreate his real-life appearance but rather by the written identification

slightly above and to his right.



*Figure 1. St. Mongestä on Horseback, c. 1700*

In addition to the conventions for representing individual saints, biblical, and historical figures, Ethiopian artists developed "types" for depicting foreigners. Representing foreigners in profile became prominent in later Ethiopian folk art and was often used in illuminated manuscripts to connote religious, ethnic, or cultural difference.[7] Art historians have explored the other more subtle and diverse means by which Ethiopian artists marked the racial identities of their subjects, particularly focusing on their representations of "foreigners." In his analysis of depictions of St. George in Ethiopian illuminated manuscripts, Stanislaw Chojnacki mentions how "in every case, the face of the Saint has been carefully modelled, and seems to have a foreign character," although he fails to specify what exactly gives this

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3  Griffith Mann, "The Role of the Illuminated Manuscript in Ethiopian Culture." In *Ethiopian Art: The Walters Art Museum*, (Surrey, Third Millennium Publishing, 2001), 95.
4  Jacques Mercier, "Ethiopian Art History." *Ethiopian Art: The Walters Art Museum,* (Surrey, UK: Third Millennium Publishing, 2001).
5  Chojnacki, Stanislaw, "Notes on Art in Ethiopia in the 16th Century: an Enquiry into the Unknown," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 21-97.
6  Chojnacki, Stanislaw. "Ethiopian Warrior Saints in 18th-Century Miniatures and Their Significance in the Cultural History of Ethiopia." *The Indigenous and the Foreign in Christian Ethiopian Art*, (73-82. Burlington, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 73.
7  Girma Fisseha, "Ahmad Grann and the Portuguese in Ethiopian Folk Painting." In *The Indigenous and the Foreign in Christian Ethiopian Art*, (Burlington, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1999), 117.

impression.[8] Going into slightly more detail, Sam Fogg in his collection of Ethiopian manuscripts describes the individuals in Figure 2 as having "marked European appearance of the faces" highlighting the "cleft chins, goatee beards and curling mustaches" of the holy men as markers of their foreignness.[9]



*Figure 2. Gospel Book c. 1600,* Art of Ethiopia, 90-91.

The variety with which Ethiopian artists differentiated racial and ethnic groups, especially over this three hundred year period, has made it hard to define any clear set of rules used to do so. Although the differences may be apparent to the viewer (compare Figures 1 and 2 for example) creating a comprehensive "formula" to understand these conventions is immensely difficult. Generally, though, differences in clothing, complexion, hair and facial hair style, and posture, particularly when compared with "typical" imagery, illustrate the intentional process of racialization employed by artists.

Although the threat of an Arab invasion had loomed over Ethiopia since the seventh century, the state also traded and shared cultural elements with its Arab neighbors.[10] An Arab influence thus existed in even the earliest Ethiopian art, visible especially in the style of depicted clothing on rendered individuals, likely imported from across the Red Sea, and elements of the figural representation.[11] While before 1500, illuminated manuscripts present Arab "type" human figures both neutrally and as foes, reflecting this at times amicable, at times violent relationship, the prevalence of their representation as enemies increased concurrently with the threatening jihads of Ahmad Grann.[12] Imam Ahmad Grann's jihads, launched between 1529 and his death in 1543, proved perilous threats to Ethiopian religious and state sovereignty. In fact, only with the assistance of the Portuguese was Grann killed and his progress halted, leaving Ethiopian Emperor Galawdewos to try and restore Ethiopian Christianity to those who had converted to Islam.[13]

By the mid sixteenth century, human figures, including Arab types, began to appear as the victims of equestrian warriors in Ethiopian art.[14] Equestrian or mounted warrior saints, present frequently in illuminated manuscripts and other decorative Christian arts

8   Stanislaw Chojnacki, "The Iconography of St. George in Ethiopia, part 1" In Journal of Ethiopian Studies, (1973), 68.
9   Samm Fogg, *Art of Ethiopia*, (London, Paul Holberton Publishing, 2005), 90.
10  Getatchew Haile, Haile, Getatchew. "Daily Life and Religious Practices in Ethiopia." *Ethiopian Art: The Walters Art Museum,* (Third Millennium Publishing Ltd., 2001), 19.
11  Mercier, "Ethiopian Art History", 53.
12  Mercier, "Ethiopian Art History", 53.
13  Dale H. Moore, "Christianity in Ethiopia." *Church History* 5, no. 3 (1936), 278.
14  Chojnacki, "Ethiopian Warrior Saints," 81.

more broadly, were one of the most popular "types" in Ethiopian art. They most often depicted St. Michael the Archangel, St. Theodore, or St George, riding on color-coded horses with their spears pointed skyward or down, to slay Satan in the form of a dragon or serpent.[15] But eventually they took on a more political context and depict both human and monster victims meeting their ends.



*Figure 3, Diptych icon of the Virgin and Child, c. 1600s.*



*Figure 4,* Portion of*: Triptych Icon of the Virgin and Child and a hunting Scene, c. 1700.* Art of Ethiopia, 62.

In Figure 3, from 1700, while St. George on the white horse slays the dragon from his saint myth, St. Theodore on his red horse stabs a foreign foe, likely of Arab provenance.[16] In a more blatant example of the assumed political nature of the later illustrations, Figure 4 shows the slaying of the Emperor of Quz (possibly a kingdom in Southern Arabia) as denoted by a written description and his Arab dress.[17] Although the events depicted here occurred much earlier—the actions of "St. Theodore" can be attributed to multiple individuals by the same name from before the fifth century—they reappeared many times in Ethiopian art through the eighteenth century.[18] In his analysis of these warrior saint depictions post-1500, Chojnacki states that "the artists apparently multiplied these human figures [war-

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15  Chojnacki, "Ethiopian Warrior Saints," 74/81.
16  Chojnacki, "Ethiopian Warrior Saints," 74/81.
17  Fogg, *Art of Ethiopia,* 62.
18  Stanislaw Chojnacki, "The Iconography of Saint George in Ethiopia: Part 1." (*Journal of Ethiopian Studies,* 1973), 44.

rior saints], gave them various forms, and most probably defined who they were meant to represent," transcending the identities of the vanquished in these saints' original stories to create new narratives. Although Figure 4 depicts a specific, historical battle in which the Emperor of Quz was slain, the three other trampled victims under the horse have no exact historical corollary. The ambiguous blend of artistic conventions, religious tropes, and historical events also facilitated the generalization of the image—perhaps more than a depiction of the scene of the mythical St. Theodore vanquishing the Emperor of Quz, it represents the triumph of Ethiopia over its various contemporary and past foreign invaders.



*Figure 5,* Portion of*: Homiliary and Miracles of the Archangel Michael, late 1600s.* Ethiopian Art: the Walters Art Museum, 110.

Similarly, the events illustrated in Figure 5 show hope for Ethiopian victory against jihadist incur-

sions in religious, figural language, although this image does not use the convention of the equestrian saint. This image from the seventeenth century shows the swallowing of the pharaoh and his army by the Red Sea as Moses and the Israelites make it to safety.[19] Regardless of their real ethnic identity in the Bible, here the image presents the Egyptians as Arab-type foreigners, mostly in full profile, excluding Pharaoh himself, and the Israelites as Ethiopian types with round faces and no turbans. Although representing a well-known story, the artist has clearly taken liberty with his rendering of the figures' racial identity, giving the story's heroes (Moses and the Israelites) Ethiopian markers and the story's villains (the pharaoh and his soldiers) Arab "type" characteristics.

In addition to recurring threats from neighboring Arab states, Ethiopia faced a wide-scale migration of Oromo peoples in the mid sixteenth century. The Oromo, a largely animist, Cushitic speaking farming people, had lived in south Ethiopia since before the fourteenth century.[20] But, the devastating sixteenth century religious wars triggered by Ahmad Grahn's invasion both pushed and pulled them further north. They moved north fleeing the devastation and famine that the jihads had caused, and also to take advantage of openings for gain and land resettlement in the regions left unstable in the jihad's wake.[21] The Oromo met ini-

19  Griffith Mann, "The Role of the Illuminated Manuscript in Ethiopian Culture." In *Ethiopian Art: The Walters Art Museum*, (Surrey, Third Millennium Publishing, 2001), 108. Historians generally agree Ramses II is the pharaoh referred to in the Book of Exodus (and thus the one represented here), although it has been debated.
20  Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History, 1570-1860*, (Cambridge, African Studies Centre, 1990), 18.
21  Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, 18.

tial success in their migration because of the Ethiopian kingdom's focus on the impending jihad.[22] Only after 1543 and the death of Ahmad Grann could Ethiopian Emperor Galawdewos (reigned 1540-1549) turn his attention to the Oromo. But even then the latter remained a threat to Christian Ethiopia for the next three centuries.[23]

Before the wide-scale Oromo migration of the mid-sixteenth century, illuminated manuscripts rarely included Oromo "type" human figures or, if they did, integrated them into the scene as neutral individuals. At this time, the Oromo formed a part of the Ethiopian kingdom even though they did not share an ethnic or religious identity.[24] Furthermore, ethnic Oromo and other non-Ethiopian African individuals likely lived within Ethiopia pre-1500 because of the kingdom's extensive trade.[25]



*Figure 7, Gospel Book, c. 1500-20.* Art of Ethiopia, 89.

Figure 6 and Figure 7, from before the Oromo migration, demonstrate this clearly by including non-Ethiopian African types among the four Gospel writers and the elders of the Church. In Figure 7, for example, the Church elders, all bearing halos and sitting in the same posture, are rendered with varying complexions. In Figure 6, the Gospel writers have been represented with dark skin as Oromo types, regardless of these historical figures' actual ethnic identity. Thus, the positive and neutral integration of Oromo figures into Ethiopian manuscripts likely reflects the diversity of Ethiopia at the time. But in the early to mid-sixteenth century, a powerful shift occurred and Oromo types began appearing with increasing frequency and derision.



*Figure 6, Saint John and Saint Luke, c. mid-1400s.* Art of Ethiopia, 83.

22  Donald Crummey, "Church and State in Ethiopia: The Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century, In *African Zion,* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993), 43.
23  Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia,* 25.
24  Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia,* xiii.
25  Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia,* xiii.

*Figure 8,* Portion of: *Icon of the Resurrection, early 1500s.* Art of Ethiopia, 47.

Figure 8 exemplifies the early stage of this notable change. In the image, Satan appears as a highly caricatured non-Ethiopian African type, with dark skin, exaggerated facial features, unruly hair, and little clothing. He lies prostrate at Christ's feet with his head near the snapping jaws of a crocodile. In the same figure, the pale pinkish skin, rigid, lined hair, and almost European appearance of Jesus, the rescued Adam, Eve, saints, and angels contrast sharply with the caricatured, dark, non-Ethiopian African typified Satan.

As explored in Figure 4, the illuminated manuscripts also show Oromo-type individuals as the victims of equestrian warriors. But unlike the emperor of Quz and other slain Arabs that represented specific individ-

uals and events, the non-Ethiopian African types often have no specific distinguishers. In Figure 4, the three trampled figures could signify specific leaders of the invading Oromo or non-Ethiopian Africans in general: the interpretation falls to the viewer. Thus, coinciding with the Oromo migration of the early sixteenth century, illustrations of non-Ethiopian African types changed from neutral to blatantly negative, presenting the group as the victims of Ethiopian warrior saints and even as Satan himself.

Another interesting shift in the depiction of non-Ethiopian African types occurred in the art created of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. In 1611, Jesuits brought European-made engravings of the life of Christ to Emperor Susenyos. Although initially welcomed, after Emperor Fasilides kicked out the Jesuits in 1632, the images disappeared too. Almost a century later in 1706, a French doctor and his Jesuit travelling companion reintroduced the European engravings in yet another attempt to Catholicize the kingdom.[26] These engravings brought in many aspects of European influence, including the representation of racist ideology in the religious sphere.[27]

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26   Mercier, Ethiopian Art History, 64.
27   Mercier, Ethiopian Art History, 64.

*Figure 9, The Arrest of Christ, c. 1755.* Ethiopian Art: the Walters Art Museum, 67.

rican types have become increasingly associated with representations of pagan evil.



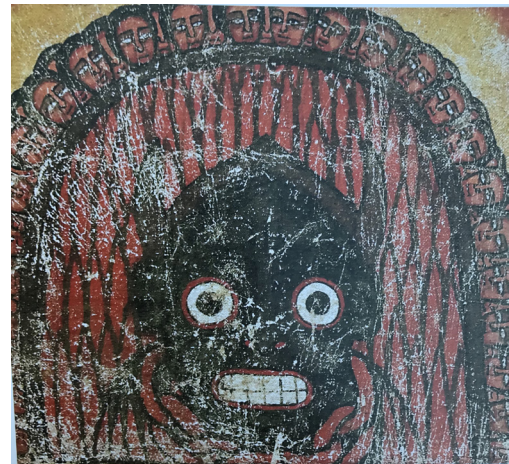*Figure 10,* Portion of: *The Miracles of Mary, 1706-1708,* Art of Ethiopia, 8.



*Figure 11,* Portion of: *Painting of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection, c. 1800.* Art of Ethiopia, 127.

Figure 9 depicts a scene from one of the earliest engravings introduced to the Ethiopian kingdom, reproduced here with visible elements of Ethiopian style. Not only did Ethiopian artists reproduce it on a large scale, it inspired stylistic and conventional shifts in subsequent Ethiopian-made art.[28] Although the image does not contain a non-Ethiopian African type, it associates the demon with blackness via its literal color. While previously, demons were depicted as polychrome dragons (see Figure 3), from 1700 onward, images of Satan almost always associate demons with blackness to some degree, increasingly differentiated from the lighter complexion Ethiopian type figures in the image. As Figure 9 clearly shows, such association was intentional on the part of the artist. While all the other figures are still Ethiopian types, the color black and the exaggerated caricatures of non-Ethiopian Af-

28  Mercier, Ethiopian Art History, 64.

*Figure 12,* Portion of*: Homiliary of the Archangel Michael: Miracle of the Icon.* African Zion, cat. 120.

Figure 10, Figure 11, and Figure 12 are more overt and show Satan as a caricatured non-Ethiopian African type. While in Figure 9, the demon is entirely zoomorphic, in the other three Satan is a dark skinned, humanoid figure with horns and wings added on. But in all three, he is the darkest figure in the image, literally the color black, compared to the lighter complexioned Ethiopian type individuals. This stark difference in color heightens the contrast between Satan, the most evil, and the other mortals or holy figures in the image. Although a nuanced trope, the use of blackness in such specific associations with Satan (note, there are no positively characterized dark skinned individuals in any of these four figures) did not appear in Ethiopian art until after the introduction of European religious prints that made similar associations.



*Figure 13,* Portion of: *Folding Picture Book, c. late 1600s.* Art of Ethiopia, 98-99.

Additionally, many illustrations of the damned from this time period carry similar racial associations, not present before the sustained interaction with European Catholics in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Figure 13 demonstrates this shift in a particularly overt way. Here, the damned are overtly represented as non-Ethiopian African types in stark contrast with the lighter complexioned, Ethiopian type individuals (either religious mortals or angels) to their left. Unlike the two satanic figures here, the damned are not caricatured but rather rendered in the typical style for depicting human figures in Ethiopian art. Again, the contrast between both halves of the Figure 13 demonstrate that the choice to render the damned and demons as dark skinned, non-Ethiopian African types was intentional on the part of the artist. The earlier date of the image and the positioning of humble (with eyes down cast), enchained, Oromo type individuals lead into the flames hell suggests that the image reflects the aggres-

sive condemnation of Portuguese Jesuits for pagan religious practices, here associated with the Oromo. Thus, although this specific image could not have been influenced by the 1706 influx of European religious pamphlets, it still bears the marks of European associations of blackness with evil paganism brought during the 1543-1632 period of interaction.[29]

Although European art had influenced Ethiopian illuminated manuscripts for several decades—because of some limited artistic exchange—before 1487 and the arrival of the Portuguese, Ethiopian images did not include European type figures.[30] But when they did appear in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, European types often occupied neutral or favorable positions. Figure 2 provides one such example. Here the image shows two Portuguese types as seated Gospel writers, shaded by umbrellas. In particular, the figure in the image on the left has a curled mustache and goatee—conventions of facial hair not present in depictions of Arab, Ethiopian, or non-Ethiopian African types.[31] The Portuguese remained in Ethiopia for almost a century, between 1543 and 1632 vigorously trying to convert Ethiopia from its unique Christianity to Roman Catholicism. The Jesuits temporarily succeeded with the 1622 baptism of King Susenyos (r. 1606-1632).[32] But amid great public anger, especially from bishops of the Ethiopian Church, Susenyos ultimately abdicated. After

this and the subsequent expulsion of the Portuguese by King Fasilides (r. 1632-1667), the images show European and Portuguese types with increasing antagonism.



*Figure 14,* Portion of: *Large Triptych Icon, c. 1700.* Art of Ethiopia, 74.

In Figure 14, the vanquished Satan has exaggeratedly white skin and almost zoomorphic figures, trampled under a victorious Ethiopian type Christ. The shift in presentation between Figure 2 and Figure 14 reflected the great tensions between Ethiopian Chritian elites and the Catholic, Portuguese Jesuits after 1632. Thereafter, the illustrations of European types switch between helpless victims (as either slain foes or vanquished Satan) and malicious figures.

29  Moore, "Christianity", 278. Although Europeans looked at Ethiopia's Christianity with derision, it still placed them above Islamic and pagan African peoples.
30  Mercier, "Ethiopian Art History," 56. This excludes influence from ancient Roman and Greco-Byzantine art, which had profound impacts on Ethiopian style. (Chojnacki, "Notes on Art in Ethiopia…," 95).
31  Samm Fogg, *Art of Ethiopia*, (London, Paul Holberton Publishing, 2005), 90.
32  Moore, "Christianity", 280-82.

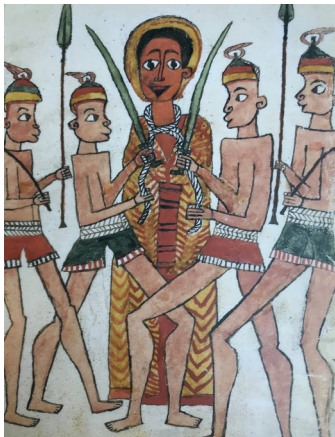*Figure 15,* Portion of: *Kwer'ata Re'su, c. 1700.* Art of Ethiopia, 10.



*Figure 16,* Portion of: *Folding Picture Book, c. late 1600s.* Art of Ethiopia, 94.

Interestingly, European types with exaggerated features—often unrealistically pink skin and frequently with blond hair—also appear as the torturers of Christ and other Ethiopian type saints. Figure 15 and Figure 16 show this powerfully. Both images date from after the removal of the Portuguese, during a time of animosity towards Europeans, and show a darker bearded or goateed Jesus tortured by pale, clean shaven guards in profile. However, after the beginning of the eighteenth century, images of any sort of European type largely vanished. This new trend coincides with the reintroduction of European and Catholic influence, via trade and travellers, in the country after more than a century and a half of isolation.[33] Likely, Ethiopian artists and elite patrons saw it as advantageous during this period to stop antagonizing European figures and reassess the potential benefits and drawbacks of a new relationship.

By tracking the shifts in depictions of various racial types in Ethiopian art, it becomes clear that the images were created in close conjunction with contemporary historical occurrences. But these images did not just reflect history: they aimed to shape it. Monks often created art at the request of wealthy and powerful high-ranking religious men.[34] And these men, including Emperor Zara Yaeqob, (r. 1434-68) saw the potential for religious art as a means of exerting power.[35] During his reign, for example, Yaeqob created the cult of Maryan icons as a way to reconstruct and strengthen Ethiopian identity.[36] Thus, these images had a purpose beyond the devotional: to communicate desired messages regarding Ethiopian society from the powerful to the public.

Primarily, selective racialization in Ethiopian illuminated manuscripts helped create a unified Ethio-

33  Richard Pankhurst, "Ethiopia Revealed: Merchants, Travelers, and Scholars." *African Zion: the Sacred Art of Ethiopia*, (Yale University Press, 1993), 26-27.

34  Mann, "The Role of the Illuminated Manuscript in Ethiopian Culture," 95.

35  Tamrat, "Church and State in Ethiopia" African zion, 142.

36  Mercier, "Ethiopian Art History", 51.

pian identity. As previously stated, oftentimes, foreign types reference entire groups, not just individuals. In his analysis of equestrian warriors, Chojnacki states that during the tumultuous sixteenth century, "artists apparently multiplied these human figures (warrior saints), gave them various forms, and most probably defined who they were meant to represent."[37] This flexibility permitted the Ethiopian government or church powers to construct narratives of Ethiopian identity. For example, between approximately 1500-1800, the Oromo's growing military power threatened Ethiopia's physical security and their animist beliefs threatened Ethiopian Christianity, distinctive from the doctrine of the Roman Catholic church since at least the fourth century.[38] In addition to endangering the kingdom's Christian identity, the inundation of the kingdom's south with non-Christians would threaten Ethiopia's religious legitimacy by linking it to "paganism." As Ethiopia tried to curry favor with their new Portuguese allies and establish that they did not need to convert to Roman Catholicism, because they already abided by Christian doctrines, associations with Oromo animists would have been a major hindrance.[39] Additionally, Ethiopian leaders wished to "rebuild the state and its society in close association with the Christian Church" and looked to "architecture, painting, poetry, and writing" to do this.[40] Thus, in the manuscripts from this time, the non-Ethiopian African

types came to signify the unwelcome Oromo and their pagan threat to Ethiopian Christianity. Whereas pre-1500 non-Ethiopian African types are painted neutrally and integrated into the various images, during the sixteenth century they are separated from the Ethiopian figures and clearly shown as foreigners. Thus illuminated manuscripts solidified Ethiopian identity as Christian and distinct from encroaching Arab, Oromo, and European peoples.

Those in power also used racialization to communicate with the public the appropriate perception of outsiders, especially during the tumultuous 1500-1800 period. Most Ethiopians during this time could not read Amharic, the highly valued written language restricted to upper classes and religious individuals.[41] The Ethiopian public was familiar with the language of religious images, however. The previously discussed thematic, symbolic, and compositional conventions in illuminated manuscripts constituted common knowledge. Ethiopians could identify St. George, for example, not by his Amharic descriptor but by his white horse and killing of a dragon or other serpent.[42] Illuminated manuscripts thus became an important way to convey secular, and even political, messages to the public. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, amid the political turmoil and threats from foreign invaders, racialization with clearly differentiated foreigners and "others" appeared with

37    Chojnacki, "Ethiopian Warrior Saints…", 81.
38   Moore, "Christianity in Ethiopia", 274-275.
39   Crummey, "Church and State in Ethiopia", 44.
40   Crummey, "Church and State in Ethiopia", 44.
41   Mercier, Ethiopian Art History, 45.
42   Chojnacki, "The Iconography of Saint George in Ethiopia: Part 1", 59.

great force. During this period oftentimes the malevolent figure would be painted as a foreigner and the holy figure as Ethiopian, even though in the historical reality or Biblical story, both shared an ethnic identity.[43] Furthermore, the repetitive and highly conventional nature of many of these scenes, in which the same subject matter was depicted but with variance in the "type" of the figures, allowed for the manipulation of the identity of these foes.

The tumultuous relationship between Ethiopia and the Portuguese in particular, demonstrates the importance of and means by which illuminated manuscripts defined enemies. As the Portuguese and Ethiopians solidified their alliance, after an unsteady start to the sixteenth century, illuminated manuscripts continually depicted European types in neutral or favorable circumstances. But their representation changed in the mid-seventeenth century, reflecting the increasingly onerous presence of the Portuguese in the Ethiopian kingdom and the lingering resentment even after their ouster. Even after Catholicism had been uprooted in the kingdom, debates within the Ethiopian Church about their ideas and beliefs persisted. Unifying Ethiopian Christians around resistance to the Portuguese Catholics proved a powerful tool to avoid further internal divisions.[44] Taddesse Tamrat affirms this, describing Ethiopian monarchs as "draw[ing] on the power of religion to strengthen their kingdom."[45]

Around this time and for approximately a century and a half afterwards, the Portuguese or general European type appears frequently as the foes in illuminated manuscripts. European types torture martyrs, kill Jesus, and lay slain at the feet of warrior saints. By associating themselves with victorious holy figures and Europeans with their foes, the artists assert that Ethiopia too will triumph in the end. Thus, the illuminated manuscripts became a type of propaganda and a way for the powerful and Church leaders, who most often commissioned pieces at this time, to reclaim the narrative of Portuguese interference. In doing so, the Ethiopians decried the overbearing interventions of the Portuguese without admitting any weakness of their own. This likely served to raise morale and assure Ethiopians that their leaders had made the right choice in eliminating European influence. The artists thus manipulated who the public viewed as friends (the Portuguese at the beginning of the sixteenth century) and foes (the Portuguese after the early seventeenth century) through the selective racialization of figures in the illuminated manuscripts created at this time.

Illuminated manuscripts also gave Ethiopians a way to express their fears and concerns for the future during the rapidly changing sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. By depicting themselves as victorious and aligning themselves with sacred Christian figures they could assuage anxieties and raise morale. Just as Christ

43  Fogg,"Art of Ethiopia", 124.
44  Tamrat, "Church and State in Ethiopia", 46.
45  Tamrat, "Church and State in Ethiopia", 46.

and the saints triumphed in the stories Ethiopian Christians were familiar with, the Ethiopian people would be victorious over their enemies. Furthermore, Ethiopia has a long tradition of holding texts, icons, and images as sacred, and thus the act of creating these illuminated manuscripts would constitute a sort of prayer for a positive outcome.[46]



*Figure 18,* Portion of: *The Story of Euphemia, c. 1700s.* Ethiopian Art: the Walters Art Museum, 65.

In Figure 18, for example, a woman shows her piety by commissioning an icon, resulting in her personal protection by St. Michael.[47] Devotees also used sacred images as "palladium", or protective talismans, in battle.[48] Thus, Ethiopian Christians believed in the power of images in a very tangible sense and viewed representations of the divine not as mere images but as sacred entities themselves. In the words of one of Emperor Zara Yaeqob's (reigned 1434-68) contemporaries, "the icon is clothed with a (human) body...You should not think that it is a mere picture."[49] Likely, then, Ethiopian Christians viewed illuminated manu-

scripts in a similar way—with power and connotations beyond the literal. So the images in which Ethiopian-type armed warriors slay unnamed European, Arab, and non-Ethiopian African type foes would constitute a prayer and the literal conjuring up of an Ethiopian victory over these other peoples.[50]





*Figure 19,* Portion of: *Equestrian Saints, c. late 1600s.* African Zion, cat. 103.

Figure 19 shows this powerfully in its depiction of twelve Ethiopian-type warrior saints slaying every foreign foe known at the time. In addition to the traditional dragon and bull, the warriors slay differ-

46  Mann, "The Role of the Illuminated Manuscript in Ethiopian Culture," 118.
47  Mercier, "Ethiopian Art History," 65.
48  Marilyn E. Heldman. "The Late Solomonic Period." In *African Zion*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993), 194.
49  Mercier, "Ethiopian Art History," 54
50  Chojnacki, "Ethiopian Warrior Saints", 81.

ent foreign "type" human figures in profile denoting Oromo, Portuguese, and Arab enemies. As Chojnacki concisely states, "the artists simply translated into devotional images what the people were already asking of their greatly venerated saints: the defeat of the 'evil infidel.'"[51] This image from the end of the 1600s not only constitutes a prayer for Ethiopian victory over all of their enemies, but also an attempt within the Ethiopian Christian understanding to construct a favorable outcome by creating sacred depictions of it.

Generally, the selective racialization of figures in illuminated manuscripts successfully promoted the aims of the Ethiopian monarchy and church. Ethiopia halted the jihads of Ahmad Grann and never succumbed to Arab invasions. Ethiopian Christianity thwarted Catholic influence and to this day retains its unique beliefs. And Ethiopia was one of a very small number of African countries not colonized by a European power.[52] Whether or not illuminated manuscripts helped secure these aims, Ethiopia's strong identity, skill at clearly but flexibly defining friends and foes, and ability to assuage public anxieties as projected by the manuscripts did in fact contribute to the outcomes of these events.

After 1500 Ethiopian identity grew increasingly strong, but also increasingly exclusive of minority ethnicities, including the Oromo.[53] Ethiopian nationalism

remains a challenge to this day, particularly in light of the recent conflict in the Tigray region. Although Oromo make up half of modern-day Ethiopia's population, they are still frequently devalued and "othered."[54] Furthermore, Ethiopia maintains a narrative of largely homogenous history and cohesive ethnic identity dating to an early period.[55] Likely, the overwhelmingly positive illustrations of Ethiopian types in conjunction with negatively constructed "foreigners" contributed to the formation of this narrative. Thus, illuminated manuscripts, their subject matter and purposes have had powerful impacts on Ethiopian culture and society.

Through analyzing the selectively used racialized types present in Ethiopian illuminated manuscripts and their changes between 1500-1800, the intentional and strategic use of racialization becomes apparent. In times of switching allegiances, fights for political and religious self-determination, and threats from religious and cultural "others," Ethiopian artists used racial types to redefine what constituted Ethiopian identity, control narratives of events, and as a prayer for their kingdom's victory.

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51  Chojnacki, "Ethiopian Warrior Saints", 81.
52  Roderick Grierson,"Dreaming of Jerusalem." In *African Zion*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993), 3.
53  John Sorenson, "History and Identity in the Horn of Africa." *Dialectical Anthropology*, (1992), 235.
54  Sorenson, "History and Identity in the Horn of Africa", 235.
55  Sorenson, "History and Identity in the Horn of Africa", 227.

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